

# Women in the Wave: Representation of Female Characters in Yugoslav New Film and Black Wave

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## **Abstract**

My doctoral thesis takes into account not only the numerical (under-)representation of female film workers, such as directors, cinematographers, composers, and scriptwriters in Yugoslav cinema, but also, as the main focus, their audio-visual representation, as seen through the lens of male dominated Yugoslav cinema. I closely analyse eleven films, from a feminist perspective in film studies. In addition, my close readings of the selected films utilise not only textual analysis, which scrutinises workings of ideology and patriarchy, but also audio-visual and formal analyses, which focus on medium specific traits, such as camera, lighting, editing, etc. Those analyses consist of five empirical chapters, tackling: the allegory of a raped woman as a raped nation (or stratum of a nation) (in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5), representations of women as treacherous in the Second World War themed films (Chapter 6), suicides of working women as well as representations of ageing and youth (Chapter 7), and victimization of female characters as well as their iconographical links to flora and fauna (Chapter 8). Besides empirical chapters, my thesis also consists of theoretical chapters: the Yugoslav New Film movement (Chapter 1), Yugoslav New Film and Gender (Chapter 2), and Methodology (Chapter 3). Representations of gender in Yugoslav New Film have hardly been addressed in a larger volume – my study contributes towards closing this gap in academic research.

# Introduction

## Preface

Balancing between my own sense of nostalgia for the dissolved country of my childhood, the loss of identity and belonging that could be compared with what a stateless person may feel, and between the historical post-Yugoslav revisionism that often tries to deem socialist Yugoslavia totalitarian, I tried to silence my saccharine childhood memories for the country that is no more and conduct objective research. Having not lived during the existence of Yugoslavia in my adult life, I had to examine, from scratch, how adult life and womanhood have been shaped according to Yugoslav gender policies, and whether there was discrepancy with their implementation. Moreover, I depart from the heritage of Yugoslav Partisan women, who not only fought bravely in the Second World War for the liberation of the country from the occupiers, but also have merit that all Yugoslav women were granted suffrage in the wake of the war. These sociological and historical aspects were not the main goals of my research, but helpful tools for comparing the quality of life of Yugoslav women and their representations on screen. After watching many Yugoslav films, I started noticing patterns. For example, women are seldomly the main characters and are often exposed to violence, whether this is symbolic, psychological, and/or physical. My thesis investigates why there are so many representations of women suffering violence in films produced between 1961 and 1972, and in particular Yugoslav New Films. In addition, I look into how depicted female bodies are often sexualised and fetishized.

I did not start this research as a feminist, just as a film scholar. However, my personal trajectory has shifted from scepticism towards feminism (that is often felt in socialist and post-socialist spaces due to viewing it as a product of the bourgeois West), and towards the discovery that I do view the world in a feminist manner, without realising it. Moreover, the things I learned during this research, which I was able to apply on film analysis, changed my own way of how I see films, and made me more sensible towards representations of not only women, but minorities in general.

## Overview

This project investigates how female characters were represented in films of the Yugoslav New Cinema (1961-1972), including its subset the Black Wave, in terms of the narrative, and the visual style. The main focus here is how often women portrayed in Yugoslav New Cinema are seen suffering from various kinds of violence. The Yugoslav New Cinema (1961-1972) occurred as part of the global widespread New Wave movements, such as the French *Nouvelle Vague*, the Brazilian *Cinema Novo* and the Czechoslovak *nová vlna*. The most recognizable features were the auteur approach by the directors, the innovation in film form, the focus on marginalized characters, and location shooting. Black Wave then is a subdivision of the Yugoslav New Cinema characterized by grim social thematic and harsh critique towards the Yugoslav state (De Cuir 2011, Goulding 2002, Levi 2007, Sudar 2013). The Yugoslav New Film movement had a significant political dimension because non-aligned Yugoslavia was the most liberal communist country, which even allowed movies that pointed out flaws in socialism to be shown in the West. For example, at the Berlin Film Festival in 1969 several feature films were screened as part of a special Yugoslav Film week. One feature length film shown in a competition program won the Golden Bear and one short film won the Jury Prize Silver Bear. This is just a hint at how Yugoslav cinematography was fruitful and productive at the time.

Renowned Yugoslav New Cinema directors include, Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Aleksandar 'Saša' Petrović, Želimir Žilnik, Boštijan Hladnik, Matijaž Klopčič, Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, Boro Drašković, Krsto Papić, Ante Babaja, Vatroslav Mimica, and Dimitrie Osmanli. Considering that all the aforementioned film directors are men, striking absence of Yugoslav female directors of feature length Yugoslav New Films comes to the fore. Indeed, there were none. In a similar vein, Dejan Durić (2018, 98) observes the underrepresentation of female directors in Yugoslav feature length film production. Not only in Yugoslavia, but in general, 'both filmmaking and film criticism, East and West, has remained very much a man's business' (Imre 2005, xiv). However, although my research focus does not encompass short length films, it is important to mention that there were some rare Yugoslav female short-film directors, such as Bojana Marijan,<sup>1</sup> Tatjana Dunja Ivanišević,<sup>2</sup> and Vera

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<sup>1</sup> She has directed short film *Vesela klasa Merry/Working Class* (1969) and is one of rare female directors associated with Yugoslav Black Wave. Although I studied only feature length films, I tried to get hold of her rare short film, but to no avail.

<sup>2</sup> She has directed a short experimental film *Žemsko/Woman* (1968), which has elements of feminist approach. She did not consider herself a feminist, but she believed in the right of a woman to become a subject and to acknowledge herself (Ivanišević in Marušić n.d.).

Jocić,<sup>3</sup> whose work could, and should, be classified as belonging to Yugoslav New Films. Furthermore, in light of the recently held 62<sup>nd</sup> Thessaloniki International Film Festival, tribute was also made to the first woman director in Bulgaria Binka Zhelyazkova and her noteworthy opus, which can be considered as a mixture of art cinema, and thematically and formally mainstream cinema, depending on the film. In general, it should be noted that the borderline between art cinema and mainstream cinema is sometimes blurry. Keeping this in mind, it is important to mention the first Yugoslav woman director, the remarkable Sofija ‘Soja’ Jovanović, whose opus – although I do not classify it as Yugoslav New Film but as mainstream cinema – should be remembered. Also, let us not forget rare but significant Yugoslav women film critics, such as Mira Boglić, who addressed gender politics in Yugoslav films and whose work I quote in this thesis.

The main focus when surveying all-male directed feature-length fictional Yugoslav New Films is how – in many of these films – women are suffering from various kinds of violence and self-violence, e.g., rape, suicide, and murder. Even though there is an emerging interest in the representation of female characters in world cinema scholarship, the depictions of women in Yugoslav cinema, namely in Yugoslav New Film, have until recently, hardly been addressed, except by only a few authors such as Mira Boglić (1980), Maja Bogojević (2013), Branislav Dimitrijević (2009), Greg De Cuir (2011), Nebojša Jovanović (2014), Petar Krelja (1979), Ivana Kronja (2018), Bojana Pejić (2021), Svetlana Slapšak (2000), Dijana Jelača (2013b), and Antonia Majača, Rachel O'Reilly and Jelena Vesić (2021). Therefore, I approach the films of this movement from a feminist film perspective, with inspiration from gender and media studies, and representation theories. I draw on these theories for the topic of screened violence towards women, where often a link is established between liberated female sexuality on screen and depictions of gender violence. E. Ann Kaplan (1990, 7) for instance, describes the traditional ways in which patriarchy suppressed women and their sexuality through – in her case Hollywood – cinematic representations: by victimizing, fetishizing, murdering, and rape. She states that in the post 1960s film, the threat of increasingly overt female sexuality, influenced by the women’s liberation movement in the US, had to be confronted with male power (the phallus) as the main weapon for controlling women (Kaplan 1990, 7). Therefore, she argues that the more women were emancipated, found employment,

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<sup>3</sup> I got introduced to her work during a presentation held by Ivana Momčilović. I contend that gender politics addressed in Jocić’s films, namely short documentaries *Najbolji muž/The Best Husband* (1968) and *Devojke bez momaka/Girls without Men* (1963), have strong potential for being included in the canon of Yugoslav New Film. Her short film opus should definitely be examined.

received a degree, and freely expressed their sexuality, the more they posed a threat to the patriarchy, so the patriarchy backlashed through cinematic expression.

There is another reappearing motif identified in feminist film theory, of a woman as a symbol of the nation (Projansky 2001, Russell 2010, Taylor-Jones 2013), and the raped woman as an allegory of a violated nation. According to Dominique Russell's observations regarding the art cinema, 'rape serves as a metaphor, symbol, plot device, for character transformation, a catalyst or narrative resolution' (2010, 4). Sarah Projansky (2001, 1) underlined that the rape metaphor is often utilized in order to depict the degradation of a country. Also, Kate E. Taylor-Jones (2013) noted that the two probable portrayals of a woman in the relation to the nation were: a woman as the mother of the nation (with the power of procreation) or a woman as the sexually violated nation. Molly Haskell (1987, 277) mentions there is a typology of female roles that appear in the movies and especially underlines the virgin-whore dichotomy.

Not only literature on film, and feminism, but on gender and media as well, are general sources of inspiration. As Tonny Krijnen and Sofie Van Bauwel (2015) state, gender representation in media is studied from two broad perspectives and methodologies. The first is a quantitative, a statistical analysis of the number of men and women in the media that addresses the numerical discrepancy, women being largely outnumbered by men in prominence and quantity. The second more qualitative perspective on media representation studies is how gender is portrayed and what the ideology is behind that portrayal. The latter perspective has been an important influence on my work.

Besides these theoretical media approaches, the study also takes into account the socio-political context, namely the official gender equality policy of the Yugoslav state and its practices in society. However, to fully understand the path towards woman suffrage, won in 1946 in socialist Yugoslavia, it is important to delve in the more distant past in order to acknowledge the strives of women that facilitated eventual victory of right to vote. The first women's organisation, on the territory of South Slavic lands, which will become constituents of Yugoslavia, dates back as far as in the XIX century (Majstorović and Mandić 2011, 83). During the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, between the WW1 and WW2, there was a burgeoning feminist activity of women's organisations (see Milinković and Svirčev, 2021), both feminist civic ones and the communist workers' ones, which advocated suffrage of women and improvement of their underprivileged status (Sklevicky 1996, 255). The pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia was a patriarchal society, which enforced the law following an old-fashioned, outmoded civil code from 1844, that denied married women from legal right to manage their

own property, and legally equated them with children, with indebted persons, vagrants, and the mentally disabled, who were also stripped of right to govern their own assets (Emmert 1999, 37). Despite such grave circumstances, Yugoslav women's union was founded in 1921, as well as Alliance of Women's movement, having a span of activity from 1927 until 1939 (Majstorović and Mandić 2011, 83). During the interwar period and beyond, it is especially important to highlight the feminist efforts of Vera Stein Erlich (Sklevicky 1996, 252). She published feminist articles in *Židov/Jew*, a weekly journal issued in Zagreb, as well as in monthly journals issued in Belgrade, *Život i rad/Life and Work* and *Žena danas/Woman Nowadays* (Sklevicky 1996, 255). The latter, published from 1936 until 1940, was a journal of communist-inspired women (Sklevicky 1996, 255). As Majstorović puts forth, 'in the late 1930s, more and more women approached the Communist Party guided by a promise that the "women's question" would be resolved together with the class question' (Majstorović 2016, 1095).

With the oncoming Second World War, most of these feminist activities ceased. However, during the Second World War in 1942, as a legitimate heiress of this rich interwar tradition of women's organisations, the *Antifašistički front žena (AFŽ)/Antifascist Front of Women (AFW)* was incepted by the Communist Party (Sklevicky 1996, 81-82). It was, in fact, the closest to a feminist organization. As Sklevicky notes, it was grounded in socialist tradition, which had an understanding of the importance of solving the 'women's question' (Sklevicky 1996, 82). Women were organised into a network of support for Partisan, antifascist struggle for the liberation of the country, for example by providing clothing, food, spreading literacy, finding recruits, and nursing wounded comrades (see Kirn 2015, 207; Jancar-Webster 1999, 75). At least 100,000 of Yugoslav women, including numerous members of AFW, as an act of their own free will, fought as Partisans, side by side with men, against the fascist occupiers (Bonfiglioli 2017, 6). Many of those women 'were committed communists who believed that state ownership of the means of production would obliterate women's economic dependence on men and grant them full citizenship in a new society of equals' (Ghodsee and Zaharijević 2015, 3). By the end of the war, two million women became members of the AFW (Bonfiglioli 2017, 6), in a voluntary manner. After the war was won with the indispensable participation of women, AFW's autonomy was gradually diminished, culminating in its (self-)dissolution in 1953 at the Fourth Congress of AFW (Batinić 2015, 15; Božinović 1996, 170). Many dedicated female delegates perceived this act as denigrating to women and women's organisations, and consequently got discouraged from further activity (Božinović 1996, 170). However, scholars such as Bonfiglioli (2017, 6) do not see this as the

end of women's autonomous organizing in Yugoslavia, but as a measure of decentralisation in the light of the introduction of worker's 'self-management as the "national way to socialism" chosen by Yugoslavia' (Bonfiglioli 2017, 6). At the same Fourth Congress of AFW in 1953, while AFW was (self)disbanded, *Savez ženskih društava Jugoslavije (SŽD)/The Alliance of Women's Associations of Yugoslavia* aka *The Union of Women's Societies* was founded instead (Božinović 1996, 170). The latter existed from 1953 until 1961, when it was succeeded with *Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena (KDAŽ)/The Conference for the Social Activity of Women* (Bonfiglioli 2017, 5). It had a span of activity from 1961 until 1975, when it was, following the changes in new Yugoslav Constitution of 1974, restructured and renamed to *Konferencija za pitanja društvenog položaja žena/Conference for the Issues of Social Position of Women*, striving to better the position of women (Božinović 1996 193), until the break-up of socialist Yugoslavia.

As pinpointed by Hinterhuber and Fuchs (2022, 32), there has been a heated debate in regard to the presence or absence of feminism and women's agency in socialist women's organisations in socialist countries, including Yugoslavia. Some scholars, for example Funk (2014, 345), deny state socialist women's organizations, such as AFW, feminist and active agency, as if they consisted of marionette apparatchiks. In contrast, other voices, such as Ghodsee (2015, 249), stress that women working for such organisations were active feminist agents, acting of their own free will because they strived to better the lives of women. For instance: by improving their education, opening nurseries, creches, and kindergartens to help employed mothers, and by providing social protection for divorced women and widows (Ghodsee 2015, 249). 'If the goal of feminism is to improve women's lives, along with eliminating discrimination and promoting equality with men', as Ghodsee further highlights, and keeping in mind that there is not only one but multiple feminisms, then there is space to reconsider activity of state socialist women's organisations under the umbrella of feminism (Ghodsee 2015, 252). Funk defends her arguments ambiguously, by retorting to Ghodsee that '[s]howing that women members of the official women's organizations at times took action that benefited women does not prove that they were feminists, though those instances can be *compatible* with feminism' (Funk 2015, 355). In the socialist countries, feminism was regarded as a product of the West and therefore as something negative (Imre 2017, 89). Still, it is beyond doubt that socialist states had egalitarian initiative, which is exactly why in contemporary times it is sometimes called state feminism (Imre 2017, 89). In 1978 in Belgrade, for the first time in socialist Yugoslavia, was held an international feminist conference, called 'Comrade Woman', where participants were also western feminists

(Drakulić 1993, 128). In my view, the fact that this event took place testifies to freedoms in Yugoslavia. This conference was a milestone because it inspired eight Yugoslav feminists to form the same year the first civic feminist group in Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (Drakulić 1993, 128). However, the feminist activity of these Yugoslav women dates back to the beginning of the 1970s, and is referred to as the New Yugoslav Feminism (Lóránd 2018 46). I find that the name itself suggests that the inspiring efforts of these Yugoslav civic feminists are the continuation of the interwar strives of Yugoslav women's movements (both communist workers' and bourgeois feminist civic), endeavours of AFŽ during and after the war, as well as post-Second World War efforts of other Yugoslav state feminist organisations, which all bettered the lives of women. As Lóránd highlights, Yugoslavia has 'the longest feminist history in Eastern Europe between the Second World War [...] and the fall of state socialism' (Lóránd 2018, 2). New Yugoslav Feminists were inspired by a mixture of theories, including critical Marxism and post-structuralist French Feminism (Lóránd 2018, 2). It is important to note that New Yugoslav Feminists did not criticise the framework of the socialist Yugoslav state per se, due to its constant, albeit imperfect, strives for women's emancipation, but its inability to eradicate "patriarchal consciousness" and, therefore, fully fulfil its proclaimed, yet still unfulfilled, promise of gender equality (Lóránd 2018, 2-8). As Morokvašić puts it,

Yugoslav women share with other socialist women the weight of contradictions: they have won rights, and access to education and a career and cultural life. At the same time, the old inequalities and values in the relations between men and women have persisted. It is as if, institutionally and legally, everything had been done and settled and yet all the most important issues remained untouched.

(Morokvašić 1986, 121).

On the one hand, a double burden has been reported in Yugoslavia, namely because Yugoslav working women were often unaided by their husbands in the domestic sphere (Bonfiglioli 2017, 1; Morokvašić 1986, 127-8; Papić in Zaharijević et al. 2012, 105). A widespread idea in Yugoslavia was that with the dissolution of class, female oppression would disappear in communism and socialism, which in the end was not the case. On the other hand, Yugoslavia was a socialist country that enabled women's suffrage and advocated gender equality since its nascence (Ramet 1999). And, women had equal legal rights, such as



inheritance, marriage, divorce, employment, and education. Namely, 'Yugoslav legislation protects women as workers, as mothers and as wives' (Morokvašić 1986, 125). Along the same lines, voices like Ana Kralj and Tanja Rener (2015, 42-43) point out that women had a great deal of freedom in the realm of reproductive rights, and economic, social and political empowerment. According to them, the position of women in Yugoslavia was better in many segments than the position of women in Western countries in terms of the policies defining social and legal equality. Of similar opinion is Morokvašić, who finds that due to such beneficial legislative changes promoting gender equality, Yugoslav women had been ushered into public life, while in many countries that were more developed than Yugoslavia, women were still excluded (Morokvašić 1986, 135). However, my intent is not to elaborate on these sociological issues, but to better understand the lives of women during this period, in order to interpret their representations.

In the theoretical and historical frameworks that I work with, the desideratum is a study free from revisionism that often adulterates research on Yugoslavia conducted in post-Yugoslav times, which splits it into its ethno-national components (as Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Bosnian, North Macedonian, and Montenegrin). Namely, Yugoslav scholar Nebojša Jovanović (2012) identifies anti-Yugoslav backlash and the ethno-nationalists tendency in post-Yugoslav context for the erasure of Yugoslav cinema from historical accounts and film criticism. Furthermore, he pinpoints the totalitarian paradigm within the ethno-national stances, which posits that the socialist Yugoslavia is a repressive, totalitarian state with tyrannical regime, while Yugoslav cinema was allegedly its propaganda tool, and a site of conflict expressed through a dichotomy between the bad oppressive regime and good, resistant, suffering, dissident artist (Jovanović 2012). In a reasoned manner, Jovanović calls for analyses that relinquish binaries such as freedom vs. oppression, dissent vs. propaganda, and individuality vs. collectivity, regarding Yugoslav socialism, its cinema, and directors. Instead, he proposes the necessity to recognize their complexities, contradictions, and nuances that would enable a better understanding of cinema of socialist Yugoslavia (Jovanović 2012). Furthermore, I prefer to use the term 'Yugoslav New Film' over the term 'Black Wave'. Gal Kirn and Vedrana Mažar (2014) raise awareness that the term Black Wave can be misemployed by the post-Yugoslav historical revisionists: by mythologizing the filmmakers as dissidents, and by nationalizing and monopolizing this pan-Yugoslav phenomenon according to the ethnicity of directors (for example into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Herzegovinian).

Therefore, I deliberately avoid, where possible, such ethno-national designations and insist on the oneness of Yugoslav New Film. I strive to investigate how gender is represented

and constructed in these films. During the research I took the following steps. The first step was to preliminarily watch 269 Yugoslav films directed by Yugoslav directors (this was the number of films I managed to find out of 286 made between 1961 and 1972). The second step was to select and closely analyse eleven films (via textual analysis, formal analysis, and audio-visual style analysis), in which women suffer some form of harm or self-harm. The selected eleven films are not the only ones, but the most representative and symptomatic ones, among many Yugoslav films that stage (self-)violence against women. They reveal the choices made by (male) directors in terms of formal treatment and semantic tropes of patriarchal ideological vestiges directed against (new) Yugoslav women on the film screen.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching issue of how women are represented (such as, narratively, formally, and visually) in some manifestations of Yugoslav New film (including its subdivision Black Wave) is formulated into four research questions:

1. If female characters are employed, self-sufficient, independent, modern, progressive, passionate, or sexually liberated, why are they ultimately punished by the vestiges of the patriarchy: by rape, beating, violent death, suicide, or victimization (for example, by illness)? To what extent is female emancipation castigated as transgression within the course of the narration?
2. To what extent can a sexually violated or/and murdered woman in the analysed films be read as an embodiment of a (sexually) violated nation, or stratum of a nation?
3. In the studied Partisan-themed films, why are civilian or Partisan female characters – who consort with a war occupier or divulge information under torture, respectively – penalized by demise, at the hands of Yugoslav men? To what extent are they punished as traitors of the nation, due to their sexual or ideological treachery?
4. If the films under research take place during pre-socialist past, before Second World War, do they, in fact, indirectly tackle the tentacles of patriarchy in the family sphere of Yugoslav socialist present at the time? Why should one believe that these films are really talking about socialist times? Does the fact that they feature lead heroines – unlike Yugoslav New Films set in the socialist present of the 1960s and 1970s, in which women are mostly in supporting roles or marginalised – facilitate this kind of parallel?

## Structure of the thesis

In the following chapters of my thesis, I examine the representation of women in Yugoslav New Film and the forms of violence, and self-violence that they are exposed to. The format of the thesis is hybrid. It is a collection, consisting of both published articles that address the empirical analysis of films, as well as unpublished material that delves into theory and methodology. Namely, **Chapters 1** and **Chapter 2** are theoretical. The former tackles the Yugoslav New Film movement, by taking into consideration what the film scholars, and the directors themselves, wrote about it during the existence of Yugoslavia, as well as what was penned about the movement in the post-Yugoslav context, after the Yugoslav wars of secession (which must be taken with a pinch of salt due to potential revisionism). The latter, Chapter 2, addresses Gender and Film feminist theories that have been used to construct the theoretical framework of this research. Just to name a few, Laura Mulvey's concepts of the male gaze, fetishistic scopophilia, and sadistic voyeurism have been puissant. In addition, her observations on the representational fragmentation of the female body, that is, the shattering of its unity—the issue that Annette Kuhn also grapples with in a noteworthy manner – have provided fertile ground for my research. **Chapter 3** explains the methodology of my doctoral thesis, that is, how I implemented the theories while conducting the research. In the absence of a ready-made methodology in film studies that could be applied to the analysis of the representation of women (especially in terms of medium-specific traits, such as camera, montage, lighting, sound, etc.) I devised a bricolage, a patchwork of methods, that will be elucidated in the methodology section. Namely, feminist approaches (such as detecting fragmentation of the female body, reading against the grain, and Bechdel test) are combined with close reading (via textual analysis, formal analysis, and audio-visual style analysis). **Chapter 4** deals with representations of raped women as symbols of the raped nation or stratum of the Yugoslav nation, with the focus on films that reflect the unsurmountable rift between Yugoslavia and USSR in 1948. The depicted women in question are supporting characters, who due to their physical and social frailty fall prey to predatory men in political power. Such men take advantage of not only their sheer physical strength over women but also their socio-political status. **Chapter 5** approaches the representation of a female character, suffering rape, and murder, in a twofold manner: as a violated nation and its revolution, as well as a violated feminist who is punished for her liberated sexuality and dominant personality. Unlike the three films studied in Chapter 4, which are set in the wake of the Second World War, the film analysed in Chapter 5 is set in contemporary Yugoslavia at the end of the 1960s, that is, two decades later. While in both Chapter 4 and

Chapter 5 a woman embodies a nation, the difference between them is that in Chapter 4 it is a disadvantaged woman who is sexually assaulted, whereas in Chapter 5 it is an emancipated woman who suffers sexual violence. Similar to Chapter 5, featuring a liberated assertive woman murdered by men with the use of a firearm, **Chapter 6** scrutinizes represented executions of treacherous women in Partisan-themed films, whether it be civilian women for their active sexuality and fraternising with the enemy, or of Partisan women for their weakness under torture and betrayal to the enemy. **Chapter 7** examines portrayed suicides of working Yugoslav women, whereas their employment is constructed on screen as perilous for them, which is at odds with actual gains of working women in Yugoslav society. Furthermore, the cult of youthful beauty, even in death, is highlighted as the desired norm, as opposed to ageing, which is seen as highly negative for a woman. **Chapter 8** focuses on victimization of female characters. It explores Yugoslav New Films that are set in pre-socialist past (as the periods: of the occupation by the Ottoman Empire, and of Kingdom of Yugoslavia), and have women as the main characters, which is rather exceptional in this film movement. This chapter looks into interpersonal relations among women by tackling concepts such as female friendship and enmity. Also, it examines the iconographical links of female characters to flora and fauna (namely, a birch tree, a dove, and a queen bee), which have a prominent place in the visual imagery of the two studied films, and are associated with the feminine.

To summarise, the ambition of this study is to contribute towards closing the knowledge gap on the representation of women in Yugoslav New Cinema (including Black Wave), in terms of the narrative and visual style, inspired by both Yugoslav and international research in the field.

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# Chapter 1. Yugoslav New Film Movement

## Introduction: Movement vs. Genre

The scope of this chapter addresses a particular movement in Yugoslav cinema, called *novi film*/Yugoslav New Film a.k.a. *Open Cinema* (1961-1972), which loosely gathered Yugoslav avant-garde film directors and theorists (Goulding 2002, 66). Renowned Yugoslav New Cinema directors included Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Aleksandar 'Saša' Petrović, Želimir Žilnik, Ante Babaja, Krsto Papić, Vatroslav Mimica, Boro Drašković, Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, Matjaž Klopčič, Boštjan Hladnik, and Dimitrie Osmanli. Besides Yugoslavia, New Cinemas also appeared in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, and are addressed as New Waves by film historians Thompson and Bordwell (2003, 460). New Wave movements were a worldwide phenomenon, which included the French *Nouvelle Vague*, the Brazilian *Cinema Novo*, and the Japanese *Nūberu Bāgu* (ヌーヴェルヴァーグ). The most recognizable features were the auteur approach by the directors, the innovation in film form and themes, the focus on marginalized characters, and location shooting. New waves rebelled against the old traditions, namely the classical narrative Hollywood forms and 'each country's respective national film industry' (Martin 2013, 15). Only certain broad tendencies were linked to a New Cinema, since it is an inhomogeneous miscellany of very diverse directors, whose films usually differed from each other and thus exhibited lower levels of unity (Thompson and Bordwell 2003, 440). Furthermore, most New Waves 'can only loosely be considered a stylistic movement' (Thompson and Bordwell 2003, 462). Therefore, if Yugoslav New Film is examined against the backdrop of Place's (2007, 49) claim that cinema movements have uniform themes and audio-visual style, it implies that Yugoslav New Film, with its assortment of different auteurs – whose films characterise dissimilar thematic and formal elements – is a loose movement. Furthermore, Place (2007, 49) gives a clear account of the distinctions between a movement and genre. Film genres appear and reappear through time, while film movements emerge in a specific place, within a particular historical time period that has a beginning and an end (Place 2007, 49-50). A movement 'cuts across genres' (Place 2007, 50). For example, the films belonging to the Yugoslav New Film movement consist of various genres such as drama, crime or war films, or more often even have mixed genres.

Many authors consider Yugoslav New Film the Golden age of Yugoslav cinema (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 1, Levi 2007, 15, De Cuir 2016, Kovačić 2014, 247, De Cuir 2013a, Liehm and Liehm 1980, 413). However, it is important not to perceive Yugoslav New Film as an isolated occurrence, but as the continuation of efforts regarding the development of Yugoslav cinema, initiated by its predecessors – the directors of Yugoslav Classical Cinema (see Jovanović 2014, 26, Turković 2005, 122, Novaković 1970, 9).

Rallying diverse films and directors, the Yugoslav New Film movement still has some general stylistic characteristics, such as the fragmented open dramaturgy, which blurs the demarcation lines between past, present and future, and between real and unreal, dreamlike storylines, sometimes resulting in the collage of loosely connected, even relatively independent segments (Novaković 1970, 187-88). In addition, films that could be classified as such are imbued with fatalism, and the borders between good and bad are not so clearly defined (Novaković 1970, 17). Also, what makes Yugoslav New Film ‘a complex but also compact unity, despite of disparate auteur concepts and sensibilities, is one collective feeling of *artistic freedom*, abundantly present in both the manner of film production, and the manner of filmic thinking’<sup>4</sup> (Novaković 1970, 153, emphasis original). Moreover, some of the movement’s traits include the interest for the daily, ordinary and contemporary life; and the presence of open-ended editing and open metaphors that consequently allow spectators to interpret the content of every film piece, instead of being served messages (Novaković 1970, 79). In the same vein, Liehm and Liehm define Yugoslav New Films as personal films, which depict the lives of characters and their society via “‘open metaphors,” leaving room for viewers to think and feel for themselves’ (Liehm and Liehm 1980, 417). Similar to the Liehms, and Novaković, Jovanović finds ‘the opulent metaphor characteristic of New Film’ (Jovanović 2011a, 165). It is also appropriate to mention here Imre’s observations on East European cinema, where she highlights the artistic intellectual strive of the Eurocentric male director to portray national history in an allegorical, self-reflective manner (Imre 2005, xii).

Yugoslav New Film fosters personal auteur expression, subjective sensibilities, and a critical stance towards reality with a tendency to demythologize it (Novaković 1970, 7). Namely, ‘it renounces every *collective mythology*, in the name of confessing some of its own intimate myths’ (Novaković 1970, 158, emphasis original).<sup>5</sup> The remark that one collective mythology is replaced with countless individual mythologies is also put forth by Stojanović, as an important characteristic of Yugoslav New Film (1969, 170). Furthermore, as Novaković

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<sup>4</sup> Own translation.

<sup>5</sup> Own translation.

observes, '[i]nstead of interpreting *general* truths, Yugoslav "New Film" starts to discover numerous *individual* truths' (Novaković 1970, 16, emphasis original). What is achieved is that the myth is dispelled whereas banal human existence, with its stench and primal drives, is elevated into spheres of myth, so a person is put above an ideology (Novaković 1970, 158).

According to Yugoslav New Film director Aleksandar Petrović, Yugoslav New Film introduced a pessimistic view on the world and life, as well as a new approach to death – whether it be a physical one, the death of feelings, or the death of ideas – which comes down to 'the confrontation with illusions and ideals'<sup>6</sup> (Petrović 1988, 332). Up until 1961 (which marks the beginning year of Yugoslav New Film) tragedy as a presumption of the pessimistic view on world and life did not exist in Yugoslav film. Even films with tragic endings had some optimistic or so-called positive interpretation (Petrović 1988, 331-2). If someone died, the death had to have positive overtones, amongst which the most often was 'the wellbeing of the fatherland'<sup>7</sup> (Petrović 1988, 332).

Yugoslav New Films did not only occasionally indirectly reflect society and things that happened, but their images also had potential to construct meanings and influence real-life, or at least opinions of the viewers. Such double aspects are promulgated in anthropology by Geertz by making the distinction between cultural patterns that are models of how society functions or models for how society should function.<sup>8</sup> In other words, they give meaning 'to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves' (2000[1973], 93). As Favero (2011, 61) propounds the view on Italian cinema – emphasizing the notion that films in fact produce meanings at a societal level – some 'films share a capacity to promote an image' of something. In a similar vein, in his piece on Yugoslav cinema in the 1960s, Beganović (2012, 135) puts forth the function of images to represent, while concurrently influencing the political and ideological circumstances in a certain society. He observes their somewhat manipulative power to provoke visceral responses by means of visual seduction. Although I oppose Beganović's (2012, 135) division of the Yugoslav cinema into derogatorily dubbed 'dogmatic and liberal', which I would rephrase into mainstream and Yugoslav New Film, I concur with Beganović that in both of these incarnations of Yugoslav cinema the directors were aware of the potential effect of images on the viewers. For example, in the work of Yugoslav New Film director Želimir Žilnik, film scholar Mazierska finds that 'a mosaic of heterogeneous elements forces the viewer to make up his mind about what he[/she] is seeing,

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<sup>6</sup> Own translation.

<sup>7</sup> Own translation.

<sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Prof. dr Paolo Favero for introducing Geertz's concept to me.

to create his[/her] own version of events, in short – to be active and independent’ (2013, 149). This self-reflective aspect can also be found in the opuses of other Yugoslav New Film directors.

New Film revolutionised both themes and film language (Liehm and Liehm 1980, 414). To Sudar, ‘New Film can be broadly defined as the beginning of new formal and thematic concerns in Yugoslav cinema, the concerns that young filmmakers introduced to distance themselves from post-war Yugoslav film’ (Sudar 2013, 182). Yugoslav New Film directors were often debutants (although not exclusively), but they were on average significantly older than their international colleagues of corresponding New Waves (Novaković 1970, 80).

In Yugoslav New Films there is an abandoning of the classical way of expression in favour of the modern one, which often imbues film with double, open meaning (Novaković 1970, 23). In contrast to the classical film, which has fabula, developed psychological and emotional motives, as well as closure, Yugoslav New Film is modern, unconventional, subjective, has a fragmented structure and is metaphorically open to leave spectators the freedom of interpretation (Novaković 1970, 24). The openness of the content of New Film and its opposition to a dogmatic way of thinking, also connotes one critical relation towards the reality and societal ideals (Novaković 1970, 189). The creation of New Film is essentially a moral act, as well as an act of intellectual facing of the auteur with the environment in which he creates (Novaković 1970, 187-188).<sup>9</sup> In a personal manner and by creating subjective reality, this loose movement makes accessible numerous themes that were previously out of reach, especially the ones where the elements of social, ethical and political critique of Yugoslav contemporary society dominate (Novaković 1970, 96). Therefore, Yugoslav New Film auteurs bring not only a modern visual sensibility but also new approach for showing social problems (Novaković 1970, 80). Some of the themes that Yugoslav New Film broaches include the clash of generations, and the clash of individuals with their environment (Novaković 1970, 80). In general, all of these films are focused on human downfalls, because they accept human unhappiness as an equal component of human destiny (Novaković 1970, 167). Dealing with human defeat (and ideas of destruction), they portray negative and passive heroes (Novaković 1970, 18), who either die, are beaten, betrayed or on the run, and overall are unable to change their failed destinies (Novaković 1970, 166-167).

Kronja (2012) finds that Yugoslav New Film depicts youthful individualism and urban life through poetic visual metaphors. Moreover, she observes that although New Wave cinema differs from country to country, what the films have in common are the innovative aesthetic

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<sup>9</sup> The directors of Yugoslav New Film, creating feature length fictional films, were only men.

solutions, candid stance towards social themes, genre-influenced or fragmentary narrative structure, open viewpoint on sexuality, and the liberal political outlook (Kronja 2018, 159).

### **Yugoslav New Film and Socialism**

As Goulding notes, although Yugoslav New Film directors did not publish a pamphlet, or have a unifying aesthetical approach, the common traits of the wave include the desire for a liberated auteurist expression, stylistic innovation in form, the focus on contemporary themes that were often imbued with politics and criticized the existence of marginalization in a classless society, and lastly, that all of these films were created in the socialist setting (Goulding 2002, 66). Schober asserts that Yugoslav New Film directors used Yugoslav socialist society, where everyone was nominally the same, as a backdrop against which they revived sexual, ethnic and aesthetic difference (Schober 2018, 139). Moreover, they emphasised the individual as opposed to the collective (Schober 2018, 155). Yugoslav New Film auteurs do not only break the old rules of directing, but also the dogmatic limitations where certain themes were deemed taboo because of the impenetrable socialist myths that were built upon them (Novaković 1970, 80). Similarly, Levi finds that they put forth their subjective truths via authorial expression imbued with aesthetic innovation, and question the ‘far rarely disputed ideological framework maintained by the socialist state’ (Levi 2007, 15-16). However, it is significant to point out that even though ‘often strongly critical of the concrete social, political, and cultural manifestations of Yugoslav socialism, the views of these filmmakers were for the most part not opposed to socialist ideas as such’ (Levi 2007, 16). Yugoslav New Film director Žilnik – giving as an example the collaborations on some films of his fellow directors Petrović and Pavlović with scriptwriters who could be considered as prominent members of socialist society – observes that ‘it cannot be said that there was a distance between the new film authors and the “regime”’ (Sekulić, Kirn, and Testen 2012, 62). Some directors themselves in their statements clarified their stances towards Yugoslav socialist society, such as when Petrović stresses in an interview with journalist Pavel Branko that:

My intent was not to criticise socialism, but the contemporary situation of man. Because, if yet socialism looks as it does, how does it look what socialism isn't? If that what was before socialism had not been bad, a man would not try to create something different, better.<sup>10</sup>

(Petrović 1988, 299)

To him, socially critical Yugoslav New Films, by its very existence, testify that a particular society has evolved to a degree where such films could be produced (Petrović 1988, 322). Similarly, director Živojin Pavlović, speaking on behalf of himself and director Dušan Makavejev, finds that their critique of society, interpreted by their critics as a critique of the social system, was not his and Makavejev's primary ambition (Pavlović in Jovanović 2011a, 165). He further notes that they 'wanted to show subjective truths, subjective understandings about life, people, and the position of a human being in today's society, and not only in our society but in society in general' (Pavlović in Jovanović 2011a, 165). Not only for the directors, but for the film scholars as well such as the Liehms, the New Film was 'the art of democratic socialism, an art that has no duties and obligations, but rather the freedom to be a conscience—often an unavoidably sombre one—of the land, the nation, the society, and the individuals that comprise it' (Liehm and Liehm 1980, 429). Similarly, Mortimer reckons that Yugoslavia had the status of 'something of a beacon for nonauthoritarian socialists around the world' (Mortimer 2009, 170). Štrajn highlights 'the Yugoslav singular type of socialism, in which political power and culture in the context of the development of the model of the self-management system cohabited in a sometimes strained, but overall tolerant relationship' (2019, 111). Yugoslavia, which was not formally a member of the Soviet Bloc, was developing its own model of socialism, which was self-governing, non-aligned and differed immensely from Soviet bureaucratic socialism (Šuvaković in Štrajn 2019, 115). One of the common mistakes is treating Yugoslavia as part of the Soviet Bloc, as Martin (2013, 259) does, when it is known that as early as 1948 there was an unsurmountable ideological rift between Tito (Josip Broz) and Stalin (Iosif Vissarionovich Dzugashvili), fuelled by the economic and foreign policy of Yugoslavia. Consequently, Yugoslavia was expelled out of Cominform (The Information Bureau of the Communist and Worker's Parties) the same year. Moreover, Yugoslavia was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which stood against big political blocs, imperialism, colonialism, and racism. Non-Aligned Movement held its first official conference

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<sup>10</sup> Own translation.

in 1961 in Belgrade, the capital of SF Yugoslavia, with the merits of Tito. As Stubbs highlights, [s]ocialist Yugoslavia's "liminal hegemony" of the movement in the 1960s and 1970s offered a vision of modernity radically different from the hegemony of Northern and Western models that were seen as creating dependency, peripherality, and neo-colonialism' (Stubbs 2021, 138). Also, Yugoslavia allowed its citizens to travel freely abroad.

## Yugoslav New Film and International Film Festivals

The Yugoslav New Film movement had a significant political dimension because non-aligned Yugoslavia was the most liberal communist country – with its own version of communism called self-management socialism – which allowed movies that pointed out flaws in socialism to be shown in the West. As Goulding notes, Yugoslav New Film was '[t]he richest and most complex period of Yugoslavia's development of a domestic film industry', which lasted until the dismantlement of the movement in 1972 due to economic difficulties and temporary tightening of the political climate (Goulding 2002, 65-66). The quality of Yugoslav New Films was recognized internationally at film festivals<sup>11</sup>. For example, at the Berlin Film Festival in

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<sup>11</sup> At the Berlinale in 1967 Živojin Pavlović's film *Buđenje pacova/The Awakening of the Rats* (1967) was awarded with a Silver Bear for Best Director in 1967, whereas his film *Rdeće klasje/Red Wheat* (1970) won the C.I.D.A.C. Award and the IWG Golden Plaque at the same festival in 1971. Moreover, the following year, in 1968, Dušan Makavejev's film *Nevinost bez zaštite/Innocence Unprotected* received a Silver Bear, while in 1971 FIPRESCI special Mention at Berlinale for *W.R.: Misterije Organizma/W.R.: Mysteries of Organism* (1971), which was also decorated at Cannes with the Luis Bunuel prize. Živojin Pavlović's other films were decorated as well at other festivals: *Kad budem mrtav i beo/When I am Dead and Pale* (1967) was selected for FIPRESCI prize at Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 1968 and *Zaseda/Ambush* (1969) for CIDALC Award at Venice Film Festival in 1969. Besides, Yugoslav New Film directors are recently re-appreciated. At Berlinale in 2002 as a part of 'Retrospective' programme *Early Works* by Želimir Žilnik was shown, and again in 2012 within 'Europe's Golden Bears' programme. Živojin Pavlović's *When I am Dead and Pale*, digitally restored by Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, was screened at the Berlinale in 2018 amongst *Forum* Special screenings. Furthermore, in 2015 in Berlin Arsenal Institute for Film and Video Art e.V. hosted a retrospective programme 'Black Waves, Red Horizons – New Yugoslav Film', curated by Annette Lingg and Vedrana Madžar. Besides the short films selected belonging to Yugoslav New Film movement, the programme featured the following feature length films as well: often neglected Kokan Rakonjac and his work *Nemirni/The Naughty Ones* a.k.a. *The Restless Ones* (1967), *Po isti poti se ne vraćaj/Don't Come Back By the Same Way* (Jože Babič, 1965), *Man is not a Bird, W.R.: Mysteries of Organism, Early Works, Three/Tri* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965), *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of My Family in the Revolution* (Bato Čengić, 1971), *When I am Dead and Pale, Delije/The Tough Ones* a.k.a. *The Tough Guys* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968), *Jutro/Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967), *Plastični Isus/Plastic Jesus* (Lazar Stojanović, 1971), *Kros kontri/Cross Country* (Puriša Đorđević, 1969), *Slike iz života udarnika/Life of a Shock Force Worker* (Bato Čengić, 1972). In 2006 there was a Yugoslav film conference held at the 'City, University of London' accompanied with a Yugoslav cinema event at Riverside studios. In 2010 there was a series of seminars and subsequently a conference 'Surfing the Black' organised at Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht, with discussions and screenings, that resulted in a publication of a volume edited by Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić and Žiga Testen. Furthermore, in 2013 there was a symposium 'Bright Black Flames: New Yugoslav Film between Subversion and Critique' curated by Gal Kirn and Vedrana Madžar which was held at the 13<sup>th</sup> GoEast: Festival of Central and Eastern European Film in Wiesbaden, which gathered filmmakers, critics and film historians. Besides presentations and discussions, there were screenings of thirteen shorts and documentaries, and the following feature length fiction Yugoslav New Films: *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965), *Innocence*



1969, Želimir Žilnik's fiction feature *Rani Radovi/Early Works* (1969) triumphantly won the Golden Bear, while the Jury Prize Silver Bear for short film went to *Transplantation of Feelings/Presaðivanje osećanja* (1969) by Dejan Đurković. These two films and *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969) – which won the UNICRIT Award honourable mention – were amongst several feature and short films screened at the Berlinale as a part of a special Yugoslav film week (De Cuir 2012b, 421). In addition, Aleksandar Petrović's films have been nominated twice for the Oscars for Best Foreign Language Film: in 1966 for *Tri/Three* (1965) and in 1967 for *Skupljači perja/I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967), whereas the latter has also been nominated for Golden Globe Awards in 1969 for foreign film in foreign language. The film also competed in 1967 at Cannes film festival, where it won Grand Prix and the International Critics' Prize (FIPRESCI). Furthermore, two years later, in 1969, Petrović's film was again chosen for the official competition at Cannes Film Festival, namely *Biće skoro propast sveta/It Rains in My Village* (1968). In regard to the international audiences being introduced to Yugoslav New Film it is important to note the screenings at The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)<sup>12</sup>. In 1966 American viewers had the opportunity to see *Čovek nije tica/Man is not a Bird* (1965) in MoMA, while in 1967 two films were screened: *Buđenje pacova/The Rats Awakening* a.k.a. *The Awakening of the Rats* (Živojin Pavlović, 1967) and *Jutro/Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967). In the following screening that took place in 1969, the Yugoslav New Cinema programme<sup>13</sup> consisted of ten directors, and their twelve feature length films (and some short films supplementing each screening). This programming by Willard Van Dyke, director of MoMa's department of film, is important as it sheds light on which films and

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*Unprotected/Nevinost bez zaštite* (Dušan Makavejev, 1968), *Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969), *Jutro/Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967), *Slike iz života udarnika/Scenes From the Life of Shock Workers* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1972), *Red Grain/Rdeće klasje* (Živojin Pavlović, 1970), and *Poslednja postaja/The Last Stop* (Jože Babič, 1971). One of the most recent recognitions of Yugoslav New Films was that Vatroslav Mimica has received Life Achievement award in 2012 at Amiens International Film Festival. In 2013 *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961) was screened at Haifa International Film Festival as a part of Haifa Classic Programme. Furthermore, 60<sup>th</sup> Thessaloniki International Film Festival (TIFF) in 2019 hosted post-mortem tribute to Dušan Makavejev, who died earlier that year, featuring the screenings of nine of his films, out of which four belong to the Yugoslav New Film movement: *Man is not a Bird* (1965), *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967), *Innocence Unprotected* (1968), and *W.R.: Mysteries of Organism* (1971).

<sup>12</sup> MoMA has screened Yugoslav New Films not only in the past but in the recent years as well, such as in 2016 Lazar Stojanović's *Plastični Isus/Plastic Jesus* (1971), whereas in 2018 was shown Želimir Žilnik's short documentary *Crni film/Black Film* (1971).

<sup>13</sup> *Gravitacija ili fantastična mladost činovnika Borisa Horvata/Gravitation, or the Fantastic Youth of Boris Horvat, the Clerk* (Branko Ivanda, 1968), *Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1968), *Pohod/The Journey* a.k.a. *The Trek* (Đorđe Kadijević, 1968), *Događaj/The Event* (Vatroslav Mimica, 1969), *Imam dvije mame i dva tate/I Have Two Mummies and two Daddies* (Krešo Golik, 1968), *Kaja, ubit ću te!/Kaya, I'll kill you* (Vatroslav Mimica, 1967), *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969), *Kad budem mrtav i beo/When I am Dead and White* a.k.a. *When I am Dead and Pale* (Živojin Pavlović, 1967), *Vrane/Crows* (Gordan Mihić and Ljubiša Kozomara), *Mali vojnici/Playing Soldiers* (Bato Čengić, 1967), *Zaseda/Ambush* (Živojin Pavlović, 1969), and *Nevinost bez zaštite/Innocence Unprotected* (Dušan Makavejev, 1968).

authors were perceived as prominent Yugoslav New Film auteurs, although the list is not exhaustive since several directors, such as Aleksandar Petrović and Boštjan Hladnik, are omitted. However, if the list of Yugoslav New Film directors selected by MoMa is compared with the ones which are given prominence nowadays, often directors, such as Branko Ivanda, Vatroslav Mimica, and Krešo Golik are overlooked or forgotten. This is perhaps due to the rise of the term Black Wave – designating the politically provocative subset of Yugoslav New Film, consisting of films that were initially attacked ideologically in Yugoslav press with intent to smear, discredit and blacken them – in which the aforementioned directors are not classified. Moreover, the description of Yugoslav New Film in the press release of MoMA in 1969 reminds the reader of the recent descriptions of the Black Wave, which often highlights criticism of the Yugoslav society as one of its traits. Namely, as Van Dyke notes, ‘[t]he new Yugoslav cinema is inquiring, doubting, enigmatic and sometimes deeply critical of the society from which it springs. Its heroes are the defeated, the bewildered, and the unsatisfied savage young’ (Willard Van Dyke in "Contemporary Yugoslav Cinema," 1969). The similarity invokes the difficulty to carve out Black Wave as a separate movement out of Yugoslav New Film, which was a subject of a heated debate that will be addressed in the next section.

### **Debate De Cuir-Jovanović**

Yugoslav New Film had innovative themes and form, and open narrative structures that are intended to be actively interpreted by the audiences (Novaković 1966, 6). As mentioned previously, Yugoslav New Film ‘also became known (in some of its incarnations) as the “black wave” of Yugoslav cinema’ (Levi 2007, 16). Namely, at the end of the 1960s, Yugoslav New Film was attacked in the press for its thematically darkest films that were, at the time, labelled in a derogatory manner as ‘Black Film’, ‘Black Series’ and ‘Black Wave’. However, in the recent scholarship, the label has been appropriated by a number of film scholars, designating the Black Wave either as a subdivision of Yugoslav New Film, or as a synonym with Yugoslav New Film, or as a special movement within Yugoslav New Film, or simply for what it was when it was initially conceived by its critics – a label. Further defining of the Black Wave opened up a debate between two scholars: Nebojša Jovanović and Greg De Cuir, which took place on the pages of the journal *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*.

The debate was initiated when De Cuir published the article *Black Wave polemics: Rhetoric as aesthetic* (2010), in response to which Jovanović wrote the article *Breaking the*

*Wave: A commentary on 'Black Wave polemics: Rhetoric as aesthetic'* (2011a). Then, De Cuir retorted with the article '*ONCE YOU GO BLACK...': A counter-response to Nebojša Jovanović's 'Breaking the wave'*' (2012a). The crux of the matter is that Jovanović (2011a, 161) disagrees with De Cuir because, in his view, the Black Wave films are not a movement with a single ideological outlook, especially not with so-called 'Methodical Marxist', as De Cuir branded it. Furthermore, Jovanović (2011a, 167-8) criticises De Cuir for perpetuating 'Artist versus Regime' cliché,

According to this nostrum, it goes without saying that the Regime is corrupt, tyrannical and vicious, just as it goes without saying that the Artist is guided by an innate sense of freedom and democracy; it goes without saying that the Regime manipulates and deceives and it goes without saying that the Artist knows only the language of truth that simply has to be told.

(Jovanović 2011a, 168)

It appears that De Cuir has considered Jovanović's words, since in his future work published in *Frames Journal*, he states,

It should be noted that many contemporary critics and historians – often those emanating from the region of the former Yugoslavia itself – have written the socialist history of the country as a totalitarian affair which was intolerant or dissent [...]. However, as others have noted in contrast, it is possible that such critics overestimate the oppressive nature of socialism and the convenient narrative of brave artist versus dogmatic and dangerous regime.

(De Cuir 2013b)

Other voices also criticise 'a dichotomy of the brave dissident artist struggling for the freedom of expression in a totalitarian regime' (Janevski 2012, 75). However, in the initial debate, Jovanović (2011a, 161) commends De Cuir for being in opposition with totalitarian paradigm recurrent in writings on Yugoslav cinema, since the dissolution of the country in the Yugoslav wars of secession. The totalitarian accounts of Yugoslav cinema not only aim to portray socialism as negative, but to obliterate the concept of Yugoslav cinema, by breaking it into, and replacing it by its ethno-national components in this anti-Yugoslav cinema backlash (Jovanović 2011a, 169). Within a totalitarian paradigm, Yugoslav cinema was the locus where the

totalitarian state and League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that is, the Party, exerted its supreme authoritarian power, and incarcerated films that spoke unfavourable of it in the 'bunker', a dark and closed vault. To Jovanović, '[t]he term Black Wave itself, in its colloquial use, simply designates the films that were banned, officially or otherwise' (Jovanović 2011a, 168), to which De Cuir retorts that 'the term cannot be limited to films that were banned, officially or otherwise' (2012a, 85).

Furthermore, Jovanović points out that the first time the term Black Wave has appeared in Yugoslav press is not, as De Cuir has indicated, in "*Crni val*" u našem filmu/ "*The Black Wave*" in *Our Cinema* by Vladimir Jovičić (Jovanović 2011a, 162). In contrast, Jovanović claims that it was earlier, namely in the article *Efekat "crnog talasa"*<sup>14</sup> /*The "Black Wave" Effect*, by an anonymous author. Moreover, Jovanović hints, grounded in Bogdan Tirnanić (2008, 84), that the anonymous author of the article and thus the person who coined the term Black Wave is allegedly journalist Nebojša Glišić. This is my only point of disagreement with Jovanović, with whom, mostly, I side with in this debate. The above-mentioned, unsigned article was initially published in the newspaper *Economic Politics/Ekonomska politika* number 903, on July 21<sup>st</sup> of 1969, and then reprinted in the addendum – titled *Reflektor/Reflector* – of the newspaper *Borba/Struggle*, on August 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1969 (Jovičić 1969). Besides this article, which appeared on the page eight, the addendum also consisted of the previously mentioned article "*The Black Wave*" in *Our Cinema* (Jovičić 1969), from page one until seven. The addendum was signed by Vladimir Jovičić, on page eight, implying that he was indeed the author of both articles, as De Cuir perceptively notes. However, Jovanović accurately observes that similar terms 'black film' and 'black series' were used prior to the term 'black wave', as early as in 1968, for instance by Yugoslav film critics Mira Boglić and Milutin Čolić.

As previously mentioned, it is believed by De Cuir that the term Black Wave was coined by Jovičić (DeCuir 2010, 87). To De Cuir, Jovičić's article *The Black Wave in Our Cinema*, published in newspaper *Borba*, bears special significance, since, in his view, it represents the opinion of the League of Yugoslav Communists, that is, the Party, and the peak of its attacks in the mainstream press. De Cuir argues that in this article Jovičić 'identified films and filmmakers to be associated with it [Black Wave] and effectively launched the counter-action against them' (DeCuir 2010, 87). That said, in the aforementioned article Jovičić (1969, 3) identifies only three directors as associated with the Black Wave: Aleksandar Petrović, Jovan Živanović, and Želimir Žilnik (whom he mentions briefly), and their films *Biće skoro propast*

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<sup>14</sup> Serbo-Croatian words 'talas' and 'val' are synonyms, both meaning 'wave'.

*sveta/It Rains in my Village* (1968), *Uzrok smrti ne pominjati/Do not Mention the Cause of Death* (1968), and *Rani Radovi/Early Works* (1969), respectively. Furthermore, in the article Jovičić (1969, 6) notes in regard with *Early Works* – which was temporarily prohibited from screening, then defended at the court by director Žilnik himself, and consequently released – that censorship as a method of behaviour towards works with artistic value is not acceptable since it is not in the spirit of freedom that Yugoslavia proclaims. This is not because the ulterior motive of Yugoslavia is to advertise its political system as good, but because those freedoms need to be respected in order to keep up with the promise of those freedoms (Jovičić 1969, 6). In my view, it is very unlikely that such affirmation of the artistic values of one of the films in question and the anti-censorship stance by the journal issued by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia corresponds to ‘a general tightening of progressive liberties that had been allowed throughout the 1960s’ (DeCuir 2010, 87). More likely it is a lively debate in the press that, together with numerous film magazines and journals (such as *Filmske sveske/Film Notebooks*, *Sineast/Cineaste*, and *Filmska kultura/Film Culture*), addressed the politically provocative themes of films, as a part and parcel of vibrant Yugoslav film criticism. Moreover, with only three films mentioned, it can hardly be considered a movement. Even if De Cuir was referring to the second article in *Borba*’s addendum *Reflector*, titled *Efekt “crnog vala”/Effect of “Black Wave”*, only a few additional directors and their films were identified as Black Wave: *Delije/The Tough Guys* (Mihajlo ‘Mića’ Popović, 1968), *Vrane/Crows* (Ljubiša Kozomara and Gordan Mihić, 1969), and *Sveti Pesak/Holy Sand* (Miroslav ‘Mika’ Antić, 1968).

Besides, Jovanović lambastes De Cuir for the usage of the concept Methodical Marxism (Jovanović 2011a, 164-5). He finds it problematic that De Cuir posits it as a tool, which is used premeditatively by Black Wave filmmakers to criticise Yugoslav socialism, as if they had an ideological agenda (Jovanović 2011a, 164-5). Also, Jovanović contests De Cuir’s hypotheses that it is a movement united with ideology of commitment to Marxist cause, critique of the League of Yugoslav Communists, that is, the Party, which incites the audiences to contest it, triggered by Black Wave’s aesthetic premise in polemics as Marxist rhetoric, in the shape of political speech. In contrast, Jovanović sees Black wave as ‘the differences in a farrago of aesthetic practices and ideological standpoints that emerged in Yugoslav cinema in the 1960s’ (Jovanović 2011a, 162). Moreover, even though De Cuir eventually situated Black Wave within New Film, his definition of the Black Wave’s critical aspect doesn’t carve it out as a separate movement with unified ideological program and aesthetics, but reiterates what has been written about New Film by various authors, starting from The Liehms, Daniel Goulding, Pavle Levi and Loraine Mortimer (Jovanović 2011a, 164). In Jovanović’s opinion, De Cuir ‘coalesces a

range of New Film ideological-aesthetic currents into the Black Wave monochrome' (Jovanović 2011a, 164). Furthermore, De Cuir gives preference to the term Black Wave even though Yugoslav filmmakers at the time used the term New Film, an elastic term that was utilised to celebrate the period of openness, innovation and diversity of 'auteur film', which did not have a definite outlined assortment of aesthetic traits, nor a unified ideological programme (Jovanović 2011a, 162-3).

Indeed, my own research on the clippings of Yugoslav press, published at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, confirms that the directors themselves used the term New Film, whereas their critics used the terms Black Wave and Black Film. This is best exemplified in two books edited by director Aleksandar Petrović, consisting of reprinted newspaper articles, some of which he penned himself. The books tackle Yugoslav New Film and have the term 'novi film [new film]' in their titles: *Novi film/New Film* (1971) and *Novi film 2, 1965-1970: "crni film"/New Film 2, 1965-1970/New Film 2, 1965-1970: "black film"* (1988). In addition, Petrović uses the term New Film in his own articles reprinted in these two books. The title of the second book also features the label 'black film', in order to refer to the terminology used by the attackers of the thematically dark Yugoslav New Films, whose reprinted articles – written with ideological intent to smear such films in the public debate in Yugoslav press – were also included in the second book. Yugoslav *Black Film* is, therefore, a subset of Yugoslav *New Film*, which consisted of politically provocative films which the Yugoslav press attacked at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, with clear ideological intent to blacken them. Furthermore, director Želimir Žilnik appropriated the label 'black film' – initially 'coined in order to politically disqualify this segment within the broader [...] Yugoslav New Film' (Šijan 2011, 7) – for the title of his short documentary *Black Film/Crni Film* (1971), with the motive to mock the derogatory label at the time.

I have a preference for the term Yugoslav *New Film* over the term Yugoslav *Black Film* a.k.a. Yugoslav *Black Wave*. As mentioned above, Yugoslav *Black Film* a.k.a. Yugoslav *Black Wave* is an initially denigrating term for a segment of Yugoslav *New Film*, which includes politically charged films that the Yugoslav press criticised during the late 1960s and the early 1970s, with ideological resolve to blacken them. My predilection is: due to pan-Yugoslav implication of the term Yugoslav *New Film*, inclusive of more films, and due to having the connotation of unprecedented artistic freedoms and international successes at festivals, rather than of (self)censorship. Also, it is contextualized in the preference of the Yugoslav *New Film* directors themselves at the time of their filmmaking. As Želimir Žilnik notes,

The story about “black” films recurs from the moment when someone started to think with film, to fixate what they see around them, to show what seethes them. A lie was invented that a film can be “good, but black” or “bad, but still honest”. The one who makes bad films and wants to be honest, should stop making films, that is an honest gesture, so someone else who is better would spend the money [e.g. state subsidy for cinema]. Bad directors have always been hypocritically praised for their honesty, while someone who thinks critically [has been criticized] for “being unobjective and for blackness”. There is no black film. Only black [e.g. bad] directing. Socially critical film is always an information about the freedom of the society that that film talks about, otherwise that film would not have been made in the first place.<sup>15</sup>

(Žilnik in Zubac 1968, 12)

Apart from the debate whether Black Wave was just a pejorative label or a movement, it is also given conflicting timeframes. In general, there is a big discrepancy in regard to when Black Wave could have started, however most scholars agree that it ended around 1972. De Cuir delineated Black Wave ‘from roughly 1963 to 1972 within the broader all-encompassing division of Yugoslav New Film’ (DeCuir 2010, 87). He marks the year 1963 as the beginning of the Black Wave, since the omnibus film *Grad/City* (Marko Babac, Živojin Pavlović, and Kokan Rakonjac, 1963) was banned by a court order. However, not all the films that De Cuir identifies as Black Wave were banned by court order or otherwise, so banning cannot be a prerequisite to categorise a film, which he himself acknowledges (see De Cuir 2012a, 85). Since De Cuir marks as the beginning of the Black Wave the year 1963 due to the judicial banning of the film *City*, Jovanović (2011a, 162) underscores the arbitrariness of this classification by reminding the reader that in the previous year the same directors made aesthetically and thematically similar omnibus debut film *Kapi, vode, ratnici/Raindrops, Waters, Warriors* (Marko Babac, Živojin Pavlović, and Kokan Rakonjac, 1962). It was not banned, but on the contrary, positively received for its implementation of new aesthetics (Jovanović 2011a, 162).

Furthermore, Boynik’s (2014) timeframe for Black Wave matches the one set by De Cuir, from 1963 until 1972. However, other voices set it differently. Beard (2019, 95) places Black Wave between 1968 and 1972. Lazarević Radak (2017) situates it from 1967 until 1971. Sudar states it was ‘from the late 1960s onwards’ (2013, 31), grounded in *The BFI Companion to Eastern European and Russian Cinema*, which defines Black Wave as ‘radical Yugoslav

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<sup>15</sup> Own translation.

films of the late 1960s and early 1970s' (Pelko 2000, 265). Furthermore, Goulding notes that '[f]rom about 1969 to 1972, the counteroffensive against *new film* tendencies was renewed and intensified under the banner of *black film*' (2002, 78). Drawing on Buden (Buden and Žilnik 2013), Majača describes Yugoslav Black Wave as 'a cinematic tendency of the late 1960s and 1970s that was critical of the Yugoslav state' (2021, 19). Therefore, there are two tendencies with regard to setting the timeframe of Black Wave. One places its beginning to 1963, while the second places it at the end of the 1960s. Both tendencies agree that it ended at the beginning of the 1970s.

In order to investigate this discrepancy, it is important to refer to Jovičić's aforementioned seminal article, in which he observes that some films appeared 'two-three years or so before [1969, when the article was written] as individual harbingers of what we more often call Black Wave' (Jovičić 1969, 2). Keeping this in mind and the fact that most of the films Jovičić labelled as the Black Wave are from either 1969 or 1968, it is questionable whether Black Wave can be stretched as far back as 1963 as Boynik or DeCuir argue, especially as a 'concentrated eruption' (DeCuir 2010, 87), since Jovičić has stated that there were only sporadic forerunners of Black Wave approximately two to three years before 1969, the year when the label was attached by critics.

There is a discrepancy in not only setting up the timeframe of Black Wave, but also Yugoslav New Film. Stojanović (in Petrović 1988, 355), Goulding (2002, 62), Jelača (2015, 2019), and Šijan (2011, 7) situate it between 1961 and 1972. Accordingly, I situate my research within this timeframe. Similarly, Thompson and Bordwell state that the film *Two/Dvoje*, directed in 1961 by Aleksandar Petrović, 'helped launch New Film' (2003, 464). However, Thompson and Bordwell do not specify when New Film ended. On the other hand, Nowell-Smith argues that '[t]he 'novi film' started about the same time as the Czech New Wave [1963 (Thompson and Bordwell 2003, 462)], which influenced it considerably, but it survived longer, being finally called to order by the authorities only around 1972' (2013, 178). Likewise, Kirn and Madžar place the beginning of Yugoslav New Film in 1963, but the ending year, according to them differs – it is 1973 (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 1). They contend that 1963 is selected for the start year due to (anti-) Genre Film festival GEEF – the first official meeting of Yugoslav film amateurs – being held in Zagreb. Moreover, according to them, it is because it is the year when film *Dani/Days* (Aleksandar Petrović) and omnibus *Grad/The City* (Živojin Pavlović, Marko Babac, and Kokan Rakonjac) – which was banned by a court verdict – were made (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 4-5). Thus, 1963 is perceived by them 'as the year which marked the transition of film amateurs to professionals, and that in which many of them received further



support for their debut features' (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 5). However, they point out that 1962 is also often taken for the beginning of New Yugoslav Film, when, for instance, at the time amateur directors Živojin Pavlović, Marko Babac, and Kokan Rakonjac, from the cinema club Belgrade, created omnibus *Kapi, vode, ratnici/Drops, Waters, Warriors* (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 4). Also, Kirn and Madžar identify '[a] major breakthrough in terms of aesthetic and thematic sensibility [that] took place in 1961 with a series of movies that deal with the topics of unfulfilled love and suffering': *Dvoje/And the Love Has Vanished* a.k.a *The Couple* (Aleksandar Petrović), *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik), and *Nočni izlet/Night Excursion* (Mirko Grobler) (2014, 3). In my view, these films and the year 1961 not only foreshadowed the Yugoslav New Film, but indicated its beginning, together with *Carevo novo ruho/The Emperor's New Clothes* (Ante Babaja, 1961). In addition, Kirn and Madžar single out *Uzavreli grad/The Boom Town* (Veljko Bulajić, 1961) for heralding the Black Wave, with its 'gallery of different shady characters from the "black zones" of society, such as criminals, prostitutes and other dodgy figures. This later becomes, in style and topic, one of the recurring "black" elements, the official stamp of Yugoslav New film' (2014, 4). Kirn and Madžar acknowledge that 'the decade from the early 60s to the early 70s is the most productive and recognized period in the history of Yugoslav cinema' (2014, 3). In the films that preceded Yugoslav New Film, they recognise '[f]irstly, the lack of more aesthetic and experimental approaches, and secondly, the relative absence of contemporary themes' (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 3), however they criticise the common approach amongst the scholars to belittle or completely ignore the value of these films. Similarly, Pavičić (2008, 19) highlights the indisputable worth of these films.

### **Dissidence or Dissent, Yugoslav or National Cinema**

Kirn and Madžar raise the problems with naming, namely, with the term Black Wave, which can be misused from the post-Yugoslav historical revisionists' perspective: to mythologize the filmmakers as dissidents in their plight against the allegedly totalitarian state (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 7). In line with their observation, I think that, in the case of Yugoslav New Film directors, that is, Black Wave directors, the term dissent should be used, rather than the one of dissidence. Relatedly, as Kirn and Madžar observe, not only is the historical fact omitted that the Black Wave appeared under socialist Yugoslavia (not outside of the system) and is instead enshrouded in a veneer of dissidence, but also this pan-Yugoslav phenomenon is monopolized and

“nationalized” based on the ethnicity of directors (such as, into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Herzegovinian, etc.) (Kirn and Madžar 2014, 7). Therefore, ‘[w]e prefer to use the term new Yugoslav film (or auteur cinema), but also insist in not relegating the term “Black Wave” to the dissident discourse’ (Kirn 2012, 20). In the same vein, grounded in Jovanović (2011a), Lóránd opines on the issue of Yugoslav New Film, ‘that the diversity of the work of the different artists would be jeopardised by forcing them under the umbrella of “dissidence”’ (2018, 92). Furthermore, she asserts that Yugoslav New Film directors were ‘if not dramatizing, but certainly problematising the lies, shortcomings and hypocrisy of the regime, while they were also part of the system’ (Lóránd 2018, 93).

Similarly, from my findings, one of the directors, Žilnik (in Babić 1986, 14), states that many of so-called “black wave” films, including his *Early Works*, were screened in the movie theatres at the time when they were made, and were only criticised and contested afterwards due to a political campaign against critical film. This is because, as he notes, ‘we give everything a flavour of scandal, prohibition, enmity. We make damage to ourselves. As if we need dissidents. Instead of being proud that we are the only socialist country that does not have dissidents, there are forces that constantly push towards something forbidden’ (Žilnik in Babić 1986, 14). He also adds that ‘the films from the period of “black film” mostly had nice success at international festivals’ (Žilnik in Babić 1986, 14). To conclude by borrowing from Lóránd’s remarks on new Yugoslav Feminists, and applying it to Yugoslav New Film directors – they ‘attempted to engage the state in a dialogue rather than refusing it per se, as most dissidence does’ (Lóránd 2018, 9).

As Đurović observes, as opposed to the dominant approach of perceiving Yugoslavia and its cinematography as totalitarian, over the last ten years or so there is a small but growing niche ‘of researchers who write about contradictory dynamics of Yugoslav film, as a response to the dominant totalitarian approach to socialist Yugoslavia’ (2020, 12). She aligns her work with Jovanović’s (2011a, 2014, 2012a, b, 2015, 2011b, 2012c, d, 2016) findings and gives her contribution by detecting numerous contradictions in the Yugoslav film, in particular in youth genre, which ‘goes against the dominant totalitarian narratives about Yugoslav film as a communist propaganda tool’ (Đurović 2020, 311). In line with their stances, my research is also situated on the side that recognises complexities, ambiguities and contradictions of Yugoslav cinema and society, which recognises its advantages disadvantages, and nuances, as opposed to the Manichean view of the totalitarian paradigm.

## **One Yugoslav Cinema vs. Multiple Cinemas of its six socialist republics**

Yugoslav New Cinema was a national cinema movement that occurred in a specific time period, from 1961 until 1972. Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia consisted of six federative republics: Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Socialist Republic of Croatia, Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Socialist Republic of Montenegro, Socialist Republic of Slovenia, and Socialist Republic of Serbia (while within Serbia's territory there were also two autonomous provinces: Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina), which had their own sub-national production centres, within one Yugoslav nation. Therefore, it was multilingual cinematography, with films in several languages e.g., Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian.

This opens one of the debates with regards to Yugoslav cinema, whether it was a national cinema that had all-Yugoslav character in its constituent republics, or whether it was an assemblage of disparate republican cinemas, of which each had its own distinctive stylistic characteristics. There are several proponents of each theory. After the wars of secession, the outlook on Yugoslav cinema changed drastically towards the latter. As the country was broken down into republics, the artificial attempts of dividing and delineating Yugoslav cinema into Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Bosnian cinema occurred, which contributes to the erasure of memory of Yugoslav cinema.

For example, Aida Vidan (2011) brands Black Wave as Serbian instead of as Yugoslav. Ivo Škrabalo (2011) takes the same stance and tries to delineate Yugoslav cinema according to a national basis, so the Yugoslav New Film movement with pan-Yugoslav character is completely omitted and split into Croatian auteur cinema and Black Wave, for which he states that it particularly occurs in Serbian cinematography. Such monopolization can be also found in Goran Gocić's (2009) article where he appropriates Black Wave as Serbian cinema. These are examples of post-Yugoslav revisionism, as previously described by Kirn and Madžar (2014), with the aim to nationalize and monopolize Yugoslav phenomenon according to the ethnicity of filmmakers. Jovanović (2012a) criticises that such proponents of the cinematic delineation of Yugoslav cinema – into a set of separate cinemas aligned with the borders of new states that used to be constituent socialist republics of Yugoslavia – are the culprits for its second, symbolic death, whereas for the first demise of Yugoslav cinema the politicians are to blame due to triggering the wars of secession. Jelača (2015) sides with Jovanović's (2012a) arguments mentioned above, with regards to Yugoslav film history and that it should not be divided along ethno-national lines, with each segment being considered separately, away from overarching

Yugoslav context. To summarise, my research sides with Jovanović's (2012a), Kirn and Madžar's (2014, 7), Jelača's (2015), and Đurović's (2020, 12) critical stances. This PhD thesis is one attempt in preventing such erasure of Yugoslav cinema.

The argument for such an approach is that although they were some minor stylistic differences in diverse centres that existed in cities across Yugoslavia, such as Belgrade, Zagreb, and Ljubljana, Yugoslav New Film directors made films under very similar production conditions. For example, the equipment used in those films was in the ownership of Yugoslav socialist state and its people, not private. Also, several Yugoslav New Films were inter-republican co-productions between two or more of their film centres. Most importantly, Yugoslav New Films featured actors and actresses from all over Yugoslavia that were sought in all republics indiscriminately, for instance actress Milena Dravić who featured in numerous films, including *Rondo* (Zvonimir Berković, 1966) that was shot in Zagreb and produced by Jadran Film in (Yugoslav) SR Croatia, *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969) produced by Bosna Film situated in Sarajevo in (Yugoslav) SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Sedmina* (Matjaž Klopčič, 1969) produced by Viba Film in (Yugoslav) SR Slovenia, *Makedonski del od pekolut/Macedonian Part of Hell* (Vatroslav Mimica, 1971) by Vardar Film in (Yugoslav) SR Macedonia, and *Jutro/ The Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967) by Dunav film in (Yugoslav) SR Serbia. Similarly, actor Velimir 'Bata' Živojinović acted in many films, for instance *Valter brani Sarajevo/Walter Defends Sarajevo* (Hajrudin Krvavac, 1972) produced by Bosna Film situated in Sarajevo in (Yugoslav) SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, *Uzrok smrti ne pominjati/Do Not Mention the Cause of Death* (Jovan Živanović, 1968) by Avala film in (Yugoslav) SR Serbia, *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967) by Jadran Film in (Yugoslav) SR Croatia, *Lažnivka/Liar Woman* (Igor Pretnar, 1965) by Viba film in (Yugoslav) SR Slovenia, *Muškarci/Men* (Milo Đukanović, 1963) by Lovćen film in (Yugoslav) SR Montenegro. Also, actor Bekim Fehmiu acted in variety of films as *Ko puca otvoriće mu se/Who Knocks Will Be Knocked Off* (Marko Babac, 1965) by Kino Klub Beograd in (Yugoslav) SR Serbia, *Protest/The Protest* (Fadil Hadžić, 1967) by Viba film in (Yugoslav) SR Slovenia and Autorska grupa Most in (Yugoslav) SR Croatia, *Pod isto nebo/Under the Same Sky* (Ljubiša Georgievski and Miomir 'Miki' Stamenković, 1964) by Vardar film in (Yugoslav) SR Macedonia, and *Klopka za generala/A Trap for the General* (Miomir 'Miki' Stamenković, 1971) by Bosna film in (Yugoslav) SR Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To recapitulate, Yugoslav cinema was, in my view, an amalgam of films produced not in a centralised film industry, but in production centres all over the country, yet they retained pan-Yugoslav character.

### **Liminal cases: Soja Jovanović and Fadil Hadžić**

Even though one might question my decision to incorporate in Yugoslav New Film canon some of the directors, I dare to say that the line between the Yugoslav New Film movement and its contemporary, formally and thematically mainstream cinema, is occasionally blurred, and therefore might lean towards one or other side, depending on who is interpreting it. Along the same lines, in Jelača's (2020, 6) view, the fact that women – who were the majority of film editors in Yugoslavia – often worked on both art Yugoslav New Films and mainstream ones, undermines the Manichaeian division on art and lowbrow cinema. To Bogojević, Yugoslav New Film is 'a supplement to the mainstream national cinematic discourse, rather than an example of counter-cinema' (2011, 256). Yugoslav New Films simultaneously daringly differed from the official ideological discourse that influenced the filmmaking, while also concurrently complying to it (Schober 2018, 139). Furthermore, Slapšak finds no substantial distinction in representation of female characters between ideologically unsuitable Black Wave, and ideologically suitable dominant films (Slapšak 2000, 135). I find applicable on Yugoslav cinematography, Kuhn's observation on the cinema of the US, that some films 'are more appropriately seen as ranged over a continuum' (Kuhn 1994, 221). With commodified, formally and thematically mainstream Yugoslav cinema at the one extreme (such as Partisan spectacles), and overtly critical and often (but not exclusively) stylistically modern Yugoslav New Films (for instance, their politically provocative Black Wave segment that was ideologically attacked in Yugoslav press towards the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s) on the other extreme, Yugoslav films produced from 1961 until 1972 (including comedies, children's films, melodramas, Partisan-themed films, youth themed films, etc.) can be placed anywhere within this continuum range between the two extremes. There are liminal examples of directors and their films, to name a few, as Soja Jovanović and Fadil Hadžić, that diverse scholars classify differently. Thus, due to their liminality, these directors rather defy the somewhat binary division on Yugoslav New Film and mainstream cinema, that I myself also foster.

Although I do not make use of a close analysis of Jovanović's films, she deserves a special mention as the first Yugoslav female director, and the only female film director of feature length fiction films during my studied period from 1961 until 1972. She was also the first director ever in Yugoslavia to make a feature length fiction film in colour (Lazić 2013, 85). In her *Cineaste* article, Slapšak (2007, 37) rehabilitates Jovanović, who was rather consigned to oblivion, by focusing on her and asserting that she has 'created comedies that do not conform to traditional generic representations of gender' (Slapšak 2007, 37). Jovanović's films, under

guise of comedies, are actually underlying critiques of Yugoslav society (Slapšak 2007, 37). Jelača (2020, 15) followed suit by striving to reinscribe this often omitted and neglected film maker in history of Yugoslav cinema. In addition, on the one hand, Bogojević classifies Jovanović in Yugoslav New film, when she states that ‘[t]he *new film* generation was a complete male phenomenon, with the exception of Soja Jovanovic [*sic*]’ (Bogojević 2011, 256). On the other hand, unlike Bogojević, Jelača (2020, 16) does not classify Jovanović’s films – and I am referring to, in particular, the part of her opus produced between 1961 and 1972 when Yugoslav New Film was taking place concurrently with thematically and/or formally mainstream, dominant films – in the domain of the Yugoslav New Film movement. Instead, she asserts that all Jovanović’s films are ‘made firmly within the frameworks of dominant, classical film language’ (Jelača 2020, 16). By contending that Jovanović’s films are classical narrative, dominant films, which are ‘never about formally or aesthetically rethinking the language of cinema’ (Jelača 2020, 16), Jelača implies that they are mainstream films, and not Yugoslav New Films, which are often considered as art, auteur films. Jovanović’s style is frequently ‘straightforward film language that does not overtly experiment with form nor call attention to itself or the filmmaker’s presence’ (Jelača 2020, 18).

That, in Jelača’s view, does not make them less worthy. Her aim is to rethink and regard Jovanović’s films (and the films akin to hers) as women’s minor cinema in socialist Yugoslavia. It is a part of a larger, transnational mapping of women’s cinema, ‘that do[es] not blindly privilege Western paradigms nor require[s] socialist women filmmakers to be political “dissidents” in order for their work to be deemed worthy of attention’ (Jelača 2020, 15). Women’s cinema is not only regarded as films produced by women, but as films that address the viewer as a woman, irrespective of the viewer’s gender or sex (Jelača 2020, 1). In Yugoslav context, such films often communicated stances in favour of woman’s emancipation and liberation, without harbouring antagonism towards socialist state per se, but towards its failure to fully implement the initial promise of gender equality, dependent on eradication of both patriarchy and social classes (Jelača 2020, 1).

Jelača grounds her theory on socialist minor cinema in Wang (2017, 78), who argues that marginalised practices do not necessarily entail oppositional or politically dissident standpoint, but can even be backed by the system. In line with that, Jelača (2020, 16) asserts that Jovanović constantly communicated marginalised stances in her films (for instance peasant or working-class women), without taking overtly politically oppositional positions – for example, the all-male Black Wave directors did – but instead by using mild ironies. Therefore, similar to Slapšak (2007, 37), Jelača (2020, 18) notices in Jovanović’s comedies implicit, subtle

social criticism and politics. Furthermore, drawing on Lazić's (2013, 77) interview with Jovanović, Jelača (2020, 17) observes the important role of sound, namely music and dialogue, in Jovanović's directing method. Such privileging of sound over image could be interpreted through the lens of film feminism (see Silverman 1988, Vernon 2017), as Jovanović's subliminal intervention to subvert workings of patriarchy in the visual domain – which is frequently more prominent than the sound domain – and her turn to aural senses instead (Jelača 2020, 17). Although Jovanović's film opus ostensibly has low cultural capital, if regarded through the lens of socialist women's minor cinema, it is revealed that it often has potential for 'poignant critiques along the intersections of sex, gender and social class' (Jelača 2020, 1). Even though in this case I do not side with Bogojević that some of Jovanović's films can be classified as Yugoslav New Film, but rather with Jelača (2020, 16), who sees them as formally or aesthetically mainstream, dominant films, with classical narrative, I support all of their attempts to reinscribe Jovanović in the history of Yugoslav cinema.

Another example that blurs the line between art and dominant Yugoslav films, as well as defies this clear-cut binary division is the opus of Fadil Hadžić. He is often regarded as a mainstream director, as opposed to a Yugoslav New Film director, one of the reasons being that he mocked the concept of the film auteur, as Jovanović (2015, 288) notes in an attempt to redeem this often-neglected Yugoslav film director. On the one hand, Hadžić's Partisan-themed films, set in Second World War, are without a doubt classified as mainstream cinema, as *Abeceda straha/Alphabet of Fear* (1961), *Desant na Drvar/Parachute Raid on Drvar* (1963), *Druga strana medalje/Back of the Medal* (1965), and *Konjuh planinom/On the Mountain of Konjuh* a.k.a. *A Song for the Dead Miner* (1966). On the other hand, his contemporary themed films, starting from *Službeni položaj/Official Post* (1964), then *Protest* (1967), *Tri sata za ljubav/Three Hours for Love* (1968), and *Lov na jelene/Deer Hunt* (1972) exhibit social criticism (Jovanović 2015, 288), which is often a trait of Yugoslav New Films (including Black Films), such as Čengić's, Petrović's, Pavlović's or Papić's, but not as pungent as theirs (Pavičić 2003, 35). Besides, Hadžić's *Idu dani/As Days Go By* (1970), evocative of Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, according to the director himself, is ostensibly made as a mockery of French *Nouvelle Vague* (especially director Jean-Luc Godard and actor Jean-Paul Belmondo), and the politics of auteur that was influential at the time (Pavičić 2003, 27). Ironically, despite Hadžić's nominal contempt for modern film language, I find it modern itself due to its form that incorporated new traits, as the usage of intertitles with intertextual references to Godard, and open ending.

Furthermore, *Divlji anđeli/Wild Angels* (1969) is about problematic, rebellious youth subculture, which is also a common theme of Yugoslav New Films. Also, previously mentioned *Three Hours for Love* has a mock Cinema Verité beginning with interviews, which is formally modern opening of the film, and in the spirit of formally innovative Yugoslav New Film. Due to this introductory pseudo-documentary sequence, with street interviews in Cinéma vérité style, combining amateurs and professional actors (Pavičić 2003, 22), the film in my view is reminiscent of Makavejev's lauded Yugoslav New Film collages that intersperse documentary and fiction, and occasionally break the fourth wall. Also, *Three Hours for Love* focuses on youth subculture and their leisure (Pavičić 2003, 22), which is a common trait of Yugoslav New Films, although Hadžić is almost never viewed as Yugoslav New film director. Moreover, his film is amongst the few youth films selected for a case study by Đurović in her doctoral thesis, in which she argues that they 'deconstruct the binary of producer's and auteur cinema, i.e. the mainstream and the art film' (2020, 133). Had the persona of Hadžić, who has been regarded as a 'party hack', a regime director (even though he criticised the regime in his films), been separated from his works (Jovanović 2011b, 25, Pavičić 2003, 6), perhaps some of his films would not have been valued as mainstream films, but instead would have been included in the Yugoslav New Film canon. Exceptionally, film critic Pavičić dubs Hadžić's *Protest* as full-fledged Black Wave Film (Pavičić 2003, 21), that is, Yugoslav New Film.

Even though Hadžić is not considered an auteur, and is generally excluded from the Yugoslav New Film movement, his example shows how some of his films are thematically or formally modern, and how sometimes there is no clear delineation between the Yugoslav New Film movement (including Black Wave) and its contemporary mainstream films. In Jovanović's (2015, 288) opinion with which I concur, even if there are solid reasons for not regarding Hadžić as Yugoslav New Film director, especially due to his disrespect for theory of auteur, that does not diminish his value or the appreciation of his aforementioned films for their social criticism. To summarise, as seen from examples of Jovanović's and Hadžić's opuses, the distinction between Yugoslav New Film and formally and/or thematically mainstream films can sometimes be relative and blurred.



## Red Wave and Black Wave

As mentioned above, Hadžić also made partisan war films that are populist and mainstream in terms of form and themes, such as *Parachute Raid on Drvar* and *A Song for the Dead Miner*. Together with Veljko Bulajić's *Kozara* (1962), they are regarded as forerunners of the so-called 'Red Wave', 'a streak of the Second World War epics and action films in the late 1960s and 1970s' (Jovanović 2015, 288). Initially used with ironic connotation, the 'Red Wave' label was tagged to Partisan spectacles with pyrotechnics, which often featured foreign stars, and were backed by Yugoslav League of Communists as a riposte to socially critical 'Black Wave' (Jovanović 2015, 289). Thus, the 'Red Wave' label was a retribution from Yugoslav New Film directors and film critics for the 'Black Wave' label. Nevertheless, Jovanović identifies in some of the recent, post-Yugoslav scholarship that propagates totalitarian nature of Yugoslav state or the aforementioned 'Propaganda versus Art' dichotomy, a certain tendency to limit a whole diapason of Yugoslav films into only two opposing poles, based on these two mocking colloquial labels, which are transformed into analytical categories (Jovanović 2015, 289). In particular, Jovanović's (2015, 289) critique is aimed at De Cuir for juxtaposing Black Wave and Partisan film, and downgrading the latter to the vessel of socialist ideology while elevating the former as its oppositional cinema. For example, De Cuir argues that '[t]he Partisan war film solidified and forwarded a dogmatic national ideology and a collective myth, in doing so becoming the basis for an oppositional cinema to depart from' (2011, 35). Therefore, De Cuir (2013) regards the Partisan War Film as an example of the values and myths of the ruling party. Jovanović (2015, 289) reproaches him for such reasoning. In general, Jovanović pinpoints a tendency in Post-Yugoslav scholarship to misinterpret mainstream Partisan-themed films as cinematic depot of totalitarian dogmas, grounded in alleged dichotomy of 'Propaganda versus Art' (2015, 287). Thus, Yugoslav cinema is oversimplified and levelled to only two opposing poles. The first pole includes the worthy ones, the most internationally acclaimed Artists often dubbed as dissidents, belonging to Yugoslav New Film that is frequently shrunk to the end of 1960s and the beginning of 1970s, reduced to the Black Wave label, and political critique of the regime (Jovanović 2015, 287) overlooking their aesthetical qualities. The second pole includes the purportedly worthless ones, the alleged party sympathisers, whose work supposedly blindly serves and supports the regime (Jovanović 2015, 288).

However, in his other publication De Cuir (2013b) suggests that Partisan films were often influenced by American classical cinema and westerns, for instance in terms of iconography, such as the presence of horses, weapons, gunfights and vast spaces on the

countryside. Also, they shared a classical narrative structure, editing continuity and sharply delineated dichotomies between good and bad, where the noble forces prevail and evil is defeated (De Cuir 2013b). Therefore, I find that the Partisan war films are more likely to convey the myths and values of American cinematography than of the Yugoslav ruling Party with regard to heroic narratives with optimistic conclusion, wrapped in the packaging tailored to the Yugoslav market and audiences. Nevertheless, this difference in opinion does not diminish my respect for De Cuir's interest and enthusiasm for Yugoslav cinema, which should be commended.

I find a similar example of the aforementioned problematic polarisation on Black Wave and Red Wave – mainly because it reduces whole Yugoslav mainstream cinema (I am referring to the period from 1961 to 1972 in particular), and its variety to Red Wave – in otherwise tremendously valuable contribution by Daniela Š. Beard (2019, 96), especially in regard to the usage of music in the Black Wave, that is Yugoslav New Film. In contrast, the former Head of the Yugoslav Film Archive Dragoslav Zelenović correctly notes that Yugoslav film production consisted of an assortment of films, whereas one extreme was the so-called 'Red Wave', while the other extreme was the so-called 'Black Wave' (in Mitrić 2018, 187).

The issue with some recent scholarship could be resolved if, besides those extremes that are exclusively mentioned and studied, the existence of variety of films would be acknowledged, for example mainstream children's films<sup>16</sup> and youth films. Also, mainstream populist dramas<sup>17</sup> are usually left out, as well as mainstream action thrillers<sup>18</sup> with contemporary topics. In addition, out of those post-Yugoslav studies many significant Yugoslav New Films<sup>19</sup> are omitted if they do not fit into the dissident paradigm of the director or the theme of social critique. It is only fair to note that Greg De Cuir (De Cuir 2011), despite some previously

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<sup>16</sup> For example *Vuk samotnjak/Lone Wolf* (Obrad Gluščević, 1972) and *Orlovi rano lete/Eagles Fly Early* (Soja Jovanović, 1966)

<sup>17</sup> *Prekobrojna/Superfluous* (Branko Bauer, 1962) or *Palma među palmama/Palma Amongst Palm Trees* (Milo Đukanović, 1967).

<sup>18</sup> *Operacija Ticijan/Operation Titian* (Radoš Novaković, 1963) and *Ubistvo na svirep i podmukao način i iz niskih pobuda/Murder Committed in a Sly and Cruel Manner and from Low Motives* (Živorad 'Žika' Mitrović, 1969)

<sup>19</sup> Just to name a few: Boštjan Hladnik and his films, which include *Ples v Dežju/Dance in the Rain* (1961), *Peščani zamak/A Sand Castle* (1962) and *Maškarada/Masquerade* (1971); Vatroslav Mimica's *Ponedjeljak ili utorak/Monday or Tuesday* (1966), *Događaj/An Event* (1969), and *Hranjenik/The Fed One* (1970); Vladan Slijepčević's *Pravo stanje stvari/The Real State of Affairs* (1964) and *Štićenik/The Climber* a.k.a. *The Protege* (1966); Zvonimir Berković's *Rondo* (1966) and *Putovanje na mjesto nesreće/The Scene of the Crash* (1971); Ante Babaja's *Carevo novo ruho/The King's New Clothes* (1961), *Breza/The Birch Tree* (1967), *Mirisi, zlato i tamjan/Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh* (1971); Lordan Zafranović's *Nedjelja/Sunday* (1969); Miodrag 'Mića' Popović's *Roj/The Beehive* (1966) and *Hasanaginica/Hassan Bey's Wife* (1967); Jovan Živanović's *Uzrok smrti ne pominjati/Do Not Mention the Cause of Death* (Jovan Živanović, 1968); Marko Babac's *Ko puca otvoriće mu se/Who Knocks Will Be Knocked Off* (1965).

mentioned shortcomings, as pointed out by Jovanović with whom I mostly side, contributed to the scholarship on Yugoslav New Film by analysing some films unknown or less known to English speaking readers until then. These films include: *Nemirni/The Restless* (Kokan Rakonjac, 1967), *Delije/Tough Guys* a.k.a. *The Tough Ones* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968), *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969), *Vrane/Crows* (Ljubiša Kozomara and Gordan Mihić, 1969), *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža/Young and Healthy as a Rose* (Jovan Jovanović, 1971), and *Plastični Isus/Plastic Jesus* (Lazar Stojanović, 1971).

In conclusion, even though some scholars prefer the term Black Wave, I use the term Yugoslav New Film. That way, I can encompass more films and bring to the fore the ones that would have otherwise been overlooked and excluded if they were judged only through the prism of Black Wave, for example *The Beehive*, which seemingly focuses more on the treatment of women in the distant past than on the critique of Yugoslav contemporary society. Therefore, Yugoslav New Films (and Black Wave) are not only gems for their (hidden) political messages, but also for the assortment of aesthetic solutions which their directors applied as well as for the under researched gender politics that are often simultaneously complicit and critical of the psychological or physical mistreatment of women portrayed in these films.

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## Chapter 2. Yugoslav New Film and Gender

### Introduction

Based on my analysis of Yugoslav New Films, as well as mainstream films produced during the same time period (from 1961 until 1972), I noticed a striking pattern of recurring violence towards female characters. Although violence manifests itself in various forms, for example physical, psychological, symbolical, inflicted by another person, and/or self-violence, its omnipresence is overwhelming. The main focus of my study is the startling frequency of various kinds of violence towards women in Yugoslav New Films, in the form of rape, physical abuse, murder, and suicide. I investigate why celluloid women are exposed to such cruel treatment. The aim of this chapter is to explore the guiding theories, both Yugoslav and international, which have inspired my PhD thesis, and are interwoven into its theoretical framework. I also discuss the key literature that has informed my research questions. I discuss both international and Yugoslav scholarship on film feminism, gender, film, media, and cultural studies. Although there are not many articles or books in English or Serbo-Croatian that focus specifically on gender in Yugoslav New Film, more recently, over the past decade or two, there has been an emerging interest in the representation of gender in Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinema scholarship. However, the depictions of female characters in Yugoslav New Film have still not received much interest.

This chapter is divided into subsections which tackle the mapping of the empirical chapters of my PhD thesis, as well as series of concepts that build its theoretical framework. This chapter relates to the following published empirical chapters: **Chapter 4**, **Chapter 5**, **Chapter 6**, **Chapter 7**, and **Chapter 8**. **Chapter 4** *Violated Sex: Rape, Nation and Representation of Female Characters in Yugoslav New Film and Black Wave Cinema* (Vuković 2018) was published in the *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* journal. **Chapter 5** *Yugoslav(i)a on the margin: sexual taboos, representation, nation and emancipation in Želimir Žilnik's 'Early Works' (1969)* (Vuković 2021) was published in the same journal as noted above. **Chapter 6** *Treacherous Women: Representation of Female Character as Traitors of the Nation in Partisan-themed Yugoslav New Films* (Vuković 2020b) was published as a book chapter in *Balkan Cinema and the Great Wars*, edited by Adrian Silvan Ionescu, Marian Țuțui, and Savaş Arslan. **Chapter 7** *Cinematic Suicide: Representations of Working Women in Yugoslav New Film* (Vuković 2019) was published as an article in the online journal *Apparatus*:

*Film, Media, and Digital Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe*. **Chapter 8** *Of bees, birds, trees, and women: iconography, superstition and victimization of female characters in Yugoslav New Film* (Vuković 2020a) can be found in the journal *Images: The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication*. The order of the chapters could have been different if they had been chronologically ordered by the time-period of which the storylines of the films were set. For example, **Chapter 8** could have been placed as the first empirical chapter (**Chapter 4**), given that the women are represented in pre-socialist, pre-Second World War times. **Chapter 6** could have become **Chapter 5** as the women are depicted in narratives which were set at the very end of the Second World War. **Chapter 4** could have become **Chapter 6** as the women are portrayed in the wake of the Second World War, after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948. The only chapter to remain in the same order would be **Chapter 7**, as it features modern women from, at the time, contemporary Yugoslavia. Following the same logic **Chapter 5** could have become **Chapter 8** (or **Chapter 7** because they are interchangeable). Nevertheless, I opted for a different order of the chapters, which depicts the forms of violence that female characters are exposed to. In **Chapter 4** the focus is on rape, whose victim is an embodiment of a suffering stratum of a nation rather than a personality in her own right. Similarly, in **Chapter 5** a rape and murder of a female character is read as a violation of a nation. In addition, it is also read as a punishment of a woman for her emancipation (including sexual emancipation). In **Chapter 6**, a woman is again related to a nation, but this time she is vilified as a traitor of a nation, due to being a sexually active civilian or weak Partisan soldier, who must be eliminated by military execution, for fraternising with or for betrayal to the enemy, respectively. In **Chapter 7**, a female character needs to be punished (by psychological violence, or physical violence – gang rape) and self-punished by suicide, for her emancipation by labour and/or liberated sexuality. In **Chapter 8** the locus is not so much on a particular type of violence that a heroine is exposed to, for example rape or life-threatening neglect, but on the process of victimisation of a heroine (which is a form of violence), and how she defies it or reconciles with that process. Therefore, the empirical chapters examine how women are exposed to violence in Yugoslav New Films.

There is an overlap between **Chapter 2**, and the following empirical chapters consisting of published works, with regard to the grounding theories that I use. Furthermore, this chapter tackles the main concepts that are grounded in the theoretical framework of my PhD research. The structure of this chapter addresses a series of these concepts, organised as subheadings, such as the overarching theme of violence, the theme of patriarchy, representation, gaze, ageing, stereotyping, silencing, female Partisans, bourgeoisie, female employment, feminism,

Yugoslav New Film auteurs and gender, sexuality, rape as allegory of raped nation, and class and ethnic differences. In short, my PhD study aims to contribute towards filling the knowledge gap regarding the representation of women in Yugoslav New Cinema (including Black Wave), in terms of the narrative and the visual style, inspired by both Yugoslav and international research.

### **Mapping the Empirical Chapters**

In my empirical chapters, I investigate eleven case studies based on my viewing as to why violence towards women often permeates Yugoslav New Film. **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5** both tackle the representations of rape of female characters as allegories of the nation or strata of the nation, inspired by both international and domestic scholars works (Atakav 2017, Taylor-Jones 2013, Cui 2003, Banerjee 2016, Iordanova 1996, Mazierska 2006, MacDonald 2010, Naaman 2016, Jelača 2013b). In many Yugoslav movies a female character is shown as an object of her nation, society, household, milieu, and class (Boglić 1980, 123). Grounded in Mostov's (1999) sociological work on sexuality, gender and nation in former Yugoslavia, and based on my own film research, I formulate my research question as to why in selected Yugoslav New Films a woman signifies a nation itself, whose rape stands for violation of national integrity, or for turbulence within a nation. Moreover, I draw on her theory, that a woman's body stands for a feminine national territory such as farms, households, and battlegrounds (Mostov 1999, 91). This pattern can be found in the case study films discussed in **Chapter 4** *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969), *Doručak s đavolom/Breakfast with the Devil* (Miroslav 'Mika' Antić, 1971), and *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The role of my family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1971). The female body is observed as a site of national pride or shame, a metaphor for its borders and territory, which can be pillaged and penetrated by force by an (external or internal) enemy (Iveković 2000, Ivekovic 1995, Mostov 1999). Based on my viewing, although quite a few Yugoslav films produced from 1961 until 1972 represent female rape, only some Yugoslav New Films represent female rape with allegorical implications, in particular by Yugoslav, domestic men (not by an external enemy, the Other) in the wake of the Second World War. Such examples include the above-mentioned case study films, analysed in **Chapter 4**, as well as few films which I did not analyse closely, for example *Rdeće klasje/Red Wheat* (Živojin 'Žika' Pavlović, 1970) and *Mali vojnici/Playing Soldiers* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1967). More frequent representations of a raped woman as an allegory

of a nation, or stratum of a nation, can be seen in the portrayal of a woman being raped by foreign men during the Second World War, Ottoman rule and so on; or by domestic men in contemporary Yugoslavia, but often without allegorical implications. Nonetheless, there are some examples where representations of female rape in modern Yugoslavia of the 1960s have allegorical meaning. In *Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969), analysed in **Chapter 5**, this is highlighted in the film by the director himself as the name of the main heroine Jugoslava<sup>20</sup> (Milja Vujanović) is eponymous of the Yugoslav nation. Reminiscent of statues in some scenes, and thus monumentalised (before being degraded), the heroine evokes paintings and sculptures in which a woman is an embodiment of a nation, including the French *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) and the USA's *Statue of Liberty* (1886), respectively. In fact, the history of art is abundant with examples of allegorical statues of women who are eponymous of nation-states, for instance *Serbia, Hellas, Hispania, Hungaria, Polonia*, and *Germania* (Pejić 2021). Furthermore, this chapter approaches the violence that the main heroine is exposed to not only as allegory, but as a patriarchal punishment for her sexual and political emancipation. For the sake of investigating the latter, I conduct feminist film criticism, drawing on authors, such as Kaplan (1990), Horeck (2004), and Daković (1996). Grounded in Mulvey (1989) and Kuhn (1992) I examine whether the unity of the female body is fragmented into body parts by the use of close-ups, namely the chest area, buttocks, and legs, which sexually objectifies, fetishizes, and dehumanises women. I apply these theories to close examination of medium-specific traits (camera, lighting, editing, etc.), by paying particular attention to representations of the female figure and its fragmentation. Representational fragmentation of the female body is also observed in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 6**. Dillman (2014) is another scholar whose concepts are interwoven into my theoretical framework. Her work insightfully points out contradictions and fissures between the images and the narrative, which result in the paradox that films can simultaneously have sexist and feminist undertones. I find it useful to understand when it comes to the films I have studied. In addition, Dillman (2014) suggests that films with violent deaths of female protagonists nullify any feminist messages, construed, for instance, when having strong heroines in the narrative. These theories are utilised in **Chapter 5**.

Besides investigating why women are represented as symbols of the raped nation in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5**, **Chapter 6** delves into why, in the selected case studies *Jutro/Morning* (Mladomir 'Puriša' Đorđević, 1967), *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar 'Saša' Petrović, 1965), and *Delije/The Tough Guys* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968), they are depicted as

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<sup>20</sup> It is pronounced Jugoslava.

traitors of the nation. The selected case study films are among a few examples which concern the executions of treacherous women, namely of civilians for fraternising with enemy and of female Partisan soldiers (Yugoslav women who fought in the Second World War against the enemy) for their cinematic cowardice, weakness, and betrayal to the enemy during the Second World War. Using Krelja's (1979) work as a guiding theory – which pinpoints the tendency in Yugoslav New Film to place weaknesses in female characters and punish them accordingly – I apply it to the depictions of female Partisans, more precisely, on their infrequent but telling portrayals as cowards and traitors. Such depictions do not correspond to their actual real-life bravery during the war (see Batinić 2015, Sklevicky 1996, Jancar-Webster 1999). Furthermore, in Krelja's view, Yugoslav New Film auteurs 'advocate the thought that the significant part of guilt for the fact that the world we live in is not a better, more beautiful, and nobler [place], lies in women, who are of nature equipped with their seemingly fragile and oversensitive build'<sup>21</sup> (Krelja 1979). Inspired by his standpoint on represented women's alleged guilt, I examine the portrayal of civilian female characters as traitors of the nation, for consorting with the enemy during the Second World War. A common cause of violence towards female characters in Hollywood cinema is patriarchal punishment for their active sexuality (see Johnston 2007, 93). Similarly, in Yugoslav New Film representations of female sensuality are eventually suppressed by male characters. A heroine who cheats is often harshly scolded. Female desire is often penalised by death, either by an accident or murder, which can be at the hands of her partner. Women that are depicted as sexually active face sexual violence and even gang rape on some occasions. It is as if such Yugoslav New Films, even in the cases when they are critical of women's mistreatment, convey an ambivalent forewarning that being promiscuous has repercussions for a woman.

Besides their active sexuality, women's labour is another type of oppressed female emancipatory practice, as I observe in selected case studies in **Chapter 7**. I examine why in Yugoslav New Films, as well as in the mainstream films made during the same period, employed women are exposed to sexual assault or to some other physical and psychological violence, which can even lead to self-violence. Based on my viewing, many Yugoslav films produced between 1961 and 1972 omit the profession of female characters, marginalise it, represent it as perilous, or overshadow it with their romantic interest. Amongst them only a few focus on the suicide of working women, as can be seen in the selected case studies *Bube u glavi/Bughouse* a.k.a. *Bats in the Belfry* a.k.a. *This Crazy World of Ours* (Miloš 'Miša'

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<sup>21</sup> Own translation.

Radivojević, 1970), and *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961) in **Chapter 7**. Although these films mentioned above are rare, I consider them important in order to examine why and how they reveal contradictions in the Yugoslav gender order. I investigate the proliferation of representations of female employment as hazardous, which are counterfactual in light of the actual female gains in Yugoslav socialist society where, as Ramet observes, female employment was on the rise and women became financially empowered through work (Ramet 1999, 96-100). Moreover, I seek to understand why their working environment is rendered hostile and dangerous in its cinematic representation, as if the underlying message might be that women should quit their jobs and return to domestic life.

In order to examine this notion, I find ‘reading against the grain’ a useful approach (see Doane, Mellencamp, and Williams 1984, Cairns 2006, Ponzanesi 2017, Kotsopoulos 2001, Devereaux 2002, Zoonen 2000, Bobo 2004, Smelik 1998, Staiger 1985, Mayne 1984, Stam and Spence 1985, Hayward 2001). There is an overlap with the methodological chapter where I also address reading against the grain as an important method for my research. Kuhn contends that reading against the grain is a process of deconstruction that challenges the dominant preferred readings of films by uncovering how they construct patriarchal ideology, detach contradictory elements from their initial context, and unveil the processes by which meanings can be attributed to a woman in a film (Kuhn 1994, 79-93). This is something reminiscent of Hall’s encoding/decoding, where he identifies three hypothetical positions from which a message can be read (Hall 2005[1980], 125). The first one is when the viewers operate within the ‘dominant’, ‘preferred’, and ‘hegemonic’ position, from which decoding of a discourse may be construed (Hall 2005[1980], 125). The second one is the ‘negotiated’ position, which is a mixture of dominant and oppositional elements, because it takes into consideration the hegemonic position, while, at the same time ‘it operates with exceptions to the rule’, via contradictions and disjunctures, although they are ‘only on certain occasions brought to full visibility’ (Hall 2005[1980], 127). The third one is when the viewer understands the literal, dominant message, but deliberately chooses to read it from the preferred, contrary, ‘oppositional’ position, ‘within some alternative framework of reference’ (Hall 2005[1980]). My readings against the grain often take a ‘negotiated’ position, which seeks for fissures, ambivalences, and contradictions, while I engage less frequently in ‘dominant’ and ‘oppositional’ readings. For example, the approach used to analyse the films in **Chapter 6** and **Chapter 7** divulges them in the underlying tendency, refracted from real-life of the remnants of the patriarchal mindset in post-war Yugoslavia to restore female war veterans to domestic life and return working women back



home (see Jovanović 2014, 8, Slapšak 2001, 209). The latter tendency is similar to the one in post-war USA society, as echoed in *film noir* (see Wager 2005, 47).

Furthermore, in **Chapter 6** I apply to Yugoslav New Films Wurm's (2015) and Vittorelli's (2015) work on Classical Yugoslav Cinema, and investigate why the case study films reveal an inclination to promulgate images that representationally 'disarm' a female Partisan. For instance, if she is shown carrying a weapon, without actually using it (Wurm 2015, 190). In line with this are the cases when her nurturing qualities as a Partisan nurse are highlighted, while her abilities as a Partisan fighter who is capable of taking a life are underplayed (Vittorelli 2015, 131). The memory of a female Partisan is further tampered with in films by juxtaposing her somewhat crude outlook, hardened by war, to an image of a refined woman, belonging to the remnants of the pre-war bourgeois stratum, anticipated to dissolve in socialism (Batinić 2015, 251). Thus, the films promote a certain type of femininity and beauty, echoing commodification of the post-war Yugoslav society and transition from production to consumerism (see Jovanović 2014, 10-11). Yugoslav celluloid women were expected to be beautiful, not only in life, but in death as well, I argue in **Chapter 7**. This can be inferred from viewing films with female characters who commit suicide, because marring of their bodies, expected to be visible as a consequence of self-violence, is never shown (see Aaron 2014, 80).

In **Chapter 7** another aspect is tackled where celluloid women are subjected to unreasonable standards of beauty, treated differently than men, and exposed to verbal and symbolic violence – their ageing (see Bogojević 2013, 248). My research delves into the reasons why female characters are more scrutinised for the signs of aging, such as wrinkling on their hands or face, than their male counterparts of the same age (see Krainitzki 2016, 169). I draw on Chivers' (2017, 68) research, who asserts that there is a prevalent social ageism and sexism that hinders the appearances of women in front of camera past a certain age. She finds that this is due to a negative attitude towards aging female bodies (Chivers 2017, 69). As a consequence, in general, male actors are usually paired with younger actresses. Mature actresses are less likely to be cast in romantic roles with men from their peer group (Chivers 2017, 68-71) and more likely to be stereotyped as mothers (Daković 1996, 40). Although film scholar Daković (1996), in the article *Mother, Myth, and Cinema: Recent Yugoslav Cinema*, on the pages of the *Film Criticism* journal, analyses Yugoslav film case studies produced in 1980s and 1990s, that is, decades after the Yugoslav New Film movement, from my viewing her keen observations on motherhood and repression of femininity can still be applied on the studied movement.

Furthermore, as Krainitzki (2016, 162) notes, the image of an older woman is frequently asexual. Sexuality is more often reserved for younger women (see Liddy 2017, 167). The juxtaposition of older and younger generation within a film reveals not only generational conflict – a common trait of initial New Waves, including Yugoslav New Film – but also absence or presence of female solidarity, which is scrutinised in **Chapter 8**. Bogojević's concept of 'reversed masquerade' comes to my aid. It concerns elderly female characters, often clad in black, in the cases when they rather obliterate femininity and assume an androgynous outlook (Bogojević 2011, 259). Also, they cast a voyeuristic-sadistic gaze on young women (Bogojević 2011, 259). Besides Bogojević's (2011) concept of theory on Yugoslav film, I draw on Simić's sociological concept called 'cryptomatriarchy' (Simić 1999, 22). He puts forth that, in rural areas in socialist Yugoslavia, mothers in law exercised power in the domestic sphere, for instance over their daughters-in-law, who were initially the underdogs of the family, until and unless they give birth to a male heir (Simić 1999, 22). Thus, remnants of patriarchy, which were difficult to eradicate, lingered in rural areas of Yugoslavia, despite numerous legislation that the socialist state brought in order to enact gender equality (Morokvašić 1986, 135). Furthermore, my research benefits from Jovanović's keen observations on heroines and patriarchy in Yugoslav Classical Cinema – generally speaking, films with classical narrative, preceding the Yugoslav New Film Movement – asserting that some films from that period criticised rural patriarchal tradition 'as a part and parcel of the dead epoch, but also connoted that it might still be quite alive' (2014, 182). Therefore, by criticising patriarchy in the past, these films implicitly address its remnants in their socialist present at the time (Jovanović 2014, 182). Furthermore, Jovanović puts forward that when films are set in the past, in pre-socialist times, they often have exceptionally strong female leads (Jovanović 2014, 226). Although these findings are on Classical Yugoslav Cinema, I point out that they are applicable to Yugoslav New Film, and that there is continuity between those two movements.

Another author who tackles gender and Yugoslav film is Slapšak (2007b), in her article *Representations of Gender as Constructed, Questioned and Subverted in Balkan Films*, featured in English in the renowned American magazine *Cineaste*. Moreover, amongst her non-English pieces Slapšak wrote a book on female icons of XX century (Slapšak 2001) and a chapter on the portrayal of female body in the Yugoslav film (Slapšak 2000) which can be found in the book edited by Branka Arsić. In the latter, Slapšak (2000, 128) argues that films from the early phase of Classical Yugoslav Cinema (roughly from 1947 until 1962) surprisingly feature more fleshed out female characters than the ones that depict the present-day themes of the corresponding period, which tend to stereotype represented women. I draw on her

aforementioned theory, which I apply to Yugoslav New Films (roughly from 1961 until 1972). I examine whether a parallel can be drawn between studied films set in the pre-socialist past, prior to the Second World War – which are rather rare and exceptional – and real-life contemporary Yugoslavia of 1960s and 1970s. I examine whether and how the case study films (in **Chapter 8**) – which depict patriarchy to its full extent – transpose women’s gender inequality (due to the double burden in the domestic sphere), from the contemporary socialist present, to the represented pre-war period. In **Chapter 8** I highlight the iconographical meaning assigned to a heroine, such as a queen bee, a birch tree, or a white dove. For the purpose of shedding light on the empirical chapters, I investigate the audio-visual and numerical representation of women on screen and in the film industry, respectively.

## **Representation**

In order to scrutinise violence towards female characters in Yugoslav New Film, the concept of representation is crucial. Stuart Hall posits that identity is constructed ‘not outside but within representation’ and suggests cinema should be regarded ‘not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak’ (Hall 1990, 236-237). He perceives ‘representation as a signifying practice’, which rather than only meaning something, constructs meaning, relative in terms of culture and time period (Hall 1990, 276).

Feminists have made a sharp distinction between ‘woman as representation’ and ‘woman as experience’ (Andrijasevic 2007, 38). In the latter notion of femininity, women are regarded as historical subjects and fully fledged participants of social relations (Andrijasevic 2007, 38). The former notion of femininity is described by de Lauretis as one that is in close proximity with nature, unconscious, maternal, and body, but is ‘purely a representation, a positionality within a phallic model of desire and signification’ (de Lauretis 1987, 20). In an artistic world created by men, women ‘have all along been objectified as the very devices of representation’ (Chow 2001, 40). Along the same line, Buikema and Zarzycka advocate that the feminist attention to visual analysis should, more than anything else, be focused on barring such representational practice to objectifying the female body (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 121). Its focus should be on ‘[t]he female physique—be it exposed, seductive, vulnerable, self-revealing or oppressed, fighting back [or] marginalised—[because it] is a space where women’s

agency, governance and civil status are negotiated' (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 129). For the sake of confronting the traditional establishments, inclined to reproduce phallogentric structures, it is necessary to detect representations of women that frequently revert to universalism, essentialism and uniformity (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 129). Therefore, to Buikema and Zarzycka, representation should be regarded as a political issue for the purpose of socially conscious feminist reading (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 129). Furthermore, in Dhaenens' view, 'representations can be interpreted as both consenting to and contesting dominant, ideological ideas about everyday society' (Dhaenens 2011-2012, 193).

Female representations and roles are devalued on numerous occasions. Capecchi and Demaria (2001) observe that this occurs, for example, when a woman's corporeal qualities such as prettiness are highlighted. It also occurs when men behave in a paternalizing manner (by exhibiting an inappropriate body language, such as placing an arm around a woman's shoulders) or in an overprotective manner (by intervening for the sake of a woman). The same phenomenon is at work yet again when a woman's professional roles are downplayed in favour of mother and wife roles. Representational devaluing also occurs when women are depicted as victims – whose emotive features are emphasised and taken advantage of, in order to amplify dramatic aspects – such as the ones 'without work or [the ones] who have been made redundant, women who have been conned, beaten up, raped, or are fleeing from war' (Capecchi and Demaria 2001).

Even though representations of women are widespread in the visual domain, traditional gender hierarchies and divisions are still etched and emblazoned in the woman's body (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 120). Buikema and Zarzycka identify 'the problem of the female body being simultaneously overly visible and marginalised in visual culture' (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 120). Similarly, Andrijasevic finds that quite paradoxically 'the control of female sexuality goes hand in hand with its eroticization' (Andrijasevic 2007, 42).

### **Women in Yugoslav Film Production**

I align my work with Krijnen and Van Bauwel's (2015, 20) definition of representation, which is twofold. According to them, one meaning of the word representation refers to how gender is depicted in the media, what dominant ideology is behind those portrayals, and what meanings are associated with them (Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 20). The other meaning of the word representation can be understood as looking into the statistics of women and men working in

the media, in order to examine their numerical disbalance, for example whether women are outnumbered by men in quantity and prominence, and whether they are employed less frequently in specific professional roles (Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 20). This implies that men are more prominent in positions involving decision making as well as in creative artistic roles. However, even if gender equality was achieved, where there would be an equal number of women as men in film industry, it does not automatically guarantee that female characters would be portrayed from a women's perspective or from a feminist stance. Generally speaking, while male filmmakers are the usual suspects, female film workers, such as directors and scriptwriters, are also capable of making brutalised and even chauvinistic depictions of women. One of the scenarios where this happens, is in the cases of filmmakers (of any gender) who subliminally or deliberately perpetuate patriarchy, and phallogentric perception of female characters as sexualised, objectified, and visually fragmented in fetishized body-parts (see Kuhn 1992) (Mulvey 1989). Nevertheless, all things considered, the more that women are employed in the film industry, the more their stories and voices will be heard, as in the recent moves towards gender parity in film festivals (e.g., Cannes, Oscars).

In the preliminary viewing and sampling phase of my research I quantitatively investigate the presence of women in Yugoslav film production from 1961 until 1972, also noted in the methodology chapter, with which this chapter overlaps to some extent. The result of my analysis shows that women rarely took prominent roles in key film production professions, such as scriptwriters, directors, and cinematographers. It appears that there is not a single feature film involving a female cinematographer or composer during the studied period. Likewise, there was a deficit of female film directors. Although my research does not focus on short films or documentaries, it is important to mention Bojana Marijan-Makavejev and her short documentary *Vesela klasa/Merry Working Class* (1969). She was 'the female director in the male-dominated Black Wave scene' ("Black Waves, Red Horizons," 2015b). Furthermore, out of an estimated 286 feature length films directed by Yugoslav directors during the studied period (1961-72), there was only one female film director, Sofija 'Soja' Jovanović. It is important to note that she is the first Yugoslav woman director since the inception of the Yugoslav cinema, and also the first person ever to direct a feature film shot in colour in Yugoslavia (Liehm and Liehm 1980, 249). Despite all this, her work is often perceived as 'light film comedies' (Goulding 2002, 43), which could be classified as mainstream cinema. On the other hand, Slapšak observes Jovanović's films as 'subversion of the restraining Yugoslavian ideological norms of the Fifties and Sixties [which] involved adapting a literary tradition of comedy to the screen' (2007a, 37). She further points out that Jovanović deliberately utilised

unconventional comedies in order to pass ‘censors who did not see it as a criticism of their society but of the past’ (Slapšak 2007a, 37). Nevertheless, in the movie *Dr/Dr* (1962), ‘the perceptible political allusion was noted by some diligent ideological watchdogs’ (Slapšak 2007a, 37). Furthermore, Yugoslav film scholar Bogojević classifies Jovanović as the only female Yugoslav New Film director of feature length fiction films (Bogojević 2011, 256). Bogojević attributes such scarcity of women in Yugoslav cinema to gender inequity. ‘*Female idols*, both as film authors or as fictional characters, therefore, did not seem to exist or were rare, in comparison to great numbers of male heroes, both on the screen and behind the cameras’ (Bogojević 2011, 256, emphasis original). I find that parallels can be drawn between USA filmmakers Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino, who directed their films under the Hollywood mainstream studio system, and Soja Jovanović, due to similar production circumstances in an all-male world.

In addition, Jovanović was one of the rare female scriptwriters (for the films she directed) during the examined period. According to the quantitative research, out of 286 films (both Yugoslav New Film and mainstream films), in only 15 films were women involved in scriptwriting. Furthermore, in eight of these 15 films both women and men collaborated on the script, and in only seven were women the sole scriptwriters. Furthermore, in only four cases were women responsible for writing the novels that were adapted into scripts. However, that does not necessary imply that the screenplay was developed by a woman. For example, the script for the film *Čudna devojka/Strange Girl* (Jovan Živanović, 1962), was based on a novel written by a woman, Grozdana Olujić, but adapted by a man, Jug Griželj. Yugoslav New Film female scriptwriters include Mirjam Tušek, who co-scripted with Krešo Golik the film entitled *Imam dvije mame i dva tate/I Have Two Mummies and Two Daddies* (Krešo Golik, 1968), the film based on her novel. Besides, Olga Vujadinović wrote a script together with Živojin Pavlović for the segment *Žive vode/Living Waters* of the omnibus *Kapi, vode, ratnici/Raindrops, Waters, Warriors* (Živojin Pavlović, Marko Babac, and Kokan Rakonjac, 1962).

In contrast, editing was one of the rare professions through which women permeated the film industry in vast numbers. The question poses itself whether female editors had significant influence on the outlook of a film. However, it is important to keep in mind that Yugoslav New Film (including Black Wave) was auteur cinema and therefore the directors who oversaw the editing of their films had the final say in the editing room during the post-production phase. Nevertheless, female editors in Yugoslavia often worked on both art cinema, that is, Yugoslav New Film, and mainstream films, as Jelača observes, thus destabilising ‘the binary between “art” cinema and “mainstream” cinema’ (Jelača 2020, 6). Out of 286 films

produced in Yugoslavia between 1961 and 1972 with domestic directors, 44 were edited by men, in 234 women were editors, and in eight films both men and women contributed to the editing of the film project. As film critic Škrabalo points out, in the Yugoslav film industry ‘editing was seen as a women’s profession’ (in Modrić 2018). It is beyond my knowledge as to why women were preferred to men as editors, but I dare to speculate that female hands and fingers were regarded as nimbler, similar to the situation in the textile industry, because at that time film tape was physically cut and glued in order to edit the film. In European and American studios of the 1910s and 1920s, editing jobs were offered mostly to women, whose social status matched to that of a seamstress or secretary, performing manual labour (Modrić 2018). In Hollywood during the 1940s, it gradually became more difficult for women to get employed as editors (Hatch 2013). However, in the Soviet cinema, women played an important role, both as uncredited editors, as well as credited ones, who creatively contributed to the reclaimed Soviet Montage, such as Ėsfir’ (Esther) Shub, Elizaveta Svilova, and Vera Popova, renown for editing Sergei Eisenstein’s, Dziga Vertov’s, and Lev Kuleshov’s films, respectively (Kaganovsky 2018, Pearlman and Heftberger 2018). Drawing on that, I dare to offer another speculation, that the predominance of female editors in Yugoslavia was due to their technical skills and the art of editing, rather than the physical build of their delicate fingers.

Pearlman and Heftberger find that the editor ‘is, to this day, more likely to be a woman than is the director or cinematographer’ (Pearlman and Heftberger 2018). Regardless, there is a striking invisibility and lack of academic scholarship on female film editors, not just in Central and Eastern Europe, but worldwide (Heftberger and Grgić 2018). Perhaps due to bias about editing as a mere technical craft instead of a creative job, editors in general, and especially Yugoslav female editors have not been mentioned in film encyclopaedias, and are found rarely in scholarly studies, as Modrić notes (Modrić 2018). Her research on Yugoslav female editor Radojka Tanhofer, published in the *Apparatus* journal, is an exception. Besides Tanhofer, other important female editors that contributed to the Yugoslav New Film movement included Katja Majer, Lida Braniš, Kleopatra Harisijades, Ivanka Vukasović, Jelena Bjenjaš, Marija Fajdiga Pirkmajer, Olga Skrigin, Marija ‘Manja’ Fuks, Maja Lazarov, Milanka Nanović, and Mirjana Mitić. This is indicative of how the strong presence of female editors could not balance out the striking absence of women on positions as directors, and directors of photography, as well as their insufficient presence as scriptwriters. The question poses itself as to whether violence (and self-violence) and sexual objectification, which recur in many Yugoslav New Films, would not be so prominent had the stories been told from a women’s perspective, by women, and as seen by women, through a female gaze.

## Violence

The overarching theme that connects the empirical chapters and, based on my viewing, develops in both auteur Yugoslav New films and mainstream films, is the physical or psychological violence towards women. In my opinion, there are not many depictions of women who inflict violence, whereas celluloid women themselves are often exposed to violence in the analysed Yugoslav films produced between 1961 and 1972. Yugoslav cinema is an example of male cultural hegemony, as Bogojević notes, with a habit of depicting violence as recurring topic (Bogojević 2018, 112). In a similar vein, Slapšak (2000, 131) asserts that in the so-called Yugoslav Black Films (in this case synonymous with Yugoslav New Film) ‘violence towards women, [such as] slapping, is the usual means of male communication: women react to this way of disciplining with instant submissiveness’<sup>22</sup> (Slapšak 2000, 131). The heroines are not only silenced and over-simplified, but are also the carriers of meanings, having the worst that exists in society inscribed in them (Slapšak 2000, 131). Viewers could for no reason develop animosity towards women, who are the most visible aspect of misery for a man in a film, in case they would have not understood the blurred, underlying messages about unemployment, destitution, terror of police, and darkness, as the traits of a repressive world (Slapšak 2000, 132).

De Cuir (2013, 3) puts forth that in Yugoslav New Film a female character is often portrayed as victim since she is frequently treated badly, harmed, and exposed to severe cruelty. Various forms of violence towards women, such as physical beating, sexual assault, and murder, all occur occasionally in the very same film (De Cuir 2011, 109). Female protagonists are abused even when they are innocent or passive, as often was the case (De Cuir 2011, 108). Along the same line, Krelja finds that even in the case of a morally chaste heroine, the degradation of a woman as an individual is at work in Yugoslav New Film, since a man or whole environment sees her as a suitable passive object for inhumane treatment (Krelja 1979, 413). For example, a submissive heroine exposed to physical or psychological violence appears in *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967) and *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969) (Krelja 1979, 413) (**Chapter 8**). Furthermore, De Cuir perceptively identifies that the brutality towards the heroines gives an impression of punishment with patriarchal implications (De Cuir 2011, 108). Especially in the case of powerful and self-assured heroines, the motive for their maltreatment in Black Wave, that is, Yugoslav New Film, is the contradictory stance towards, or even fear of, their strength and self-confidence (De Cuir 2011, 109). They undermine the patriarchal system and must consequently be penalised for it (De Cuir 2011, 109). Another

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<sup>22</sup> Own translation.



cause of the grim destiny of celluloid women is their proven, or alleged cheating on their sexual partners (De Cuir 2011, 109). The suppression of female active sexuality by rape is a prevalent form of assault in these films (De Cuir 2011, 109). Almost as a rule, the perpetrators who kill women are the male characters that are either their partners or men they know (De Cuir 2011, 113).

De Cuir finds that the exaggerated violence of female characters ‘is one of the great ironies of the New Film era, which is often seen as a liberated moment in Yugoslav cinema’ (De Cuir 2013, 3). He observes that the roots of the cinematic violence towards heroines are in Yugoslav society (De Cuir 2011, 109). Intimidation of women by initiating fear in them, in order to protect a patriarchal order in society, is one of the reasons of brutality towards them (De Cuir 2011, 112). Correspondingly, Kronja points out that the Black Wave films mirror the destitute social position of women in Yugoslav socialist society, highlighting ideological limitations, and societal circumstances that impede them (Kronja 2018, 171). In Kronja’s view, in Yugoslav society a woman is regarded as the ‘Other’ whose sex appeal and reproductive powers unnerve men (Kronja 2018, 170). Consequently, this is reflected in the Black Wave, that is Yugoslav New Film, where, for example, in Živojin Pavlović’s films detestable depictions of female characters are accompanied with male abuse by cheating, beating, cursing, and sexual violence (Kronja 2018, 170). Ugrešić suggests that Yugoslav film is a deep and shattering insight into the image of a woman that a Yugoslav man has (Ugrešić 1994). Callousness towards female characters exposes deep-seated distrust towards real-life women, who, after the Second World War, were transformed from housewives and Partisan comrades into emancipated, sexually active employed women that lived independently, without necessarily starting a family (De Cuir 2011, 109), particularly in urban areas. Similarly, female protagonists in the Black Wave (Yugoslav New Film) are young and lacking long-term relationships, spouses or offspring, therefore not meeting the traditional expectations for their gender essentialist, procreative biological role (Kronja 2018, 171). However, the conservative traditional viewpoint on gender lingered in Yugoslav society, which implies control and possessive attitude towards women (De Cuir 2011, 112).

As mentioned above, De Cuir (2011, 112) stresses that the screened violence towards women originates from the real life violence. He claims that ‘[p]eople use fear as a tactic to suppress, so the need to control women and maintain a patriarchal structure in society is a root cause of the use of violence against women’ (De Cuir 2011, 112). Nevertheless, the impression is that De Cuir based his opinion on movie viewing instead of actual historical sources, because he listed none to support his statement. Namely, De Cuir used a semi-documentary film *Kenedi*

*se ženi/Kenedi is Getting Married* (Želimir Žilnik, 2007) as an example of an assumption that ‘a conservative, traditional outlook which stated that women were similar to property, as things to be controlled’ is responsible for the violence towards women in the Black Wave films (De Cuir 2011, 112). He stresses the advice from the semi-documentary that the groom ought to ‘slap’ the newlywed bride on the wedding night, so she would learn to fear her husband. Consequently, De Cuir grounds on this violent advice his argument about the screened violence towards women – what it all comes down to is that it originates from real life. This becomes problematic because the semi-documentary film is about Roma minority, whilst De Cuir is using it to make generalisation about the mindset of all Yugoslav men. Furthermore, the prevalent opinion among scholars, as Hofman (2009, 193) notes, is that Yugoslav women had more rights before the Yugoslav wars of secession (1991-1995) than they do today in the former Yugoslav republics. The semi-documentary from 2007, which is shot in a capitalist society, could hardly illustrate the lives of women four decades prior in a socialist society. Nonetheless, I do not refute De Cuir’s implication that there was indeed real-life violence towards women in the socialist Yugoslavia – keeping in mind the sociological and feminist findings on the existence of violence in Yugoslav society (see Bonfiglioli 2017, 8; Božinović 1996, 221; Lóránd 2018, 193; Majstorović 2016, 1095; Sklevicky 1996, 174; Ugrešić 1994) – as well as the prevalence of violence towards women worldwide, especially sexual in light of the #MeToo movement. However, I find De Cuir’s choice of example of one violent man in a semi-documentary film – whom he used to illustrate his argument about violent treatment of women by Yugoslav men in general – rather unsuitable and exaggerated.

Furthermore, my research departs from the idea that the represented violence in Yugoslav films is a construction or indirect refraction, whereas De Cuir puts forth that the represented violence is a reflection of real life, directly transferred to cinema. Similar stances to De Cuir’s (2011), with regard to Yugoslav New Film mirroring reality, are also held by Kronja (2018, 171), as exemplified above. Therefore, they could be considered as the proponents of reflection theory (see Rosen 1975, Haskell 1987), initially originating from sociology, which argues that films directly reflect life, meaning that if the society is violent, the films will show violence. As mentioned above, I do not deny that there was indeed violence towards women in Yugoslav society, as it can still regretfully be seen in societies worldwide today. Nor do I disagree that films reflect reality in some of their incarnations, namely as its indirect reflections and refractions. However, it is important to note that the binary stance to representation is often considered as problematic because ‘one of two parts involved is supposed to be a copy, a replica, an objectified “stand-in” for the other’ (Chow 2001, 38).

Contemporary film theory (see Favero 2011, Beganović 2012), and feminist film theory (see Kuhn 1992, Jelača 2013b, Johnston 2000) point out that films do not merely reflect life, but also construct meanings. For example, to borrow from Gerbner's opinion on medium other than film, yet similar, 'television violence is communication, not violence' (Gerbner 1972, 28). Gerbner introduced cultivation theory within media studies, whereas the concept of 'cultivation' is used 'to describe the independent contributions television viewing makes to viewer conceptions of social reality' (Gerbner 1998, 180). Gerbner's idea that representations of violence are communication about violence and not actual violence is also endorsed by Hall (2005[1980], 120), who in his study of Western films stresses 'that what audiences were receiving was not "violence" but messages about violence' (Hall 2007, 390). Similarly, feminist film theory switched the focus from observing cinema as simply mirroring meanings about femininity and women, that is, about sexual difference, to the opinion of it as a cultural practice that produces, reproduces, and represents them (Smelik 1998, 7-9). In fact, feminist scholars have, since the 1970s, raised a concern about ubiquity of eroticised female bodies in the media, asserting that the meaning attributed to gender, ethnicity and race is not inherent, but produced, and such identity models are expressed through visuals (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 119). The issue of anti-essentialism was also tackled by discourse scholars and cultural studies scholars, by shifting research 'focus from gender being determined by biological sex to gender being constructed in interaction through discourse' (Majstorović and Lassen 2011, 1). Along the same lines, Wang contends that such a 'shift transformed the perception of film as a reflection of reality to an active, systematic reproduction of dominant patriarchal cultural values, especially through its construction of subject positions for viewers' identification' (Wang 2017, 78). Likewise, Capecchi and Demaria find in television studies that what is shown on the television screen is not about reflection of reality, but about what female and, consequently, male identity roles it suggests, and thus what possibilities of identification are available for spectators depending on their gender (Capecchi and Demaria 2001). In their view, televised reality is constructed in a manner that is inclined to give prior importance to the 'male' while disregarding the complexity of the 'female' (Capecchi and Demaria 2001). Therefore, grounded in the aforementioned theories, I do not approach representations as mere reflections, but as refractions, and constructions of the meanings produced about women.

Furthermore, Dillman (2014, 33) theorises on represented violence towards women, that regardless of how emancipating a film is, if it results in an unnatural death of a female character, all the empowering effects are annulled since it obliterates female agency. Similarly, Bronfen (1992, 181) asserts that depictions featuring the demise of a pretty woman exist in order to

maintain, reaffirm, or fortify the status quo of male-oriented cultural norms and values. Namely, on the one hand, the death of a woman who poses a threat reinstates an order that was temporarily interrupted due to her presence (Bronfen 1992, 181). On the other hand, the death of a honourable blameless woman is for the purpose of social critique and change (Bronfen 1992, 181). Although this is only one possible interpretation with regard to the disempowering effects of a violent demise of a heroine, I find it plausible and applicable to my analysis of case studies, because from my viewing of Yugoslav New Films, if a heroine is dead, she does not stand a chance to be a survivor or a winner. To borrow from hooks' observations on Hollywood cinema, '[t]he death that captures the public imagination in movies, the death that sells, is passionate, sexualised, glamorised and violent' (hooks 2002, 91). In the cases where a woman is killed by the use of a gun, Kaplan's theory comes to aid, stating that murder weapon stands for phallus, which dominates a woman by taking her life (Kaplan 1990, 6), as implemented in the analysis of the case study film *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969) (**Chapter 4**). In addition, I pay particular attention not only to represented murder, but to any type of celluloid gender-based violence – such as rape, physical beating, illness, and suicide – and investigate whether, and how, it fetters and disenfranchises the depicted women. Female characters are also seldomly given the power of the gaze, especially the desiring gaze (Kaplan 1990, 27, Mulvey 1989, 19), and even in those infrequent instances, it is soon followed by their disempowerment and punishment (Williams 1984, 85, Doane 1984, 72).

## **Gaze**

Besides the lack of representation of women in Yugoslav film production, apart from narrative violence that befalls female protagonists, there are also representational practices, in terms of camera framing and editing usage, that have an influence on how women are shown onscreen (see Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, Mulvey 1989, Kuhn 1992). More often than not, female characters in Yugoslav New Film are objectified. In his study of classical European paintings and contemporary publicity images, Berger observes that 'men act and women appear' (Berger 1977, 47). Women are portrayed in a diverse manner from men since the 'ideal' viewer is supposed to be a man, while the depiction of a woman is intended to please him (Berger 1977, 64). In those nude European art paintings the artists and viewers who bought them were typically men, while the ones who were objectified on those paintings were typically women (Berger 1977, 63). Such historical attitudes towards the depictions of women normalised as

socially acceptable the attitudes of men who stare at women and of women who look at themselves being stared at, thus transforming themselves into an object, especially of vision, that is, a sight (Berger 1977, 47). Therefore, this unequal relationship affects not only stance of men towards women, as if they were a thing or an abstraction, but also women's attitude to themselves (Berger 1977, 47). Looking up to men, they scan themselves and their own femininity, in a manner similar to men (Berger 1977, 63).

Berger's stances are aligned with Mulvey's (1989), first published in 1975, in her ground-breaking article *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, which influenced film feminism. Film feminists who utilise psychoanalysis, such as Mulvey, investigate closely how visual images of femininity and masculinity, which are depicted in a manner that disempowers female characters, produce viewers' positions that are gendered (Rose 2016, 149). Mulvey finds that female characters imply *to-be-looked-at-ness*, due to their traditional exhibitionist role in which they are concurrently displayed as a glamorous, isolated, erotic object and gazed at as a sexualised spectacle for the enjoyment of men (Mulvey 1989, 19). Although the gaze is pleasurable for the ones who actively control it, this being men, it can also be dangerous, whereby a woman portrayed as a representation and the object of such gaze embodies this paradox (Mulvey 1989, 19). The fact she does not possess a penis infers danger of castration which the gaze disavows, and thus poses the threat of displeasure and anxiety (Mulvey 1989, 21). The male subconscious has two ways to alleviate this castration anxiety (Mulvey 1989, 21). The first is by voyeurism, which is linked with sadism. It manifests itself by scrutinising the objectified female character, establishing her guilt (closely related to castration) and accordingly punishing or forgiving her (after setting her back on the right path) (Mulvey 1989, 21-22). The second is by fetishistic scopophilia, that is, by enhancing the glamorousness and corporeal beauty of the portrayed objectified character in order to transform her completely into a fetish, so that it becomes soothing rather than threatening, or by the substitution with a fetish object, such as a shoe, which facilitates the denial of female castration by becoming the replacement for the missing phallus (Mulvey 1989, 11-21). Furthermore, Mulvey argues that there are three types of gazes that objectify a woman and that they are all male. These include (1) the camera as an extension of male directors' outlook, (2) male protagonists in a film, and (3) male spectators. However, Mulvey's third aspect of male gaze was found problematic by feminist scholars coming from numerous approaches (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 122). For example, de Lauretis (1987, 99) reproaches Mulvey for overlooking what happens to female viewers. Besides, she pinpoints theoretical problems linked to the inferred masculinity or maleness of the Mulveyan gaze, such as Mulvey's implied or ideal viewer, whose pleasure in

looking is masculine, or cinematic enunciation, which reaches for a spectator as masculine or male (Kuhn 1994, 195-197). In the 1980s, film feminist scholars differentiated audiences, which is a social and cultural concept of cinema-going, from the spectatorship, which is 'understood as a mental or psychological relationship or engagement with the film text' (Kuhn, Biltreyst, and Meers 2017, 5). In contrast to spectatorship, often (mis)perceived as homogenous, audiences can be differentiated in terms of their location, historical moment, identity, race, ethnicity, earnings, social, or cultural status (Biltreyst and Meers 2011, 416). A case-by-case approach to every film's mode of reception should be taken, Biltreyst and Meers (2016, 15) argue, due to the unique interplay of circumstances, determined by the context of a film's production in a specific historical time and place. As mentioned above, Mulvey's universalisation of the male gaze has been heavily criticised, due to her implicit assumption that the spectator is a man, as well as the omission to acknowledge what happens with female spectators, spectators of colour, gay spectators, and spectators from different social backgrounds (see Bergstrom and Doane 1989, White 2007). Still, such shortcomings do not diminish her enormous contribution to feminist film scholarship. Furthermore, in her later work Mulvey tries to redress the issue of the missing female spectatorship in *Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' inspired by King Vidor's 'Duel in the Sun' (1946)* (1989), *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image* (2006), and *Afterimages: On Cinema, Women and Changing Times* (2019). In my opinion, the third aspect of the male gaze should be read as if some films are tailored for hypothetical male spectators, whereas it is up to the wide range of the real audiences whether they will interpret these films as they are intended, or rather deconstruct them. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration, as Kuhn notes, that spectatorship has a fluid and multiple nature, because in real-life it consists of actual women in the cinema audiences, with distinctions in sexual preference (e.g. lesbians), age-groups, social class, and race (e.g. non-white women) (Kuhn 1994, 208).

Similar to Mulvey, in hooks' opinion, one of the critiques of feminist film theory, grounded in psychoanalytic framework, is that such theory is ahistorical and gives priority to sexual difference, which omits acknowledgment of race, echoing the absence of black femininity that takes place in films, thus stifling any debate about a specific type of sexual difference, namely racialized sexual difference (hooks 2015, 123). Numerous feminist film scholars still construct their argument as if it were about all women, while in fact, it refers only to white women (hooks 2015, 123). It could also be argued that my research draws from this frame of reference, since all films analysed in my PhD research are about white female characters and are interpreted by a white woman. However, in Yugoslav films produced

between 1961 and 1972, the representations of racial difference are very scarce. This is due to the population in former Yugoslavia being predominantly white. To my knowledge, there were only a few depictions of the Roma minority<sup>23</sup> and a representation of an African man<sup>24</sup>. Although my study does not focus closely on the representation of race, Yugoslav films have the potential for such analysis despite the predominantly white society and ‘white’ films.

In fact, feminist visual literacy has the prospect of bringing such underlying relations of race, gender, and ethnicity, obfuscated in the image, to the fore (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 119-120). In line with this, Chow puts forward that ‘representation cannot be divorced from gender, race, class and other differences involving hierarchy and subordination’ (Chow 2001, 49). Moreover, she finds that ‘[t]he disputes over masculinist representations of women have an intimate parallel in the disputes over Western representations of non/Western peoples and cultures’ (Chow 2001, 42). In a similar view, hooks assesses that in the film *She’s Gotta Have It* (Spike Lee, 1986), director Lee reproduces Hollywood mainstream patriarchal filmic practices by depicting a female character as an object of a male desire and gaze (hooks 2015, 126). Thus, he merely applies the dominant pattern of the objectified celluloid white womanhood onto black womanhood, substituting the sexualised white body with a black one (hooks 2015, 126). hooks’ description of the construction of a female character as an object of

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<sup>23</sup> Director Aleksandar Petrović gave prominence to the Roma minority in his internationally acclaimed films *Skupljači Perja/Feather collectors* a.k.a. *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967) and *Biće skoro propast sveta/It Rains in my Village* (1968). However, I opted for his more recent, less well-known film *Tri/Three* (1965), which also has a Roma episodic character, but male (who forces a bear to dance on the hind legs). Since my research emphasis is on femininities and not masculinities, I did not focus on this character. Nevertheless, the representation of Roma female character Tisa in *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* – interpreted by Gordana Jovanović, a non-professional actress of Roma origin whom Petrović discovered – is worthy of attention and a suggestion for further research. While Roma female characters, such as Tisa and Lenče (played by Olivera Vučo, who is not Roma) have prominent roles in the previously mentioned film, in *It Rains in my Village* Gordana Jovanović, the same actress who impersonated Tisa, has less important, episodic role. Similar, episodic treatment of Roma female character is in *Memento* (Dimitrie Osmanli, 1967), featuring a Roma chiromancer in one scene. Other examples of Roma characters, in this case episodic male ones, are in *Čovek nije tica/Man is Not a Bird* (Dušan Makavejev, 1965), namely two Roma factory workers who steal copper wire. Furthermore, Yugoslav New Film *Pohod/The Trek* (Đorđe Kadijević, 1968) features an episodic Roma family (also with a bear), eventually killed by German occupiers. Films with a prominent Roma male character include the ones directed by Puriša Đorđević, such as *San/The Dream* (1966), *Jutro/The Morning* (1967), and *Podne/Noon* (1968), and it is interpreted by actor Mija Aleksić, who is not Roma. Mainstream films from the same period also feature Romani characters, mostly episodic, for example in *Krvava bajka/Bloody Tale* (Branimir ‘Tori’ Janković, 1969), in which young boys, who were shoe shiners, defiantly refused to clean shoes of the German occupier, amidst Kragujevac massacre of several thousands of Yugoslav civilians.

<sup>24</sup> To my knowledge, the only Yugoslav film produced from 1961 until 1972 that has a black African character is dark humoured Yugoslav New Film *Cross Country* (Puriša Đorđević, 1969). The character is a male medical student from Nigeria, murdered by cremation in a crematorium where he worked, by his brother-in-law in a fit of jealousy over a girl. When the Nigerian man, aware of his impending death, asks his white brother-in-law if he is against the black people, the brother-in-law responds that he is against anyone who ‘fucks with his heart’. Therefore, in the case of this murder, the motif does not seem to be a result of miscegenation nor racism but rather jealousy.

phallographic gaze can be borrowed and applied on Yugoslav New Film, since it is a male-oriented movement, which also follows a pattern of representing eroticised women.

### **Raped woman as Allegory of Raped Nation**

In **Chapter 4**, I argue that in Yugoslav New Film one of the possible readings of a raped female character is as an allegory for political rape of a nation or stratum of a nation. The selected case study films tackle, in particular, the rapes of vulnerable and dependent women in films set in the historical past, around the time that there was a political rift between Tito and Stalin in 1948. The motif of woman as nation and rape as allegory has been spotted in various cinematographies, such as: Balkan (Iordanova, 2001, 204), Polish (Mazierska 2006, 161), Chinese (Cui 2003, 20), Middle Eastern (Atakav 2017, 234), French (MacDonald 2010, 58), and Indian (Banerjee 2016, 71). According to Russell's observations regarding art cinema, 'rape serves as a metaphor, symbol, plot device, for character transformation, catalyst or narrative resolution' (2010, 4). Projansky (2001, 1) underlines that the rape metaphor is often utilized in order to depict the degradation of a country. Furthermore, Taylor-Jones (2013) noted that the two probable portrayals of a woman in the relation to the nation were: a woman as the mother of the nation (with the power of procreation) or a woman as the sexually violated nation. Mostov (1999, 89-91) points out the metaphoric outlining of the (former) Yugoslav nation as a female body and highlights gendering of borderlines and spaces. Grounded in her theory, I examine how in selected Yugoslav New Films images of soil, farmlands, and landscapes are feminised by being linked with depictions of sexual violence towards female characters. I investigate the relation between a female rape and the seizure of lands, animals, crops, and property, that is to say, the general misuse of power by pro-Stalinists in Yugoslavia, who raped both physically and ideologically. Along the same lines, Boglić notes that in numerous films a woman appears 'always as an object of the environment, family, prejudices, society, class, nation'<sup>25</sup> (Boglić 1980, 123). Women are perceived 'as property, akin to territory and to borders which should, likewise, be "protected" (and, in that perspective) conquered' (Iveković 1995, 10). National images are constructed through interconnected strategies of gendering the nation and of sexualizing representation, embodied in a female character. As a depicted Other, she connotes sociocultural subjugation, while as a sexualised icon, she functions as an eroticised spectacle (Cui 2005, 832). In her research on Balkan cinema, including Yugoslav, Iordanova (1996) states

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<sup>25</sup> Own translation.



that such allegorical representations are not due to directors' concern for treatment of women – although they were occasionally critical of patriarchy – but more likely due to their desire to express messages, especially political, embedded in a body of a woman. This is in line with Imre's research, where she points out 'the "artistic character" of East European cinema – the Eurocentric male or masculine intellectual's attempt to process national history in a sophisticated, self-reflective, allegorical film style' (Imre 2005, xii). Considering the fact that all the film directors of case study films are men, because all feature length fiction Yugoslav New Films are directed by men, they use female character's body to their own means, in order to convey an allegory. To borrow from Dillman's observations on the cinema of the U.S., films can be simultaneously chauvinist and egalitarian (Dillman 2014, 2-3).

Shown in extremes in the so-called Black Film (in this instance synonymous with Yugoslav New Film), the marginalised existence of the female character and her violated body stand for the degraded humanity (Kronja 2018, 170). Similarly, Daković interprets a woman as the Other, namely nation, culture or country (Daković 1996, 42). She notes that in the Yugoslav Black Wave (in this instance synonymous with Yugoslav New Film), a female character is often depicted as the oppressed symbolical figure, within the wider exploration of topics such as economic hardship, social marginality, ethnicity, and repression of an individual by the society (Daković 1996, 42).

Jelača metaphorically links a female body with the territory that the woman in question inhabits, whereas both parts of this gendered nationhood dyad are subjected to patriarchal control and battled over (Jelača 2013a, 136). She gives as an example Yugoslava's (Milja Vujanović) body in *Early Works*, which does not stand for itself but is a metaphor for something else, such as the Yugoslav state, the society in its entirety, or collective belonging, dedication, and suffering (Jelača 2013b, 312-313). The female story is appropriated to such an extent that it stops being a story about a woman herself (Jelača 2013b, 313). Women are not only depicted, but actually constructed through films, as Jelača notes (Jelača 2013b, 311) in line with contemporary film feminist theory (see Kuhn 1992). Therefore, besides reading a female character as a mere reflection of reality, she can also be perceived as a construction of meaning.

On the one hand, by viewing 269 Yugoslav films made between 1961 and 1972, I argue that Yugoslav mainstream films often feature an allegory of female rape or attempted rape by an external enemy during the occupation, namely by Germans (and their collaborationists, who are occasionally domestic, but in that case perceived as an extension of an enemy), or the Ottomans. Furthermore, there are some Yugoslav New Film examples that exhibit such pattern, as *Roj/The Beehive* (Miodrag Mića Popović, 1966), in which Stojanka's (Mira Stupica) rape is

an allegory of external problems, namely the occupation by the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, Yugoslav New Films more often depict a rapist as homegrown, especially in post-WW2 themed films, with intent to address internal Yugoslav problems via raped female characters who embody the raped nation, such as Yugoslava (Milja Vujanović) in *Early Works*. In **Chapter 4**, the selected case study films in which a raped woman stands for a raped nation or stratum of a nation are: *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969), *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The role of my Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin ‘Bahro’ Čengić), and *Doručak sa đavolom/Breakfast with the Devil* (Miroslav ‘Mika’ Antić, 1971). In the case of these three Yugoslav New Films, sexual abuse signifies ideological and physical abuse on domestic terrain. In addition, I investigate how matters of class, in a supposedly classless Yugoslav socialist society, are expressed through sexual violence towards, for instance, the peasants or remnants of pre-WW2 dissolving bourgeoisie, thereby symbolising the injustice towards their strata.

### **Treacherous women: Female Partisan and Bourgeois Woman**

Besides rape, another form of violence towards women in Yugoslav New Film includes execution. The empirical **Chapter 6** features my perspective on the representations of female characters, both civilian and Partisan, in the Second World War-themed films, and their violent deaths by execution, for their alleged treachery, as seen in the films *Morning, Three, and Tough Guys*. Important authors, relevant to this theme, are Stojčić and Duhaček (2016), whose article *From Partisans to Housewives: Representation of Women in Yugoslav Cinema* follows the transformation of portrayals of women, from Partisans to housewives, that is their reintroduction to domesticity. Other authors who have conducted research on the representation of female characters in Partisan-themed films are for example, Batinić (2015), who wrote a book length study on Yugoslav Partisan women, titled *Women and Yugoslav Partisans: A History of World War II Resistance*, that touches upon their cinematic portrayals. In addition, an indispensable contribution is the book *Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture* (2015a), edited by Jakiša and Gilić. Gender-wise, especially pertinent are its book chapters: *With or Without Gun: Staging Female Partisans in Socialist Yugoslavia* by Vittorelli (2015), and *From Slavko to Slavica* by Wurm (2015). Both chapters tackle representational disarmament of a female Partisan, since she is frequently shown only carrying a weapon,

without actually using it, and depicted more often as a Partisan nurse who saves lives, instead of a Partisan fighter who takes them.

Another valuable source of information on Yugoslav New Film and gender is De Cuir's (2011) book *Yugoslav Black Wave: Polemical Cinema from 1963-72 in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, which dedicates one segment to representations of violence towards women, such as murder, beating, and/or rape. De Cuir (2011) juxtaposes mistreatment of women in the Black Wave, that is, Yugoslav New Film, with the conduct towards them in Partisan-themed war films, which I will elaborate further in this chapter. Additionally, in *Partisan 'Realism': Representations of Wartime Past and State-Building future in the Cinema of Socialist Yugoslavia*, De Cuir (2013, 3) notes that the mistreatment of female characters is ironic for Yugoslav New Film, because it is frequently perceived as a liberated period of Yugoslav cinema. Additionally, De Cuir has also shed light on the representation of women in Yugoslav New Film and the Black Wave by touching upon gender issues in the chapter length article *The Yugoslav Black Wave: The History and Poetics of Polemical Cinema in the 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia* (2012). Furthermore, De Cuir's pieces, which occasionally broach on the portrayals of female characters, include *Serbian Cutting: assemblage and the archival impulse in the films of Dušan Makavejev* (DeCuir 2011). Lastly, I strive towards contributing and broadening the scholarship on this under-researched topic with my published book chapter, found in **Chapter 6** of this thesis, which focuses on the depictions of women, both civilian and Partisan, perceived as treacherous, and their subsequent punishment.

In real life, women played an active role in the Partisan struggle for the liberation from Nazi occupation, both in the background (as for instance logistical support, couriers and, spies) and on the frontline (for example fighters and nurses) (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 69). Gender equity was a significant pillar of Yugoslavia's official ideology (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 69). Similarly, in the wake of the Second World War, the represented female Partisan, a revolutionary Yugoslav icon, was heroic and self-sacrificial for a higher cause (Batinić 2015, 16). In the first Yugoslav films, which preceded the Yugoslav New Film movement, a female character is highly regarded, as a myth (Boglić 1980, 122-3). In such Second World War-themed films, she is a Partisan fighter, a nurse, a consoler, and a hero (Boglić 1980, 122). She completes dangerous tasks and then dies heroically on the battlefields of the revolution (Boglić 1980, 122). She carries a rifle equally to a man, fighting against the German occupiers and their collaborators (Boglić 1980, 122). Thus, early Yugoslav films, inspired by real-life participation of female Partisans in the liberation struggle, promote emancipation of women (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 79). Gender equality is not only recognised, but a female character, who stands

for gentleness in war brutality, is symbolically placed on a pedestal (Boglić 1980, 122-3). In these early narratives, heroines were portrayed as a collective revolutionary force signifying the nation in rebellion, whereas later films focus more on the individual than on collective female Partisan efforts in liberation of the country (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 79), for example Yugoslav New Films. In my view, all the above-mentioned authors, including Boglić, Stojčić and Duhaček, De Cuir, and Batinić, agree that in the early Yugoslav film, the female Partisan was depicted with reverence.

In the decades that followed, beginning from the 1960s, her heroic depiction commenced to be marginalised and featured in either sexually objectified roles of a girlfriend and lover, or in more traditional female supporting roles of a mother, sister, and relative of a male hero (Batinić 2015, 244). A woman begins appearing as a decoration, as a source of temptation and mistake of a warrior, as well as something that distracts a man from his main goal, for example, from fighting and dedication to a cause of ideology and revolution (Boglić 1980, 123). This can be seen in Partisan-themed Yugoslav New Film *Jutro/Morning* (1967) by Puriša Đorđević. The war does not allow a Partisan heroine (Milena Dravić) to develop enough as a subject, although she participated in it equally with men and won the war (Boglić 1980, 123). In the denouement of the film men indict the heroine, sentence her and finally execute her (Boglić 1980, 123). Two of the men who are implicated in her punishment, which was for treachery, are her former Partisan lovers. As director Đorđević suggests with his film, the Partisan heroine's female nature, after all, was not meant for war, Boglić ironically notes (Boglić 1980, 123).

Along the same lines, Krelja asserts that dangerous women appear not only in Yugoslav New Films set in a contemporary moment of the former socialist Yugoslavia, but also in films set in the past. For instance, in Partisan-themed films by Mladimir 'Puriša' Đorđević: *Devojka/Girl* (1965), *San/Dream* (1966), and previously noted *Morning* (Krelja 1979, 409). Searching for the root of female sin in the bygone times, these films show that the contact of the terrible Second World War mechanism with allegedly frail female body and soul put many temptations in the way of a woman (Krelja 1979, 409). Furthermore, in Živojin Pavlović's *Zaseda/Ambush* (1969) the moral failure of a girl triggers the destruction of the Partisan hero's ideals (Krelja 1979, 410). A conclusion drawn by watching such Yugoslav New Films is that where a man is degraded, there must be some treacherous woman who is responsible for his decline (Krelja 1979, 410).

Yugoslav New Film, therefore, initiated depictions of the female Partisan as flawed and sexual, which was at the time scandalous, and eventually leading to her being dethroned

(Batinić 2015, 241). The tendency to transform a Partisan woman from an independent subject into an eroticised object of love was also present in the thematically and formally mainstream Partisan-themed films, but her metamorphosis was more gradual and subtle in them than in auteur Yugoslav New Films, which coexisted together in the 1960s and 1970s (Batinić 2015, 244). Still, the outcome was akin in both auteur and mainstream films (Batinić 2015, 244). Batinić places the causes of a female Partisan's dethroning exclusively in Yugoslavia's political predicaments that eventually lead to its disintegration (Batinić 2015, 231). In contrast, grounded in Stojčić and Duhaček (2016), Lóránd (2015), and Jovanović (2014), I interpret the process of the increasing feminisation and sexualisation of a female Partisan differently. Therefore, in the selected case studied films, I examine such process as a consequence of the commodification of female bodies due to consumerism that was on the rise in the Yugoslav socialist society, as well as the patriarchal tendency to re-domesticate women (including female war veterans) after the Second World War.

Stojčić and Duhaček (2016, 69) assert that the depictions of women transformed from female Partisans to consumers and housewives in the late 1960s, due to changes in the Yugoslav society and the relinquishment of the efforts on female liberation that was originally implemented in the wake of the Second World War. Along the same lines, Lóránd (2015, 124-5) pinpoints commercialisation of women's press in the post-war Yugoslavia, with tendencies to either reassert themes that were traditionally associated with women – in magazines initially intended for former female Partisan fighters, thus obliterating their emancipatory function – or to publish new magazines with emphasis on fashion, housekeeping and beauty. She finds that the popular press upholds traditional stereotypes of women and men (Lóránd 2015, 121). In the popular media as well as throughout the art history, women are often depicted as being silenced and deprived of their individuality and subjectivity (Lóránd 2015, 129). Both in everyday life and in the popular press, Yugoslav women progressively ceased to be portrayed as Partisans, and were 'left as happy housewives or worker women at the conveyor-belt' (Lóránd 2018, 124). Similarly, in Yugoslav cinema the image of the independent and powerful Partisan fighter was gradually disappearing because patriarchal ideas were reintroduced together with double standards for men and women (Lóránd 2015, 131).

In contrast, De Cuir (2013, 3) highlights reverence towards women in mainstream Partisan War films, in which they were treated with respect by the men that were close to them, and juxtaposes it with abuse, escalating even into murder, of women depicted in the Black Wave, that is, Yugoslav New Film. As an example of such veneration he gives Partisan war film *Slavica* (Vjekoslav Afrić, 1947) (De Cuir 2013, 3). However, it is important to keep in

mind the above-mentioned historical transformation, degradation, femininization, and sexualisation of a female Partisan character in Yugoslav cinema, as noted by, for instance, Boglić (1980), Batinić (2015), Stojić and Duhaček (2016), and Lóránd (2015), which occurred in both Yugoslav New Film, and its contemporary mainstream cinema. In the light of that, De Cuir's comparison between the reverence of women in an early Partisan-themed film *Slavica*, and violence towards them in the Black Wave, roughly two decades later, is not comparable timewise and content-wise. In the 1960s and 1970s, not only modern female protagonists were exposed to debasement, but Partisan characters as well, who were not venerated as before, during the early Classical Yugoslav Cinema. If we take as an example a film which timewise roughly corresponds to the Black Wave – the Partisan-themed mainstream blockbuster *Bitka na Neretvi/Battle of Neretva* (Veljko Bulajić, 1969), derogatorily labelled as belonging to the Red Wave – it is possible to detect the abasement of a female Partisan in it.

Both Yugoslav New Films and mainstream films rarely show women that kill, since female characters are mostly represented as givers of life rather than takers. As Vittorelli (2015) and Wurm (2015) point out, there are certain tendencies in Yugoslav cinematography: to underscore their abilities as nurturers of life, as nurses, as opposed to takers of life, as Partisan fighters, and to represent Partisan heroines as only holding a weapon without actually using it. The fact that such representational disarmament of female warriors was normalised is evident in one scene of *Battle of Neretva*. Amongst many Partisan soldiers (all male except for one woman), who are in retreat, the Partisan commander stops the only female Partisan from the all-male group of Partisan deserters that run by and seizes her. As he holds her, she cowardly screams 'Let me go! They will kill us! We are doomed! Let go of me! Let's run away, comrades!' She throws away the rifle, manages to get out of her superior's grip, and flees. Whilst all the male deserters escape safely in their anonymity as film extras, the female Partisan coward is put in the spotlight, singled out, and accentuated by the director, thus becoming not only a traitor, but a traitor defined by her female gender, disarmed by throwing-away her own weapon. There is nothing heroic about her behaviour, nor is she treated with respect by her superior.

Therefore, I expand on De Cuir's work that, even though heroine Slavica is treated with deference in the Partisan-themed mainstream film from 1947, she is still murdered in the denouement, and thus faces grim destiny, which makes her ultimate fate similar to the ones of many female characters in Yugoslav New Film in the 1960s and 1970s. Although De Cuir accurately points out that Slavica dies a heroic death, whereas demises of Yugoslav New Film heroines are devoid of pathos, and not honourable, romanticised, or glorified (De Cuir 2011,

113), I base my opinion on Dillman's (2014) theory that, regardless of whether a cinematic death is heroic or not, in any case it spells disempowerment of women.

Furthermore, I agree with De Cuir's work that in Partisan-themed mainstream films indeed women are treated with consideration by Yugoslav men, but I add to it that they are still exposed to violence and disrespect by the enemy. In fact, from my viewing of both Yugoslav New Films, and formally and thematically mainstream Partisan-themed films (I refer to the ones made from 1961 until 1972, although Partisan-themed films were also made before, and after) women are frequently exposed to violence.

The difference is that in the mainstream Partisan-themed films – set in the Second World War during the occupation – the perpetrator of violence towards women is more likely to be the foreign enemy (or their collaborationist as the long arm of the enemy). In contrast, in Yugoslav New Film – frequently depicting contemporary, socialist present at the time, but also occasionally set in the Second World War and Partisan-themed – the culprit is more likely to be domestic, often known to the victim. Based on my viewing, regardless of whether the perpetrator might be foreign or domestic, female characters are equally exposed to violence in both Yugoslav New Film and mainstream films. Since such feature-length fictional films made from 1961 until 1972 were predominantly directed by men (with the only exception of female director Sofija 'Soja' Jovanović), I find appropriate to quote here Bal's observation that '[m]en have always spoken *for* and *about* women—representing them' (2001, 346, emphasis original).

The representations of celluloid women in Second World War are often juxtapositions between a female Partisan, as a personification of a revolutionary force, and an immoral woman, who is the collaborator of the enemy and a member of the dissolving pre-war bourgeoisie (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 81). These depictions conflate gender and class (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 81). Stojčić and Duhaček (2016, 81) give an example of how in *Abeceda straha/Alphabet of Fear* (Fadil Hadžić, 1961), a formally and thematically mainstream film, bourgeois female characters are stereotyped as negative. I concur with Stojčić and Duhaček in this regard that women are indeed stereotyped in mainstream films. Nevertheless, I expand on it that contrary to mainstream films, Yugoslav New Film representations of bourgeois femininity subvert this cliché. Although occasionally depicted as treacherous, bourgeois women are not necessarily negative characters but rather alluring, desirable, and above all tragic due to their untimely demises, namely in film *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965).

Jovanović's (2014) indispensable doctoral thesis, entitled *Gender and Sexuality in the Classical Yugoslav Cinema, 1947-1962*, comes to aid here. While mainly focusing on the Classical Yugoslav Cinema (roughly from 1947 until 1962), it makes a significant contribution

by raising the topic of gender in Yugoslav New Film. Jovanović notes that in the early Classical Yugoslav Cinema (that preceded Yugoslav New Film) bourgeois women were not initially rehabilitated. Free, open, and promiscuous sexuality was always linked with bad female characters, who originated from the pre-war bourgeoisie stratum, socialised with the enemy, and their moral fall equated their ideological fall (Jovanović 2014, 101). In contrast, decent Partisan, and civilian heroines were symbols of decorum and morality, who put their energy into fight for liberation from the enemy instead of fraternising with it (Jovanović 2014, 101). These diametrically opposite characters were often juxtaposed with each other within the same film (Jovanović 2014, 101). However, Jovanović (2014, 129) spots a gradually introduced tendency of the Classical Yugoslav Cinema to redeem the beautiful, fallen, bourgeois, collaborationist female character. Such tendency corresponds to a shift in Yugoslav society in which the emphasised femininity, that was repressed during the war, appeared again in the 1950s when the Yugoslav socialism made a turn from production to consumption (not only economy-wise but values-wise as well) (Jovanović 2014, 10). Furthermore, from 1950s ‘re-patriarchalization or re-masculinization’ was introduced, reflected in the dominance of men (Jovanović 2014, 10). So, female physical appearance was given prominence in real-life as well as in the system of representation (Jovanović 2014, 10-11).

The vindication of a bourgeois female character is highlighted in the late Yugoslav cinema (before the wars of secession), in which she is depicted as more graceful, ladylike, and well-mannered, namely in contrast with a Partisan woman, who is portrayed as uncultured, unrefined, and less feminine (Batinić 2015, 252). I find Batinić’s point also applicable on a number of Yugoslav New Films, such as *Uloga moje porodice u svetskoj revoluciji/The Role of My Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin ‘Bato’ Čengić, 1971), *Delije/The Tough Guys* (Miodrag ‘Mića’ Popović, 1968), and *Jutro/The Morning*, because bourgeois women are represented as being more sophisticated and having more worldly experience than some Partisan women with whom they are juxtaposed. Still, it is important to note that my feminist readings of the representations of violence towards female collaborators – as in film *Three*, which could be interpreted as equating victims: the sufferers of fascism, with the collaborators of fascism – are not intended as ‘attempts at “rehabilitating” fascism carried on by numerous apologetic interpretations’ (Traverso 2016, 322). This is imperative to keep in mind, because ‘the transition towards the post-Yugoslav and the post-socialist context brought a highly charged nationalistic memory to the fore, at the expense of – indeed to the point of erasing – the earlier antifascist, socialist, Yugoslav memory, which was transnationalist par excellence’ (Kirn 2014, 314). To summarise, my point is that, regardless of their class and social status,



female characters are affected by workings of patriarchy, such as male violence towards them and policing of their sexuality, which I discuss further in the section below.

## **Patriarchy**

The overarching contextual topic, which imbues all the empirical chapters, but is addressed most prominently in **Chapter 8**, is that of patriarchy. Throughout the thesis, I examine not only the presence or absence of patriarchal relations between the characters, but also whether patriarchal stances are harboured by Yugoslav New Film directors. Walby theorises patriarchy ‘as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women’ (Walby 1991, 20). She identifies that patriarchy consists of six structures: (1) patriarchal relations in the domain of household, (2) patriarchal relations in paid employment, (3) patriarchal mode in the state, (4) condoned patriarchal male violence against women, (5) patriarchal relations in sexuality, (6) patriarchal mode in cultural institutions, such as in the domain of education, religion, and the media, which jointly ‘create the representation of women within a patriarchal gaze’ (Walby 1991, 21). Although her structures are envisioned to describe patriarchal gender relations in Westernized societies, they are applicable to Yugoslav socialist society as well, with the difference that the state was not capitalist but socialist. As Majstorović and Mandić put forth,

socialism did bring emancipation and paid out-of-house labor for the majority of women in the former Yugoslavia. Despite these changes, Balkan patriarchy has been undisputed in most rural areas and preserved in many of urban families to a significant degree, both on a symbolic and on a more concrete level.

(Majstorović and Mandić 2011, 85)

In **Chapter 8** that scrutinises the representations of patriarchy in Yugoslav New Films (1961-1972), in particular the ones set in rural areas in pre-socialist times, I depart from Jovanović’s (2014) opinion. He states that in films belonging to the Classical Yugoslav Cinema (roughly from 1947 until 1962), namely the ones that are set in distance past, patriarchy is depicted at its fullest extent, to which I concur. By portraying problems of the past, Jovanović argues, the directors also address socialist present, and the remnants of patriarchy in it. In Jovanović’s words,

[t]he films emphasized that the historical and social past, which they criticized, is relatively a recent one; consequently, some of its integral aspects might have survived the revolution and spilled over in the socialist today. The rural patriarchal tradition appeared to be such a remainder. The films criticized it as a part and parcel of the dead epoch, but also connoted that it might still be quite alive.

(Jovanović 2014, 182)

The Yugoslav Classical Cinema – the movement which preceded the studied Yugoslav New Film (1961-1972) – through the prism of gender of peasant stratum, initiates a debate on patriarchy, ‘which served as the backbone of the traditional rural life in the pre-socialist era, and continue[s] to function the same way in socialism – at least to a certain point’ (Jovanović 2014, 225). I build on Jovanović’s findings on the Yugoslav Classical Cinema, since the issue of patriarchy that is raised in such films, namely the ones set in pre-socialist past, is also tackled in Yugoslav New Film, as my research shows, and exhibits a similar pattern. Moreover, he pinpoints accurately that in most of Yugoslav films which are set in the pre-socialist times, there is a lead or important female protagonist (Jovanović 2014, 226). In addition, Jovanović puts forth that Yugoslav filmmakers employed diverse kinds of femininities and masculinities in order to express certain ideological stances, or to question them (Jovanović 2014, 129). Furthermore, in some of films belonging to the Yugoslav Classic Cinema, Jovanović identifies a character of a sorceress, who is exclusively female, and symbolises ignorance that thrived prior to socialist progress (Jovanović 2014, 149). I find that similar patterns can be detected in Yugoslav New Films, for instance, *Roj/The Beehive* (Mića Popović, 1966) and *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967).

Additionally, in the latter of the two above-mentioned films, patriarchy manifests itself in the form of sadistic-voyeuristic elderly women. They are rather an anomaly, since representations of old age are usually rare, absent, or stereotyped as asexual grieving mothers. They correspond to Simić’s (1999, 28) sociological concept named ‘cryptomatriarchy’. It stands for a phenomenon in the Yugoslav society, more precisely in some of its rural incarnations, manifested when in the private realm of a patriarchal household elderly women assert control, especially over younger women, while in the public realm men dominate (Simić 1999, 67-77). For such celluloid elderly women, Bogojević proposes the concept of ‘reversed masquerade’, inspired by Joan Riviere’s (1929) notion of ‘womanliness as a masquerade’ (Bogojević 2011, 259), and in my view also influenced by Doane’s ‘theorization of femininity

as masquerade' (1988-89, 47). The concept addresses patriarchal stances towards younger women, of not only male, but surprisingly elderly female characters as well, who appropriate such stances from their male family members, namely fathers and afterwards spouses (Bogojević 2011, 259). The old women in question are often dressed in black, androgynous looking, and sometimes even moustached (Bogojević 2011, 259). By amplifying their masculine side, they utilise it as a mask to conceal and obliterate their femininity (Bogojević 2011, 259). They are crueller than celluloid men and they throw the sadistic voyeuristic gaze on both male and female characters (Bogojević 2011, 259). Even though the concept of 'reversed masquerade' is intended for late Yugoslav films, made shortly before Yugoslav wars of secession, it is, in my view, applicable to Yugoslav New Film as well, especially to case study films *Roj/The Beehive* and *Breza/The Birch Tree* (in **Chapter 8**). Bogojević's concept of 'reversed masquerade' can be found in her piece *The Beauty of Gender Sin: Politics of Representation in Yugoslav Auteur Film* (2011), published in the magazine *ProFemina*. Notably, Bogojević was the first author who wrote a book-length study on gender and Yugoslav cinematography, entitled *Cinematic Gaze, Gender and Nation in Yugoslav Film 1945-1991* (2013), which includes segments on gender in Yugoslav New Film. She also contributed to the expansion of such scholarship with her article *The Trouble of Gender Sin in Post-Yugoslav film – in the Name of the Father* (Bogojević 2018) in the journal *Images*. Although focusing on post-Yugoslav films, the articles also offer insights into Yugoslav films.

Besides cryptomatriarchy and reversed masquerade, another concept that supplements the research of relations between female characters in films is the Bechdel test. Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2015, 20) note that the test is used to investigate whether a medium, such as cinema, offers a proper representation of female characters. Based on my viewing, due to being mainly oriented towards a male character, a vast majority of Yugoslav New Films would fail the Bechdel test. Rare films feature two female characters that talk about something other than men. For instance, Žilnik's film *Early Work*, features women in pairs. However, such female bonding and their conversations revolve around men. Frequently, conflicts between women also concern men. Even in the films that would pass the test, it does not necessarily mean that relations between women are amicable and harmonious. On the contrary, in the film *The Birch Tree*, there is enmity between female characters. Sometimes in the same film there can be an example of both animosity and sympathy between female characters, as seen in *Roj/Beehive*.

Yugoslav New Film brings up pressing matters, Kronja emphasises, such as the harsh patriarchal existence in the family sphere, in the country that decreed 'freeing of women and of

all oppressed'<sup>26</sup> (Kronja 2012). Similarly, Bogojević (2011, 256) observes that deep-rooted patriarchal realm starts crumbling with Yugoslav New Film. This auteur movement 'approaches socio-national themes in a highly gendered mode, contrary to earlier propagandist films which systematically effaced gender for the sake of class (communist, patriarchal) struggle' (Bogojević 2011, 257). However, in Yugoslav New Film women portrayed are still assigned a patriarchal place due to almost never being a subject themselves in the narrative, but instead an object of either desire of a male subject or of his wrath (Bogojević 2011, 257). Heroines are represented as fetishized for a male character, for example *femmes fatales*; or they belong to the remnants of the pre-war higher class, due to filmmakers fascination with such women; or they come from lowest social strata; or they signify societal alienation (Bogojević 2011, 257). Along the similar line, Boglić (1980, 126) pinpoints the absence of more realistic and truthful representation of women in Yugoslav cinema. She relates it to the absence of eagerly awaited, truly complete, and fully achieved equality of women to men in all segments of real-life, as opposed to gender equality that is only nominally guaranteed by the Yugoslav Constitution, but not fully implemented in practice (Boglić 1980, 126). In my view, this was due to remnants of patriarchal grip, predominantly manifested in the family sphere.

In her article entitled *Cinematic Images of Women at a Time of National(ist) Crisis: The Case of Three Yugoslav Films*, published as an edited book chapter, Jelača looks into films that implicate tradition as a cause of subjugation by patriarchy, and of centuries-long inequity between the sexes (Jelača 2013a, 133). Furthermore, in her other piece, she rejects a more prevalent viewpoint that depictions of female sexuality by male directors inevitably include its subdual, and violence (Jelača 2013b, 312). Jelača, therefore, offers a different reading of a woman's place and female sexuality by selecting a late Yugoslav film (filmed shortly before wars of secession), namely *Lepota poroka/The Beauty of Sin* (Živko Nikolić, 1986). Her argument is that 'a woman in Yugoslav film sometimes avoids attempts to be controlled because her sexuality manifests as [being] too complicated to be suppressed'<sup>27</sup> (Jelača 2013b, 312). However, Jelača is aware that this is still a rare example (Jelača 2013b, 312). Besides, she 'finds that some Yugoslav films could be read as overtly feminist in their critique of traditional patriarchy and its treatment of women' (Jelača 2019). In my opinion, this theory is tailored for the late Yugoslav cinema of the 1980s and 1990s that Jelača analyses. However, based on my viewing, it is not applicable to Yugoslav New Film, because such films are often contradictory towards representation of women, or simultaneously feminist and misogynist. Additionally,

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<sup>26</sup> Own translation.

<sup>27</sup> Own translation.

Jelača disagrees with Iordanova (1996) on account of Iordanova's argument that in films such as *Virđžina/Virgina* (Srđan Karanović, 1991), women's issues depicted are not used for feminist means, but to underscore general societal marginalisation instead. In Jelača's (2013a, 142) view, such films confront patriarchy, and oppression of women, which is a feminist critique. Therefore, Iordanova's (1996) essay which is featured in the magazine *Cineaste* does not touch directly on Yugoslav New Film, but addresses the same late period of Yugoslav cinema as the one that Jelača tackled. Furthermore, Jelača again pits herself against Iordanova (1996), as well as Daković (1996), Slapšak (2000), and Bogojević (2013), because they assert that 'most films from the Yugoslav era engaged in a problematic reiteration of the male gaze' (Jelača 2019). Since I often refer to the male gaze in my published articles, in the empirical chapters, due to finding many examples of the male gaze in Yugoslav New Films, especially in regard to camera framing and editing, my view differs from Jelača's on this matter. This difference in opinion could be a result of the different time periods of the selected case studies. Jelača focuses on case studies which were made towards the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s, whereas my research scope is from 1961 until 1972. There are roughly two decades between them and there are the respective period-specific dissimilarities between these two time periods of the Yugoslav cinema. However, related to the same period of the last decade of Yugoslav cinematography (1980s and the beginning of 1990s), as investigated by Jelača (2013a), but from a different perspective than her, is the aforementioned Iordanova's research. In contrast, based on my viewing, Iordanova's theory could be applied to Yugoslav New Film (1961-1972), because her article effectively unmasks patriarchal thinking and the mistreatment of female characters.

In addition, besides the previously mentioned *Virđžina* and *The Beauty of Sin*, another film that Jelača selects for her arguments is *Petrijin venac/Petrija's Wreath* (Srđan Karanović, 1980), which was also created towards the end of Yugoslav cinema. In these three late Yugoslav films, which Jelača selected for her study, the lead male protagonists perish in denouement, as the embodiments of patriarchy that is loosening its grip on suppressed female characters (Jelača 2013a, 141). Conversely, based on my viewing, abusive men in Yugoslav New Film frequently survive, despite being guilty of symbolically or physically hurting women. If they are punished in the finale, it is seldomly by castigation for such acts of bodily or psychological violence towards women, but, instead, for the other sins they committed, for instance political, as can be seen in the film *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969).

When it comes to the heroines in the films chosen for analysis by Jelača, they are survivors and winners, despite the losses. In comparison, the representations of women as

winner are mostly absent in Yugoslav New Films, including Makavejev's and Žilnik's (perhaps excluding Makavejev's *Man is Not a Bird*) that have strong leading female characters. Almost as if it were a rule, female characters in Yugoslav New Film are victims in the denouement since they are often either psychologically neglected, physically raped, beaten, or killed at the hands of men (see De Cuir 2011, 113), or more rarely die by their own doing through suicide. For example, Yugoslav New Film heroines are murdered in the following case study films that I closely analysed: *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965), *Jutro/Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967), *Delije/Tough Guys* (Mića Popović, 1968), and *Handcuffs*. Even in the Yugoslav New Films that have feminist overtones, such as Žilnik's *Early Works*, and Makavejev's *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* and *W.R. Mysteries of Organism*, female protagonists are murdered by men close to them. To borrow Dillman's (2014) words on the American cinema, all the empowering effects are annulled with the death of the heroines. In addition, as Penfold-Mounce would have it on television drama – pretty, young, white women have traditionally been portrayed as victims, 'making it seem normalised that women are then vulnerable to violence at the hands of men' (Penfold-Mounce 2016).

Even in the films from the same time period that Jelača analyses, that is, from the last phase of Yugoslav cinematography, a number of counterexamples to her three case study films can be found, namely the films which do not confront patriarchy, or serve as feminist critique, and in which the directors do not advance progressive gender politics. Such a counterexample would be *Kuduz* (Ademir Kenović, 1989), which features disempowerment by death of a strong, sexually liberated female character (see Jovanović 2012). Another example from the corresponding period, of a sexually active female character whose liberated eroticism is smothered by death, is in *Haloa – praznik kurvi/Aloa: Festivity of the Whores* (Lordan Zafranović, 1988). Thus, it is important to understand that the case study films which Jelača has selected (and some other films by Živko Nikolić if I might add), are rather an exception than a rule in Yugoslav cinema, as she herself has implied. In my opinion this is due to featuring representations of women as winners, especially if contrasted to Yugoslav New Films, produced two decades earlier, which, generally speaking, lack such representations. However, my remark could be a critique not only to Jelača, but to any author, including myself, who chooses case study films in order to support a theory or to develop one.

Regardless of differences in opinion, I find Jelača's attempt to confront the more widespread stance – including my view on Yugoslav New Film – that violent suppression of a heroine's active sexuality is often inevitable in Yugoslav cinema, valuable. Furthermore, I support Jelača's reading of her selected case study films as if they were feminist critique (Jelača

2013b, 312), because representations of women as winners and survivors should be sought. In the studied films, she put forward her interpretation that a viewer is placed in a position to identify and empathise with a heroine, since a film equalises its point of view on the world with the point of view of its oppressed heroine (Jelača 2013b, 312). However, due to the almost virtual absence of women winners and enunciators in Yugoslav New Film, Jelača's theory mentioned above is less applicable to this movement. In contrast Iordanova's (1996) theory is more compatible, because she perceptively finds that female characters are often not used for feminist means by male directors, nor necessarily created to be genuinely dedicated to women's question, but instead to serve as allegories intended to raise various societal issues.

In rare Yugoslav New Films that do feature lead heroines – since they are usually supporting or insignificant characters – even if they stay alive at the closure of the film, they are not victorious, or it is a Pyrrhic victory. Such films include Makavejev's *Man is Not a Bird*, Zvonimir Berković's *Rondo* (1966), Mića Popović's *Roj/The Beehive* (1966), Dimitrie Osmanli's *Memento* (1967), and Boštjan Hladnik's *Maškarada/Masquerade* (1971). The trajectory of the female characters in them is such that they are always exposed to some kind of physical or symbolic violence and neglect. In *Man is Not a Bird*, Rajka (Milena Dravić) is slapped and insulted by her parents for having an affair with their tenant, and later slapped by the tenant as well for cheating on him. In *Rondo*, Neda (Milena Dravić) is neglected by her spouse, and her brief fling with his chess partner only alienates them even more. In *The Beehive* Stojanka (Mira Stupica) is raped by an Ottoman bey, and later publicly tried in front of a mob of villagers for allegedly betraying the hiding place of her husband to the Ottomans, which resulted in his death. In *Memento*, Jana (Renata Freiskorn) barely survives a catastrophic earthquake, which takes its toll on countless victims, including her own parents. In *Masquerade*, Dina (Vida Jerman) is raped by her husband. In all the films the coda of the female survivors is clouded by the loss. Rajka has lost her engineer lover due to her sexual fling with a truck driver. A sexual affair does not bring Neda happiness, nor relieves her from monotony of marriage life. Stojanka's fate is precarious since it remains open-ended whether she will be punished by the judge or released. In the epilogue of the film, Jana eventually chooses a domestic love suitor over an international one, but somewhat too late, so it stays unclear if she will be given a second opportunity. After the death of Dina's husband, in which it remains ambiguous as to whether or not she was implicated, she is deserted by her young lover. In order to tackle such prevalent violence towards women in Yugoslav New Film, Fredric Jameson's concept of 'political unconscious' might be useful here. Namely, he highlights that:

at a given moment, cultural production is dominated by an anxiety about the loss of gender privileges, so, too, it seems equally plausible [...] that such an anxiety – with its own fantasies, representations, symbolic expressions or obsessions, and the like – can be grasped as a multipurpose ‘apparatus’ through which many other anxieties equally find their own expression.

(Jameson in Jameson and Buchanan 2007 42-43)

Drawing on Jameson’s theory, perhaps it could be argued that Yugoslav New Film carries a specific ‘cinematic unconscious’, which can be reduced to the formula of male directors’ anxiety about the loss of their gender privileges, since Yugoslav women were entering the labour market in large numbers, as well as becoming sexually liberated. Such anxiety manifests in the films of Yugoslav New Film auteurs as the represented punishment of the female protagonists for their sexual and political emancipation.

### **Sexuality and Nudity**

Besides the aforementioned aspects of Jelača’s theories that my research differs from, there are other aspects of her study on Yugoslav cinema, in particular her remarks on sexuality, that can in my view be applied to Yugoslav New Film. Jelača (2013b, 311) stresses that the omnipresence of female sexuality on celluloid screen indicates the fixation of directors, who were mostly male. However, although Yugoslav cinema, as many others, was dominated by male filmmakers, it does not necessarily mean that their stance was anti-female but confirms that they had power over the representation of gender, which consequently was one-sided (Jelača 2013b, 313). Jelača (2013a, 139) finds that a female character is in imminent danger of onscreen abuse if she becomes too emancipated and sexually active. This is because of the chauvinist tendency by male characters to discipline female desire (Jelača 2013a, 139). The power imbalance gets bared through such suppression of female sexual practices (Jelača 2013a, 139). Since female sexuality is threatening and unfathomable, ultimate imposition of male control in a film is asserted by violent penetration (Jelača 2013b, 311). Celluloid women are frequently subjected to rape as a means to police their sexuality (Jelača 2013b, 326). It is depicted in a rather fetishized manner. The bearer of the subjectivity is the male perpetrator, instead of the female victim who is habitually denied subjectivity (Jelača 2013b, 326).



Kronja (2018, 159) observes that although New Wave cinemas differed from country to country, what the films had in common includes an open viewpoint on sexuality. Yugoslav New Film directors establish a connection between low morals and low social status (Kronja 2018, 169). In the Black Wave, that is, Yugoslav New Film, the sexuality of female characters is one of the key points in which their moral fall is manifested, followed with punitive violence towards women (Kronja 2012). Furthermore, I find Kotsopoulos' thoughts on a desiring female character in Hollywood cinema inspiring and applicable to Yugoslav New Film. Frequently, 'the very possession of desire (for knowledge, for sex, for "something else") is forbidden [to] her, regardless of whether she acts on it or not' (Kotsopoulos 2001). To be desiring is in opposition with how patriarchy envisions a selfless femininity (Kotsopoulos 2001). The notions that Kotsopoulos puts forward can be implemented to case study films, such as *Bughouse* and *Dance in the Rain*, analysed in **Chapter 7**, in which a desire to work is smothered, as well as a desire to love. Furthermore, the heroine from *The Birch Tree*, who is somewhat asexual and saintly, pays a costly price with her life for desiring a wrong man – a womaniser who becomes her husband, as seen in **Chapter 8**. Furthermore, female characters in *Three, Morning*, and *Tough Guys* are executed for desiring the enemy during the Second World War, as examined in **Chapter 6**. In **Chapter 5**, the heroine's desire for sexual and political revolution in *Early Works* is stifled by murder. To further borrow from the Hollywood cinema: a woman will be punished when she 'seeks to assert her independence' (Maltby 2005, 232) and for erotic impulses she sparks (Johnston 2007, 93). In a similar vein, Cook and Johnston (1985, 384) find that the danger of women is linked with sexuality. Similarly, Kaplan (1990, 7) underlines that in American cinema the usual mechanisms to subjugate women were victimisation, fetishism, self-righteous murder, and rape. She states that in the post-1960s film the threat of increasingly overt female sexuality, influenced by the women's liberation movement in the US, had to be confronted with male power (the phallus) as the main weapon for controlling women, regardless of whether or not women did something wrong. Therefore, she argues that the more women emancipated, found employment, received a degree, and freely expressed their sexuality, the more they posed a threat to patriarchy and in turn through cinematic expression patriarchy recoiled. Women are threatening 'because they arouse the man's desire; in unleashing his sexual desire, the woman also arouses his ability to act on other–heretofore repressed–desires, including murderous ones' (Studlar 2005, 387). Similarly, this pattern can be found in other cinemas, for example Japanese cinema, on which Bernardi remarks that 'a depiction of a woman's self-assertiveness and agency [is] undermined by social and cultural forces beyond her control' (Bernardi 2005, 263).

In Yugoslav cinema, as Ranković (1982, 254) points out, freer treatment of sexuality starts with films with contemporary themes, and it occurs later than in more developed Western European cinemas. One of the reasons being that in the Yugoslav post-Second World War society sexuality was initially linked with immorality (Ranković 1982, 254). The theme of sexuality appears more overtly in 'intimate film' (Ranković 1982, 255), that is, Yugoslav New Film. There are two such films that were produced in 1961 that bring new sensibility in the sphere of showing erotic content, namely Boštjan Hladnik's *Ples na kiši/A Dance in the Rain* and Aleksandar Petrović's *Dvoje/Two* (Ranković 1982, 256). It is the period when Partisan-themed films about liberation struggle (set in the Second World War) also start to touch upon the issue of sexuality, but only indirectly (Ranković 1982, 255).

Eroticism can have several functions in Yugoslav New Film, such as to serve the purpose of questioning of Second World War morality, or to indicate moral crisis in back then contemporary Yugoslav society, to stand for a political metaphor, or, if it is in its ruthless incarnation, to be a metaphor of universal evil (Ranković 1982, 257-60). In addition, Ranković identifies the motif of a woman in mud (Ranković 1982, 259). Her beauty in the mud is the symbol of degradation of not only female sexuality, but also the ideal of beauty. In the society of male domination, the debasement of sexuality, as a rule, infers the debasement of a woman's personality (Ranković 1982, 259).

Ironic relation towards sexuality, as Dušan Makavejev has for instance, was not widespread in Yugoslav cinema, whereas, in contrast, brutalisation of sexuality appears in higher number of films, even becoming a fad in one period (Ranković 1982, 258). A pioneer of brutalisation of sexuality in Yugoslav New Film is Živojin Pavlović (Ranković 1982, 258). Besides that, there is the brutalisation of a female character in Krsto Papić's, Boro Drašković's, and Želimir Žilnik's work, namely by rape (Ranković 1982, 259). The politicisation of sexuality, occurring at first in the countries in which 'sexual revolution' became a means for the expression of tendencies for political revolution, also gradually permeates Yugoslav cinema. This tendency occurs at the time of strained socio-political contradictions, which culminated in the Yugoslav student demonstrations in June 1968. The most explicit example of such tendency in Yugoslav film, in which the sexual freedom metaphorically signifies sexualisation of political freedom is in Žilnik's work, although its initiator is Makavejev (Ranković 1982, 260). He directly associates depictions of sexuality with political content (Ranković 1982, 259).

Makavejev's films got Yugoslav New Film viewers accustomed to the sight of denuded female body, which is not depicted as a taboo that infringes with moral norms, especially of actress Eva Ras in *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice P.T.T./Love Affair, or the Case of*

*the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967) (Ranković 1982, 261). Director Žilnik followed suit in *Early Works* (1969), in which, besides the naked body of actress Milja Vujanović, he freely introduces male nudity as well (Ranković 1982, 261). Gradually, in Yugoslav films, female and eventually male nudity ceased being taboo (Ranković 1982, 261). However, female nudity was more prominent than male nudity in Yugoslav cinema, as well as in films world-wide, which could be explained with a domination of the male part of society over the female one, also manifested in the sphere of cinematography (Ranković 1982, 261).

Schober (2018, 145) asserts that Yugoslav New Film directors introduce ethnic difference more overtly in 1960s in Yugoslav cinema, and link it with sexual difference. They do it against the backdrop of the Yugoslav socialist society, where everyone was nominally equal (Schober 2018, 139). For example, director Makavejev simultaneously stages ethnic and national differences in the background, while foregrounding gender trouble between his female characters who are playful, carefree, modern, emancipated, and sexually active, as well as his male characters, who are traditional, stiff, and sexually inhibited workaholics (Schober 2018, 146).

As Schober (2018, 147) finds, ethnic and national frictions are depicted, but they are perpetually related to gender in order to indirectly emphasise ideological antagonisms. However, in my view, keeping in mind the popular official motto at the time that ‘Yugoslavia has seven neighbours, six republics, five nations, four languages, three religions, two scripts and one goal: to live in brotherhood and unity’ (Pupavac 2012, 175), ethnic diversity was an integral part of the Yugoslav socialist state tissue and its peoples. To borrow from Pupavac’s words, ‘to be Yugoslav after 1945 was officially about the fulfilment of one’s own distinct national identity, and the celebration of others’ (Pupavac 2012, 176).

It is therefore no surprise that Makavejev depicted national and ethnic differences, with its advantages and contradictions. In addition, Schober herself offers another interpretation of the antagonisms, including ethnic. She finds that Makavejev portrays strong heroines for the purpose of relating representations of femininity with all that the male-oriented, official, bureaucratic world dismisses as ‘other’, such as passion, sexuality, prettiness, and non-conformity (Schober 2018, 149). In a similar manner, Kronja (2018, 179) discerns that Makavejev’s female characters are sexually active and liberated, whereas their male lovers are sexually inhibited and ideologically unyielding. Moreover, she asserts that:

Makavejev remarkably captures, shows and explores the psychological constitution of a Balkan man, who, conditioned with traditional patriarchal mentality, reacts with panic and dismay to woman's free manifestations of her own individuality, *joie de vivre* and sexuality, both those that brings pleasure and those that brings offspring (pro-creative). Such patriarchal man utilises every possible way to hinder all those female expressions in their development, in order to eradicate them, so they do not make damage to the existing social order, and his own sense of self.<sup>28</sup>

(Kronja 2012)

Besides, Kronja (2012) stresses that in the films of auteurs Makavejev and Žilnik the understanding of male-female gender relations is approached with ironical distance and with promotion of progressive gender politics. Although Makavejev divides women's and men's spheres or depicts women as triggers of male primitive conduct, or portrays female subordinate position in a revolutionary culture, he, as well as Žilnik, shows empathy for his heroines (Kronja 2018, 162). Additionally, Kronja (2012) finds that Makavejev puts a female protagonist at the centre of narrative, or at least gives her very important function in it, employing so-called positive discrimination. It means that she will have the greatest number of shots, or the same number of shots as male protagonists (Kronja 2012). There are other voices, similar to my standpoint, such as Beard, who pinpoints that since female characters are clearly sexualised in Yugoslav New Films, as Žilnik's *Early Works*, and Makavejev's *W.R.: Mysteries of Organism*, the directors themselves are culpable for perpetuating the gender stereotypes of heroines as sexually dangerous (Beard 2019, 110). In both films, female protagonists are portrayed as concurrently sexually attractive and threatening (Beard 2019, 110). However, the fictional misogynist killing of these two independent, emancipated heroines, implicitly criticises Yugoslav society for maintaining the domination of men, for upholding a woman's place in it, and for 'the failed promise of the emancipation of female proletarians' (Beard 2019, 106). The above-mentioned films simultaneously 'both reinforce, as well as critique, the wider social fear of stronger women' (Beard 2019, 110). I investigate why Žilnik, Makavejev, and many other Yugoslav New Film directors of feature-length films (who were all male), were simultaneously complicit with and opposed to gender inequality and patriarchal values.

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<sup>28</sup> Own translation.

## Silencing of female characters

One of the strategies of how patriarchy disempowers female characters is by silencing (see Suter 1988, 100). To borrow from Cui's observation on silencing of women in Chinese cinema 'the female voice as a gesture of resistance brings down the wrath of authority' (Cui 2005, 846). Along the same lines, Capecchi and Demaria find that women are debased via means such as language and stereotypes (Capecchi and Demaria 2001). A woman's place in patriarchal culture is of a bearer and not a maker of meaning, whose silent image is a recipient of a man's linguistic commands that verbalise his obsessions and fantasies (Mulvey 1989, 15). Similarly, Buikema and Zarzycka advocate the need to expand approaches other than representational and interpretational position of 'the silent women to be viewed' (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 129). Feminist scholarship perceives language as obstinately male-gendered and therefore incompetent to convey female reality, so silence does not necessarily need to be negative, but a potential tactic for subversion (Blackwell 2005, 534).

Nevertheless, in Yugoslav cinema a celluloid woman is often a voiceless figure who attains an identity only by being associated with a male character (Daković 1996, 40). The main character is mostly "he", whereas the same applies to the hypothetical spectator, who is also male (Daković 1996, 41). The "hypothetical" or "textual spectator" is a concept which refers to 'the position that the film offers as its "ideal" viewing position', while "historical" or "empirical" spectator is an actual audience member, who watches a film at a specific moment in history (Fregoso 2004, 337). In **Chapter 7** I concur with Daković in regard with the silencing of female characters, because in Yugoslav New Film their stories are, in the best-case scenario, told by a male narrator. Only in exceptional cases women do tell their own stories from their perspective, as in *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961). This film initiated the representation of a woman as real subject in modern Yugoslav film with heroine Maruša (Duša Počkaj), as Yugoslav film critic Boglić asserts (Boglić 1980, 124). In *Ples v dežju* Hladnik's female protagonist takes her own life, but it is worth the price because she does not settle for less in both her emotional and professional life, and thereby attains liberation through death (Boglić 1980, 124). I agree with Boglić that Maruša is a rare subject in her own right in Yugoslav New Film, but I differ in opinion with the point that she is liberated through death, because grounded in Dillman (2014) I find that every female death onscreen is disempowering. However, I think it is important to build on Boglić's reading of Maruša's character as empowering since Maruša is occasionally enunciator of her own story, while she is alive, which

distinguishes her character from the frequently silenced, voiceless, and disempowered celluloid women.

Female characters are rarely enunciators (Smelik 1998, 46). More often their story is narrated by a male narrator or shown from his perspective. Therefore, generally speaking, a male character is the enunciator, who at first feels compelled to own a woman's body in order to assert his patriarchal power, and then, if she is disobedient to him as his ownership, he must obliterate it (Bogojević 2018, 116). Since bonds between women and men are controlled by men, female characters and their bodies are exposed to silencing, sexism, infantilising, mistreatment, cruelty, sexual violence, degradation, humiliation, persecution, or imprisonment (Bogojević 2011, 257). A female character is portrayed as the Other, who is politically passive, faulty, and the one to blame and destroy (Bogojević 2011, 257). This reinforces patriarchy characterised with the paradox between the coming to terms with female sexual emancipation and fearfulness of the feminine (Bogojević 2018, 116). In a similar vein, Beard finds that in Yugoslav New Films, such as *Early Works* and *W.R.: Mysteries of Organism*, female characters pay the price with their lives for the catharsis of a man (Beard 2019, 110). Film feminists note a paradigm of punishment of sexually active, independent heroines (Mulvey 1989, Johnston 2000, Smelik 1998, Kaplan 1990). In line with this paradigm, in the aforementioned films the silencing of powerful celluloid women who confront patriarchal subjugation takes place (Beard 2019, 110).

## **Employment**

Besides the theme silencing, another theme that is tackled in **Chapter 7** is the investigation into female employment and self-violence of working women. I pose the question as to why women's labour is represented as perilous in the case study of Yugoslav New Films. Also, I look into how those representations relate to social reality of Yugoslav women, as well as how they construct reality. It is important to note Đurović's opinion that the official discourse of female emancipation through employment, or class equality in socialist Yugoslavia is sometimes challenged by the celluloid depictions of women's quotidian existence (Đurović 2018, 159). In order to illustrate this claim, she chose Jovan Živanović's film *Čudna devojka/Strange Girl* (1962), which in my view could be classified in the Yugoslav New Film Movement, due to its innovative thematic focus on rebellious youth subcultures, and generational clash (although its optimistic ending might be an argument against it). Đurović

asserts that this film could be interpreted as if Yugoslav socialism was unfavourable towards modern emancipatory stances of the female protagonist, whom is compelled to relinquish them in order to fit into the society (Đurović 2018, 148). Živanović's heroine is therefore an example of a conservative cinematic discourse – predating Yugoslav New Film, since it also appeared in Yugoslav Classical Cinema – which links the liberated female character with the need for romantic feelings (Đurović 2018, 159). This is in line with Jovanović's (2015, 43) work on the Yugoslav Classical Cinema (roughly from 1947 until 1962). Đurović further stresses that the only motivation of Živanović's heroine for emancipation through employment is romantic love (Đurović 2018, 152). The theme of sacrifice for the matters of heart imparts the traditional outlook that a Yugoslav woman should, besides domesticated spouse and mother, also be a worker when needed (Đurović 2018, 152). However, more prevalent are films which displace female characters from the employment domain into the leisure domain, thus reinstating the male privilege (Đurović 2018, 160).

In Yugoslav society, starting from the 1950s, the adoration of beauty, womanliness, and sartorial elegance, which were scorned after the war as bourgeois, are starting to be in fashion again similar to the time before the war (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 96). Since the usual topics of the Yugoslav women's press in the end of 1950s mostly comprise of tips for running a household as the epitome of female happiness, and for beautifying the female body as an epitome of freer and more overt sexuality, it all indicates steady reassertion of patriarchal female roles (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 94-95). The real-life practice of re-patriarchisation can be examined through the depiction of heroines on film (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 95). From the mid-1950s, the figure of a woman all the more resembles Western consumerist depictions, in which female desirability and prettiness is of the utmost importance (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 95).

*Strange Girl* is created in 1962 in the whirlwind of Yugoslav contradictions between economic reorganisations, such as Yugoslav self-management and consumerism, as well as between traditional social outlooks and emancipation of women (Đurović 2018, 148-9). The example of Živanović's heroine – personifying Western cultural influence – demonstrates how ambivalent messages about consumerism, and Western impact in general in socialist Yugoslavia, influenced Živanović's conservative outlook that transforms emancipated, independent female characters into docile wives (Đurović 2018, 159). The heroine's pursuit of liberation, by rejecting to obey social conventions, is abandoned when she relinquishes modernity and embraces patriarchal tradition (Đurović 2018, 159).

De Cuir (2011, 108) states that even though female protagonists were frequently

guiltless or passive, they are often assaulted in violent narratives of Black Wave films, that is, Yugoslav New Films, as a form of a patriarchal punishment. Yugoslav women gradually progressed in terms of education and presence in the workforce which resulted in the increased sense of empowerment and sexual freedom and therefore perturbed their fixed roles of Partisan fighters or patriarchal housewives (De Cuir 2011, 109). According to him, one of the motifs why the heroines are exposed to the onscreen brutality in the Black Wave comes as a consequence of the intimidation and even fear towards the power of women (De Cuir 2011, 109).

However, in Yugoslav films heroines are most often not a part of the work sphere since it is a man's world (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 96). To expand on Stojčić and Duhaček's observant argument, I argue that in those cases when female characters in Yugoslav New Film are a part of the workforce, they have negative experiences. I examine why such meanings are produced and whether they serve as a cautionary tale for the female viewers that a workplace is a dangerous environment which should be avoided.

In order to scrutinise this, I find Jovanović's (2014) research on gender and the Yugoslav Classical Cinema (roughly from 1947 until 1962) highly influential, and applicable to Yugoslav New Film (roughly from 1961 until 1972), which demonstrates continuity of Yugoslav cinema. Furthermore, I find Jovanović's findings on the Classical Yugoslav Cinema useful in *How the Love Was Tempered: Labour, Romance and Gender Asymmetry in the Classical Yugoslav Film* (2015), for example representation-wise love replaced labour, but only when it came to female characters. Yugoslav New Film, thus, perpetuates the previously mentioned Yugoslav cinematic practice where already in the 1950s, 'the motif of labour has lost its empowering capacity for women, with romance becoming the only factor that shapes their life' (Jovanović 2015, 43). In line with Jovanović's work, my research investigates why the representation of women's employment in Yugoslav New Film (during the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s) is either omitted, or, in those cases when women are employed, why their workplace is depicted as grim environment where violence and disappointment lurks. Female characters are frequently sexually assaulted by their work colleagues or customers, examples of these latter patterns can be found in *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969) and *Povratak/The Return* (Živojin Pavlović, 1966). A few female protagonists even commit suicide, motivated by several factors, including distress due to getting fired, such as in *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961), or anguish due to mistreatment, namely rape by her colleagues while doing work-related activities, for example in *Bube u glavi/Bughouse* (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970). Such predicaments all render the work environment as



dangerous place. It is as if the films convey the message that discourages women from employment which does not correspond to the reality of the Yugoslav socialism, where female labour was encouraged and on the rise. I look further into this discrepancy.

On a similar note, Boglić asserts that modern Yugoslav film (Yugoslav New Film including its subset Black Wave), which can shock by depicting extremes and vulgarities, shows only one part of reality about position, state of mind, and possibilities of a woman in Yugoslavia (Boglić 1980, 125). It is one-sided because there is another different reality that is missing (Boglić 1980, 125), from both Yugoslav New Film and its contemporary mainstream cinema. It is the reality of, at the time, contemporary Yugoslav working woman from which the directors and even more so the scriptwriters averse (Boglić 1980, 125). Consequently, it does not exist in Yugoslav New Film accounts (Boglić 1980, 125). Yugoslav film does not show the problems of a woman who is not an erotic doll, as well as the problems of the ordinary normal and everyday woman, since she is not interesting at the moment of exaltation towards spectacles and big pyrotechnical effects in Yugoslav cinema (Boglić 1980, 125).

### **Position of Yugoslav women in socialism, and the New Yugoslav Feminism**

In order to better understand the representations of female characters in Yugoslav New Film, I examine the position of women in the Yugoslav socialist society, where everyone, regardless of their biological sex, ethnicity, age etc., should have been treated equally. My investigation into the sociological aspects of women's lives in Yugoslavia is one approach of research, but it has to be complemented with other approaches, keeping in mind that meanings are refracted and constructed. Sociological research reveals that in the wake of the Second World War, women in Yugoslavia had been repaid for their indispensable participation in the liberation struggle by being given suffrage, and by receiving the overall commitment of the state to abolish social and gender inequality (Ivekovic 1995, 10). Slapšak observes 'the communist promotion of female emancipation' (Slapšak 2007b, 38). In Yugoslavia, feminism as a concept was frowned upon since it was regarded as an import of foreign ideology (Drakulić 1993, 129). State socialism was a contradictory phenomenon because it perceived feminism as a product of the consumerism-oriented capitalist West, but at the same time provided women with abundant social rights (Imre 2017, 88). According to Wang (2017, 82), the situation in Yugoslavia was similar to China in regard to the Chinese socialist state, in that it did not address women's question as a separate issue, but rather as linked to social or political matters. As Ramet (1999,

101) states, in Yugoslavia gender disparity was perceived as a class problem and it was thought that with the abolishment of class society which socialism brought, the equality in all segments, including gender, would thrive. Although in theory gender parity was achieved because everybody was the same on paper, in practice it was not fully implemented (Ramet 1999, 95). Similarly, in Iveković's view, women attained access to the political and public domains due to a quota system and political programme to gender equality rather than to deep-seated transformation in the mindsets of people (Iveković 1995, 10). However, the living expenses necessitated that all healthy household members become employed, which brought financial and psychological freedom to women to a certain extent (Iveković 1995, 10). The downside was that women were overburdened because on top their work, they performed a second unpaid shift in their homes, frequently unaided by their husbands, but the social services, mostly in the cities, alleviated this double working load (Iveković 1995, 10). Morokvašić shares a similar opinion, namely of the contradictions of Yugoslav socialism, where despite the enormous progress of women in the production and public spheres (in the domain of interpersonal relations between women and men, which is considered as private sphere), deeply rooted old conservative values lingered from pre-socialist times, especially in less developed and rural parts (Morokvašić 1986, 135). The high influx of people from villages to cities resulted in the patriarchal traditional way of thinking, typical for agrarian environments, which was to be retained in cities to some extent (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 91). Despite efforts by the state, the patriarchal mindsets could not be eradicated. Furthermore, in Iveković's view, as the recollection of the Second World War and the participation of women in it faded away, women were again gradually excluded from public and political spheres (Iveković 1995, 11).

Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the Yugoslav socialist state programmatically advocated and encouraged gender equality (justified with the women's indispensable participation as Partisan soldiers in the Second World War) by legally ratifying it in three subsequent Yugoslav Constitutions (Ramet 1999, 94). Namely, starting with its first post-war constitution of 1946, socialist Yugoslavia legally gave equal rights to men and women, thus endorsing significant improvements, such as women's right to vote, equal pay, and paid maternity leave (Ramet 94-95). The emancipatory rights women gained in Yugoslavia included the freedom to be elected as part of political bodies (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 34), access to education, health insurance, freedom of choice, marriage, divorce, and inheritance rights (Morokvašić 1986, 125). Therefore, socialism in Yugoslavia empowered women with unprecedented political, social, economic, and reproductive rights (Kralj and Renner 42). Compared to Western countries, as Kralj and Renner (2015, 43) point out, the position of women

in Yugoslav socialist society improved, with more favourable policies regulating social and legal equality. Iveković (1995, 11) shares a similar opinion, namely when it comes to women's employment rights, reproductive rights and social services substituting a woman's labour in her own household. However, she warns that this does not necessarily mean that their actual position in everyday life matched their legal position. Nevertheless, as Iveković further notes, '[a]lthough no comparison is adequate between the former socialist system and western countries regarding the status of women, there was a general egalitarian drive in Eastern countries – not at all particularly feminist in its intentions – from which women benefited' (Iveković 1995, 12). In addition, the predominant opinion among scholars, such as Hofman (2009, 193), and Salecl (2002, 112) is that Yugoslav women had more rights before the Yugoslav wars of secession than they do today in the former Yugoslav republics. The so-called new democracies in the former Yugoslav states created after the Yugoslav secession wars, which are in fact nationalist regimes, are only nominally democracies for women (Iveković 1995, 13).

At present the endorsement of gender equality by a socialist state is occasionally addressed in academic literature as the so-called 'state feminism' (see Imre 2017, 88, Wang 2017, 82). Socialism and its so-called state feminism 'afforded generous social provisions to women' (Imre 2017, 89). State feminism should be differentiated from the attempts of Yugoslav women, known as the new Yugoslav feminists, to challenge the socialist state for not fully fulfilling one of its promises, the equality of women (Lóránd 2018, 2). Regardless of the fact that the concept of feminism was regarded negatively by the state in Yugoslavia, due to being linked with the capitalist West and consumerism (Imre 2017, 89), the new Yugoslav feminists started organising their activity from the early 1970s (Ivekovic 1995, 11, Lóránd 2015, 120). In my view, this implies that they could hardly have influenced Yugoslav New Film, since the movement abruptly ended in 1972 (see Goulding 2002, Sudar 2013). Moreover, the new Yugoslav feminists published many publications, but not before 1972 (Lóránd 2018, 4). Furthermore, they also hosted events such as panel discussions, exhibitions, public forums, literary readings, and feminist presentations at conferences (Lóránd 2018, 4). After these early beginnings, the year 1978 can be considered as a milestone year for the new Yugoslav feminism, because of a canonical conference that was organised and named 'Drug/ca žena, žensko pitanje–novi pristup/Comrade-ss Woman, Women's question–a new approach' (Lóránd 2018, 5). The conference raised the visibility of feminism in Yugoslavia and attracted women who were not aware of such activities (Lóránd 2018, 5). It was the first time that an international feminist conference took place in Yugoslavia, more precisely in Belgrade, inspiring eight

Yugoslav feminists to form the first feminist group in Yugoslavia the same year, as one of its founders, Drakulić, recalls (Drakulić 1993, 128). The group started attracting other women to join in and participate in discussions, and to create their own groups which amounted to an estimated number of around hundred feminists in the early years (Drakulić 1993, 128). The new Yugoslav feminism ‘was running parallel with the new or second-wave feminisms in the “West”’ (Lóránd 2018, 5). Compared to those ‘Western capitalist societies, where feminism directly appeared as dissent, in Eastern Europe the state guaranteed many of the rights which the North American and West European feminist groups were fighting for’ (Lóránd 2018, 2). New Yugoslav feminists were concurrently criticising the state, while cooperating with it (Lóránd 2018, 1). Building on the state’s imperfect ‘promise of gender equality, the new Yugoslav feminists did not oppose directly the Yugoslav state, but saw women’s place there as constant opposition’ (Lóránd 2018, 7).

Lóránd points out that starting from as early as the 1960s, Yugoslav feminists debated about the concept of *sexual revolution* (Lóránd 2015, 121, emphasis original). In her article ‘*A Politically non-dangerous revolution is not a revolution*’: *critical readings of the concept of sexual revolution by Yugoslav feminists in the 1970s*, Lóránd (2015) introduces the topics of Makavejev, Yugoslav New Film, and sexual revolution as a contested concept in Yugoslavia. The trajectory of this international concept can be observed within Yugoslavia ‘first with the *novi val* (new wave) of Yugoslav cinema and its relationship to the Marxist humanist philosophers’ group called Praxis, and then with the appearance of the new Yugoslav feminists’ (Lóránd 2015, 121). Moreover, she again broaches the subject of Yugoslav New Film, women’s emancipation, and directors Makavejev and Želimir Žilnik, in an indispensable book-length study of Yugoslav feminism *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia* (Lóránd 2018).

Therefore, Lóránd highlights the fascination of Yugoslav New Film ‘with sexuality and sexual freedom’ (Lóránd 2015, 121). As its perhaps the most explicit example, she refers to Makavejev’s film *W.R.: Mysteries of Organism*, in which a heroine who is interpreting a sexually emancipated role brings up the issue of women’s inequality, and stands for female revolt to male subjugation (Lóránd 2015, 123). Nevertheless, Makavejev simultaneously has ironic and mocking stance towards his heroine (Lóránd 2015, 123-4). I might add – grounded in Dillman’s (2014) theory on the U.S. cinematography and television, which I apply to Yugoslav New Film – that since Makavejev’s heroine is exposed to violence and murder, ultimately all the empowering effects are diminished.

In Kronja's view, international feminist films and international feminism had an impact on Makavejev, but those aspects that left traces on his oeuvre are under-researched (Kronja 2018, 162). Focusing on depictions of gender politics in Makavejev's works, in her book chapter in the edited book *Dušan Makavejev: Eros, Ideology, Montage* Kronja (2018) explores politics, aesthetics, and representation in his films. She believes that what Makavejev and film feminism have in common is the breaking of taboos: by tackling female suppression, inhibitions, and autoeroticism (Kronja 2018, 162). I find that this is indeed seen in the documentary segment of Makavejev's *W.R. Mysteries of Organism*, when queer artist Betty Dodson, juxtaposed to her painting of a masturbating woman, talks about female onanism. Moreover, Kronja asserts that Makavejev's films lambast 'the structural violence of society against women, [and] the intimate violence against women in their relationships' (Kronja 2018, 162). However, in my opinion, grounded in research of international scholars as Dillman (2014), the progressive gender politics that Makavejev promotes, and empowering effects on his female characters that are pointed out by Kronja, are obliterated by their deaths in his Yugoslav New Films *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator*, and *W.R. Mysteries of Organism*. Similarly, the demise by murder disempowers Žilnik's emancipated heroine in *Early Works*. Although it is uplifting to watch strong lead female characters (that are rare in Yugoslav New Film), as Makavejev's and Žilnik's heroines, it is difficult to observe their downfall and deaths that strip them of agency.

In contrast to Kronja's post-Yugoslav reading of Makavejev as pro-feminist, the reading of his work (and films by other New Film directors) by Yugoslav critic Boglić is anything but feminist. Boglić finds that in the films of Yugoslav New Wave directors, such as Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Vatroslav Mimica, Zvonimir Berković, Ante Babaja, and Matjaž Klopčič, a woman takes second place (Boglić 1980, 124). Instead, the primary focus is on a male character (Boglić 1980, 124). Although modern Yugoslav New Film raises questions of emancipation, a woman seldomly becomes the main character, the lead role, and the subject in her own right (Boglić 1980, 122-4). Irrespective of what or of whom, a female character is an object, stripped of her equality and her independence (Boglić 1980, 124). In Makavejev's films *Čovek nije tica/Man is Not a Bird* (1965), and *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice P.T.T./Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967), Berković's *Rondo* (1966), Fadil Hadžić's *Tri sata za ljubav/Three Hours for Love* (1968), Petrović's *Skupljači perja/Feather Collectors* a.k.a. *I Even Met Happy Gypsies* (1967), Klopčič's *Na avionima od papira/On Paper Planes* (1967), and Pavlović *Kada budem mrtav i beo/ When I am Dead and White* a.k.a. *When I am Dead and Pale*, 'a woman is reduced to either erotic, or

existential motif, dependent on the nature, will, and desire of the main protagonist'<sup>29</sup> (Boglić 1980, 124-5). Her counterpart, a male character, in most of Yugoslav modern films appears in a pattern of 'some kind of casualty, may it be of love, or of pure eroticism with which, naturally, only a female character is proverbially imbued'<sup>30</sup> (Boglić 1980, 125).

Modern Yugoslav New film, therefore, fetishizes a female character (Boglić 1980, 126). Of course, more than ever, a woman is objectified (Boglić 1980, 125). In most of the films, she is set aside on the margins of events (Boglić 1980, 126). Moreover, with regard to a female character and her destiny, the 'black', that is a pessimistic representation – which is in general one of the traits of the Yugoslav New Film – often takes rather drastic naturalistic forms (Boglić 1980, 125). Boglić finds that Yugoslav New Film is a male-oriented film, meaning it in the negative sense (Boglić 1980, 125). On the one hand, directors seek, find, and show all that is conservative in female nature, and in their nominal, but not fully enforced, gender equality. (Boglić 1980, 125). Thus, a film points out certain state of affairs in society (Boglić 1980, 124). On the other hand, as Boglić observantly detects, the directors and scriptwriters deliberately omit the other side of social reality of a Yugoslav woman, namely her empowerment through employment, since representations of working women are mostly absent from Yugoslav New Film (Boglić 1980, 125). In my opinion, based on film viewing, in the less frequent cases when employed female characters are shown, their workplace is depicted as dangerous, which constructs a message that it is safer for Yugoslav women to stay at home than work. And, that none whatsoever corresponded to the social reality of numerous employed Yugoslav women, who were financially empowered via employment (see Gudac-Dodić 2006, 66).

Furthermore, Iordanova argues in her study of Balkan Films (including Yugoslav), – which are more recent than Yugoslav New Films, yet still revealing and applicable to them – that the focus on the issues of female characters does not necessarily aid any feminist cause (Iordanova 1996, 25). It is for these reasons that male directors still dominate this profession, and utilise images of women as a vehicle for creating allegories about other matters, such as subjugation in interpersonal affairs, social inequality, and political injustice (Iordanova 1996, 25). They promulgate political points, embedded into the destinies of disempowered women (Iordanova 1996, 31). By exploring female characters, who were generally speaking conceived as marginal and the 'other', the directors investigate the societal themes of marginality and otherness (Iordanova 1996, 35). They address those themes via women's issues such as gender inequality, violated sexuality, patriarchal customs, and feminized destitution (Iordanova 1996,

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<sup>29</sup> Own translation.

<sup>30</sup> Own translation.

35). The marginality of the destinies of their female protagonists match the marginality of their society (Iordanova 1996, 35).

### **Yugoslav New Film Auteurs and Gender**

Yugoslav Film scholar Jovanović (2014) identifies Yugoslav critics Krelja (1979) and Boglić (1980) as the first to address the issue of gender/sexual politics and the degradation of female characters in Yugoslav New Film. Krelja created the first version of his article in 1967, under the title of *Opake žene [The Fatal Women]*, which tackled gender issues and misrepresentation of heroines (Jovanović 2014, 32). Moreover, an important contribution to Yugoslav New Film, as seen from the prism of gender and entitled *Putovanje u neizvjesnost: od mita do subjekta [A journey into uncertainty: From Myth to Subject]* (1980), is written as early as 1969 by Boglić, who was one of the rare female Yugoslav film critics. She finds that in Yugoslav cinema almost every film featured female characters (Boglić 1980, 121). They appeared in the most diverse roles, but as lead heroines did not perform very often (Boglić 1980, 122). This is because cinema is always primarily the art of men, since female directors of feature length fiction films are rare, which is the case not only in Yugoslavia (with the exception of, for instance, Soja Jovanović) but all over the world. Consequently, the approach of male auteurs to female characters is almost always biased, due to male complexes, preconceptions, and societal prejudices (Boglić 1980, 122).

In a similar vein, Jelača (2013b, 314) argues that in Yugoslav cinema, which is almost always the exclusive domain of male auteurs, a female character is frequently subjugated by an aggressive male character. Moreover, recurrent patterns in Yugoslav film are male-oriented diegesis and the objectification of celluloid women on the screen (Jelača 2013b, 326). A female character – often a metaphor for collective political identity – was more frequently a passive object to whom things happened without her control than an active subject who made things happen (Jelača 2013b, 327). Bogojević (2011, 256) is of the same opinion regarding the representation of gender in Yugoslav New Film, observing that women were seldomly film directors or main characters, in contrast to countless fictional male heroes and real-life male filmmakers. Therefore, in films that are almost exclusively created by male directors, female characters are as they envision them, and are intended for male viewers (Bogojević 2011, 258).

Consequently, as Boglić (1980, 122) points out, female protagonists in Yugoslav New Film are depicted somewhere on the continuum between two extremes: their mythologisation,

and their degradation, with a clear tendency towards the latter. Nevertheless, when the modern woman stepped into Yugoslav New Film via contemporary themed films, some of her problems also arrived with her, which resulted in more convincing portraits (Boglić 1980, 122). To Boglić, a truly innovative representation of a modern heroine, who is not an object, but a subject in her own right, was introduced with Maruša (Duša Počkaj) in film *Ples v dežju* (Boglić 1980, 124). After Maruša, the successors appear, in both Yugoslav New film and its contemporary mainstream cinema, such as: the peasant from *Prekobrojna/The Superfluous*, student from film *Čudna devojka/Strange girl*, mother from *Rana jesen/Early Autumn*, lonely woman from film *Dani/Days*, from film *Lažnivka/Liar*, *Tople godine/Warm Years*, and *Pravo stanje stvari/Real state of Affairs* (Boglić 1980, 124). All of these heroines are in conflict with the conventions (Boglić 1980, 124). Their pursuit is for equality in emotions, as well as in all the forms of life (Boglić 1980, 124). Unfortunately, there are not many of these women subjects in Yugoslav New Film. However, when they do appear, it is often sporadic (Boglić 1980, 124). Other female characters are those who only passively observe as their destiny unfolds, unable to free themselves from the chains of their times and milieu (Boglić 1980, 124).

In Krelja's opinion, a common denominator for otherwise diverse films and disparate auteurs of the Yugoslav New Film movement is the representation of a female character and her body, as if 'evil resides beneath her beautiful, often innocent appearance'<sup>31</sup> (Krelja 1979, 409-12). A Yugoslav celluloid woman could live a relatively superficial and happy film life until the moment the Yugoslav New Film auteurs appeared on the scene, who wanted to depict human existence without embellishments (Krelja 1979, 413). Then she swiftly gains the reputation of the harbinger of misfortune (Krelja 1979, 413). These Yugoslav films promulgate the opinion that a woman, with her seemingly fragile and oversensitive nature, bears a significant part of guilt that the world is not a better, more beautiful, and more humane place to live in (Krelja 1979, 409). Yugoslav auteurs blame women in their films, not only for allegedly accepting questionable morals that are typical for problematic environments, but also because women contribute themselves, with their deeply immoral behaviour, to social lack of scruples (Krelja 1979, 409). As Yugoslav New Films persuade, women became rotten until fantastic, scary, and fatal proportions, affecting the destiny of their (Yugoslav) environment (Krelja 1979, 409). In contrast, even amongst defeated male protagonists who faltered under the heavy burden of life, it is still possible to find those who did not turn to evil (Krelja 1979, 409).

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<sup>31</sup> Own translation.



Yugoslav New Film directors do not burden, blame, and persecute a celluloid woman in their films because of her alleged innate female weaknesses and tendency towards treachery (Krelja 1979, 414). One of the possible interpretations – of why there is so much evil and immorality accumulated in female characters of Yugoslav New Film – is linked to an ancient prejudice, according to which a woman is the cause of every large defeat, and a man's doom (Krelja 1979, 413). Accordingly, in Yugoslav New Film there is frequently a woman who is implicated in the fall of a man (Krelja 1979, 410). For instance, Yugoslav New Film director Petrović observantly notes that '[o]ne of the more important criteria for establishing the term of Yugoslav New Film was its relation towards sex, eroticism, and towards the freedom of interpretation of that content'<sup>32</sup> (Petrović 1988, 331). In his film *Biće skoro propast sveta/It Rains in my Village* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1968), set in rural ambience, a sexually promiscuous female character enriches the immoral assortment of Yugoslav New Film women, with demonic and fateful in her female nature, since she magnetically attracts a man with her charms and then destroys him (Krelja 1979, 412).

In addition, these critically disposed auteurs, consciously or unconsciously, find that a woman – as an important integral part of life that they depict – is also infected with some weaknesses of the society at large; and that her frail body and delicate soul may even subliminally keep and carry society's amoral seed (Krelja 1979, 414). Such seed of evil, which allegedly resides and germinates inside her, and also her tendency to infidelity are not only attributed to a narrow circle of female characters, but those negative traits characterise women of all social strata (Krelja 1979, 412). In Yugoslav New Film women cheat and desert, while men in return rape, kill, and burn them, for instance in Žilnik's *Early Works* (Krelja 1979, 412). While a male director's finger is pointed at allegedly weak spot of female nature, actually it is indicting something else (Krelja 1979, 414). Krelja (1979, 413) hypothetically introduces the assumption about a woman in Yugoslav New Film as conscious or subconscious personification of reality and of life in its entirety. In the works of some directors, a woman became a litmus test, super sensitive for determining a level of destructive forces in reality (Krelja 1979, 413).

Slapšak highlights that '[i]n the depictions of women there was no significant difference between ideologically "correct" films, and the Black Wave, which the state apparatus attacked, forbade, and hindered by stopping the financing'<sup>33</sup> (Slapšak 2000, 135). The Yugoslav state censorship was on a constant watch for societal critique, while staying completely indifferent to extremely negative, new clichés about women (Slapšak 2000, 132). I find this observation

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<sup>32</sup> Own translation.

<sup>33</sup> Own translation.

by Slapšak crucial, since she put the sign of equation between the Yugoslav Black Wave and its contemporary mainstream cinema, in regard with the representation of women as token characters. Slapšak spells out clearly that such stereotypes were equally generated by Yugoslav Black Film artists, who had a certain tendency of societal critique, and who got the title of dissident relatively easily due to overzealousness of ruling apparatus, ‘even accidentally, without any personal merit, or deliberate risk’<sup>34</sup> (Slapšak 2000, 132). It is indispensable to note Slapšak’s aforementioned reflexion, especially keeping in mind that in the post-Yugoslav academic literature on Yugoslav cinema there is recurring essentialist dichotomy of ‘Artist versus Regime’ (Jovanović 2011, 168), the binary view that glorifies Black Wave directors in their plight against the regime, which is (wrongly) vilified as totalitarian. In Slapšak’s opinion, the assumption that any public statement by women, against the stereotyping of female characters by male directors of the so-called Black Wave, would actually harm women and benefit the regime, paralysed any critical voices of feminism in cultural public sphere, resulting in their silenced solidarity with those male dissidents. She further stresses that, in such a situation, every intervention of women in culture and chastising of the male auteurs could only be understood as a support to the regime (Slapšak 2000, 132). Consequently, the area of film critique, as well as literary or other critique, became an almost exclusive arena of male power (Slapšak 2000, 132), with the exception of, for instance, Mira Boglić.

However, there are alternative voices, which note that the critique of gender roles has seldomly been situated within the Black Wave, that is, Yugoslav New Film framework, since the depictions of sexuality and gender are still not acknowledged as one of the main traits ("Black Waves, Red Horizons," 2015b). Such oppositional, contradictory nature of Yugoslav New Film is well described by Lóránd. On the one hand, she observes that even before the appearance of the new Yugoslav feminism, Yugoslav New Films question whether women’s emancipation was successfully implemented and point out to gender inequality via diverse strategies of portrayal of female characters (Lóránd 2014, 173). On the other hand, in her view, there is also ‘the problematic nature of the Yugoslav new wave cinema’ (Lóránd 2014, 173). This is addressed by Dimitrijević in his study of the film *Kada budem mrtav i beo/When I am Dead and Pale* a.k.a. *When I am Dead and White* (Živojin Pavlović, 1967) where he investigates strategies of representation of heroines that can surface as indicators of a sexist discourse (Dimitrijević 2009). Dimitrijević (2009), therefore, focuses on director Živojin Pavlović and tackles sexism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and portrayals of women in his film. With regard to

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<sup>34</sup> Own translation.

female sexuality, Dimitrijević highlights the male idea about masochism as an essentially feminine trait of sexuality, which is, as if by rule, punished, characterised by passivity, and imbued in guilt that further inhibits female libidinous activity. Under the impression that the auteur's worldviews can be tentatively described as sexist, Dimitrijević investigates into statements by director Pavlović, such as:

Until then, I thought I knew everything there was to know about films, but I realised I knew nothing at all. I was like those suffragettes who advocate the freedom of sexual love, who know everything about getting laid, but at the moment when they are actually supposed to get a bullet [Serbian slang for getting laid, translator's note], they panic and are scared shitless.

(Pavlović in Dimitrijević 2009)

Krelja observes that in Živojin Pavlović's films, women have almost no morals. This is not necessarily because Pavlović as a person and film auteur has a low opinion about women, but rather due to the extremely problematic environment which surrounds his female characters in his films (Krelja 1979, 411). 'Encircled with murderers, perverts, swindlers, and individuals of questionable political past, in short – with all the scum of this world', and deeply powerless to change or improve her milieu, a female character just comes to terms with its amorality (Krelja 1979, 411). Krelja continues that 'a woman and society in Yugoslav [New] Film behave in accordance with the principle of communicating vessels in physics: if the level of morals in the "society vessel" is low, then, accordingly, in woman's [vessel, the level of morals] is low as well' (Krelja 1979, 411). Therefore, there is a close link between a celluloid woman's pernicious nature in Yugoslav New Film and the destructiveness of her setting (Krelja 1979, 411).

### **Stereotyping**

Besides the themes of patriarchy and sexuality, another important contextual theme that imbues the empirical chapters is stereotyping, although it is not given specific prominence. In Yugoslav cinema, as Ugrešić (1994) notes, films were almost exclusively made by male directors, who over decades repeated the pattern of including the same female character, with only slight variations. What the recurring female character has in common in Yugoslav films is that she is

exposed to abuse in numerous ways, including brutal rape or savage beating. As if by default, the scenes of beating accentuate a frequent shot of a male hand on a female cheek, while the scenes of sexual violence feature a shot of vicious tearing of female clothing, and of denuded female breast being groped by a hairy male hand. Besides the young ‘whore’ stereotype, another prominent stereotype in Yugoslav cinema is that of the old good mother (Ugrešić 1994). In Ugrešić’s (1994) view these binary stereotypes were not just celluloid, but also a segment of a harsh Balkan reality. In a similar vein, Slapšak asserts that:

In the majority of former Yugoslav films women are yelping and screaming, mostly because they are raped. Rape is one of the most frequent sexual motifs of Yugoslav film at the end of 1960s; the main types of women – mother in black, prostitute/singer, raped girl, are deployed in Yugoslav films, in the war ones as well as the ones that deal with contemporary themes.<sup>35</sup>

(Slapšak 2000, 134)

Slapšak finds that in the so-called Yugoslav Black Film real-life social crisis permeated the realm of creation of gender stereotypes. She gives examples of Živojin Pavlović’s films, in which female characters are shaped as patriarchal clichés and polarised. The women who have disabled, invalid bodies are self-sacrificial, kind towards the main character, and ready to help him, whereas women with fully functional, able bodies have an exclusive urge to offer sexual services for money to a man, or to steal money from him (Slapšak 2000, 132).

Likewise, Daković (1996, 40) also identifies the presence of stereotypes in Yugoslav cinema, namely of a wife, working girl, ethnic family member, and mother. Except for some rare emancipated heroines that break the mould, those clichéd female characters are suppressed in all aspects: psychological, physical, and economic (Daković 1996, 40). With regard to motherhood, Daković pinpoints a paradoxical position of a depicted mother character, capable of shifting from ‘an inferior social position to one of power’ (Daković 1996, 41). On the one hand, the mother characters are deprived of sexual interests for men, in accordance with patriarchal fears of female sexuality; while, on the other hand, younger characters are carnal, unable to resist the temptations of the flesh, and consequently tamed either by marriage or punished by death (Daković 1996, 47).

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<sup>35</sup> Own translation.

Similarly, Bogojević (2011, 257) observes that female protagonists are stereotyped as patriarchal binaries of a submissive virgin and a sexual object. The token female characters also appear as another dichotomy, on the one hand as a mother (who can alternate between a docile wife or sister character) and, on the other hand, of a whore, especially in the so-called Yugoslav Black Film (Bogojević 2011, 257), that is, Yugoslav New Film. A maternal character stands for traditional values, whereas a whore's physique is an object for the male gaze and visual pleasure (Bogojević 2011, 257). Thus, the representation of female gender is reductive because their characters are stereotyped, and their bodies are on display (Bogojević 2011, 257). In the same vein, Jelača discerns that female characters are stereotyped as if by default, since they have an absence of agency, fulfilling patriarchal image of feminine as a passive ingénue, and masculine as a violent brute (Jelača 2013a, 141-2). Similar patterns of stereotyping are followed in the corresponding time period in Hollywood cinema. As Haskell (1987, 277) notes, there is a typology of female roles that appear in the movies. She especially underlines the virgin-whore dichotomy (Haskell 1987, 277).

Following the re-patriarchisation, which occurred in the Yugoslav social life, as Stojčić and Duhaček (2016, 97-100) note, the reassertion of patriarchal stereotypes of women gradually takes place in film. It is marked with numerous paradoxes, as well as ambivalences between genuine endeavours for liberation of women and remnants of the gender essentialism, which echoed the inconsistency of Yugoslav socialism to a woman's question (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 97). The main woman's sphere is not public, but private, where she mostly takes care of the household, hygiene, housekeeping, food preparation, and the whole family, especially children and elders by herself (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 100). Film depictions of female characters can serve as a litmus test for assessing not only the accomplishments, but also the shortcomings of the emancipatory strategies of socialist Yugoslavia in regards to attaining full gender equality (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 100). Consequently, the depictions of heroines are stereotyped as sexual and objectified, or as domesticated by love through a union with a man, which includes the benefits of lifestyle in representable furnished household (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 100).

The portrayal of a Yugoslav woman as emancipated and Westernised, which was in line with the preferred image of social progress, stands for life's circumstances of middle and upper middle-class women from cities (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 99). The representation of life circumstances of a woman from a countryside and suburban areas, generally speaking, were rather rare until experiences of people living on the fringes of the Yugoslav society were shown in Yugoslav New Film (including the so-called Black Wave) (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 99).

The Black Wave widened the assortment of male protagonists and the manner of their representation, whereby it depicted the female characters as reductive and mostly stereotyped as victims (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 99). Even when images of heroines are shown as being more free in relation to the female body and sexuality, they remain a token of femininity enmeshed in sexist patterns, in which any forms of female resistance are penalised with brutality, murder and lunacy (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 99).

Since not all women are as bad and vicious in real-life as Yugoslav New Films show them to be, the films, which are genuinely obsessed with the desire to show human existence for what it is, often achieve counter-effect (Krelja 1979, 414). Despite the intention to be more realistic by depicting integral part of reality – a woman, the directors attain the opposite because they transform her to embodiment of great vices of reality (Krelja 1979, 414). However, due to the main premise of such films as the conscience of society, often the consequences are that the representation of a heroine is not fleshed out, and she is stereotyped, for instance, as a traitor, or thief, or prostitute (Krelja 1979, 414).

Yugoslav film auteurs often accentuate in their films that evil dwells beneath a woman's beautiful, frequently innocent looks (Krelja 1979, 410). The figure of famous Yugoslav actress Milena Dravić inspired divergent sensibilities of many Yugoslav New Film auteurs, and was omnipresent in their films in different, sometimes diametrically opposed and immoral roles (Krelja 1979, 412). What such diverse roles in various films have in common is that her small, proportional body, and warm physiognomy, with the looks of an ingénue, are deceiving and treacherous, which everybody initially fails to notice (Krelja 1979, 410). For example, she features in *Čovek nije tica/Man is Not a Bird* (Dušan Makavejev, 1965), *Jutro/The Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967), *Nemirni/The Restless Ones* (Kokan Rakonjac, 1967), *Zaseda/The Ambush* (Živojin Pavlović, 1969), *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969), and *Cross Country* (Puriša Đorđević, 1969). Furthermore, in Berković's *Rondo* (1966) she interprets a character of a petty-bourgeois bored wife, who becomes an adulteress. While in *Rondo* her body adapts to the sterile ambient of the modern urban household, in *Cross Country* (1969) it adapts to the vast fields, dusty roadways, and remote villages (Krelja 1979, 412). In all these films, she stood for an embodiment of a collective vision of a woman who, with her appearance, tragically misleads a man (Krelja 1979, 410).

## Conclusion

In order to examine the portrayal of women in Yugoslav New Film and the violence that they are exposed to, I make use of my own analysis, which focuses on several issues and concepts, both Yugoslav and international, such as the male gaze, representation, reading against the grain, cryptomatriarchy, a raped woman as allegory of a raped nation, and reversed masquerade. I identify recurring central and contextual themes, for example patriarchy, sexuality and nudity, ethnicity and class difference, gender, feminism, female employment, silencing of female characters, and their stereotyping. In addition, I explore the sociological position of Yugoslav women, representations of their work, depictions of female Partisans and women belonging to the dissolving, pre-war bourgeoisie. Furthermore, I investigate the participation of women in the Yugoslav film industry.

The overarching theme – the symbolic, psychological, physical violence, and self-violence, which heroines are exposed to, has been under-researched. Based on my viewing, there is a thread which possibly unifies the Yugoslav New Film movement, otherwise disparate. I draw parallels with celluloid violence and the contradictions of Yugoslav socialist society that ratified legal empowerment of women in every aspect. Furthermore, I undertake ardent work on gender equality which was hindered by the remnants of patriarchal traditional mentality that predated socialism. In the following empirical chapters, I interpret cinematic violence, not as a mere reflection of society, but as a refraction and construction of patriarchal unconscious, which is intimidated by a woman's emancipation in the sphere of employment and sexuality. In other words, it tries to repress their progress. A raped female character in Yugoslav New Film frequently embodies the raped, suffering Yugoslav nation, or a stratum of the nation (see Mostov 1999, Jelača 2013b), as examined in **Chapter 4** and **Chapter 5**. Female characters can either stand for an allegory of Yugoslavia's internal problems, or as an allegory of external problems. In Yugoslav New Films female characters are also occasionally represented as treacherous, deceiving, and prone to fraternise with the enemy (see Krelja 2010), which can also be seen in **Chapter 6**. In such cases they often belong to the pre-war bourgeoisie and are punished for their open sexuality. Moreover, a bourgeois woman is depicted as more tempting than a veteran Partisan woman, and she occasionally distracts a hero from his revolutionary goal. Based on my viewing of Yugoslav New Films, women are often killed, but are seldomly killers themselves. Moreover, films construct gender roles, for example by creating an image of the workplace as dangerous to women, even though it was contrary to their social reality where they were empowered by employment. In **Chapter 7** I investigate why female liberated

sexuality, or emancipation through employment is, as if by rule, repressed in a brutal manner, even by suicide. In films in which female characters are not physically manhandled, they are psychologically abused and neglected. Furthermore, representations of female ageing, especially old age, are sporadic and stereotyped. Elderly women are often represented as mothers, in particular grieving ones. Rarely do Yugoslav New Films break the mould portraying old women on screen, or ageing women. It is even less common for ageing women to be depicted as sexual beings. Furthermore as discussed in **Chapter 8**, the relations between women are seldomly depicted, which the 'Bechdel test' (see Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 20) refers to. The test is supplemented with the sociological concept 'cryptomatriarchy (Simić 1999), and with the film studies concept of 'reversed masquerade' (Bogojević 2011). The iconographical (see Panofsky 1955) representation of female characters is scrutinised, as well as their exposure to violence or neglect. In the following chapters, I attempt to vindicate a violated woman of Yugoslav New Film from her alleged cinematic treachery and marginalisation, in order for her to be given a proper place in film studies, even if it means reading against grain.



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### Chapter 3. Methods and Methodology<sup>36</sup>

It is good form to introduce a work [...] with a statement of its methodological point of view. I shall be derelict. I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves.

(Fanon 2008 [1952], 5)

This insightful thought on methods devouring themselves, initially discovered as paraphrased by De Cuir (in Beugnet et al. 2020) in the NECSUS issue on Method, reflects my ongoing frustration with the lack of textbooks on methodologies and viable methods in film studies research. Coming from a practical background in filmmaking – honed during a Bachelor of Arts in Directing (at the *Academy of Arts* in Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina), and a Master of Art (at *Kyoto University of Arts and Design* in Japan), where I made student films – my transition to academia was not smooth, and I was in desperate need of a handbook on film methods and methodologies, but my search was futile. As Griffin points out, texts on research methods are still scarce in some disciplines of arts and humanities, for instance in film studies and literary studies, consequently making it difficult to learn and write about research methods in these disciplines (Griffin 2011, 101). Feminist methodologies in the social sciences are not helpful here, because, as Walker points out, they are ‘a contested terrain and a source of continual debate among feminist scholars’ (Burns & Walker 2004, 69). Similarly, Peake identifies ‘genuine confusion and misunderstanding about the term “methodologies” among and beyond feminists’ (Peake 2017, 2331). Moreover, to borrow from Dhaenens’ observations on cultural studies – from which some of the supporting theories to my research originate, in addition to those from film, feminism, semiotics, psychoanalysis, and sociology – ‘there is no proper, practical, ready-to-use methodological toolbox’ (Dhaenens 2011-2012, 141).

From my observation, besides the scarcity of descriptions of methods in feminist film criticism, and, as White highlights, ‘diverse and often contradictory methods’ (White 1998, 130), I encountered another obstacle. I was perplexed regarding the implementation of theories on film analysis, in particular on medium specific audio-visual aspects of film, from a feminist perspective in film studies. Therefore, I was interested not only in the representation of women in the film industry, and film narrative, but also in their visual and aural representation.

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<sup>36</sup> I am especially grateful to my supervisor Philippe Meers for his kind help on this chapter.

Although feminist film studies do take representations of women as their focus, they seldomly explain or elaborate transparently on the method used, that is, on how to read these images. With the aim of introducing new knowledge, which I wanted to arrive at independently through the bricolage of various previous theoretical and methodological approaches, I created my own methodological framework. It was developed in accordance with the research material and the research questions about such material. In addition, it was frequently led by intuition, trial and error, and ultimately through viewing 269 Yugoslav films, which helped my analysis of the selected films.

It is important to clarify from the outset the difference between a methodology and method. On the one hand, a methodology is a written description of the planned method(s), that is, ‘a discourse on method’, which can be metaphorically compared with a map that illuminates the anticipated trajectory from a research question to its answer (Pape 2020). On the other hand, a method is a particular way of doing, that can be compared with an actual research trajectory traced by a scholar—who reads ‘the map’ along the way—from a research question to its answer (Pape 2020). ‘A method is a *modus operandi*; a methodology is an account of that MO’, Pape (2020) asserts. Moreover, he finds that a methodology emanates from the past, whereas a method comes from the future, meeting at the present-time of thought (Pape 2020). Brummett uses the map metaphor in a slightly different way than Pape. To him a theoretical framework could be compared with a map of a territory, whereas a method is like a vehicle used to traverse that territory (Brummett 2010, 44). Furthermore, Stevenson and Witschge believe that ‘methods refer in the first instance to how research is carried out’ (Stevenson and Witschge 2020). In my view, a method, or more often, methods, are implementations of a methodology. Griffin asserts that ‘[m]ethodologies are the perspectives one brings to bear on one’s research, such as feminist or postcolonialist ones’ (Griffin 2011, 95). Typically, scholars do not use more than one methodology during a research process, whereas they never use only one research method, but more often combine them (Griffin 2011, 96). Researchers on methods invoke various criteria, for instance reflexivity, meaning to which extent a scholar expresses self-consciousness about the details of the research procedure and its influence on the results (Griffin 2011, 97).

Even though any method infers concealment of disarray in the research process, and although (usually only brief) descriptions of the method(s) in research articles as if by rule omit that research is not orderly, but rather a messy procedure, still, the ‘ups and downs’ of research should be acknowledged (Stevenson and Witschge 2020, Korolkova and Bowes 2020). Keeping this in mind, in the following chapter, I will address both advantages and shortcomings of my research, in a self-reflective manner.

In order to do that, both Yugoslav, and international literature on film, feminism, gender and media, are general sources of inspiration. As Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2015, 21) note, gender representation in the media is studied from two broad perspectives and methodologies. The first is a quantitative statistical analysis of the number of men and women in the media, which addresses the numerical discrepancy that women are largely outnumbered by men in terms of prominence and quantity. The second, more qualitative perspective on media representation, examines how gender is portrayed and the ideology behind that portrayal (Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 21). In order to employ an in-depth qualitative phase of research in film studies, I conduct a preliminary, preparatory, quantitative phase of film viewing and sampling, which facilitates and leads to the main qualitative one.

## **Methodology**

I combine approaches from feminist film theory ((a) detecting fragmentation of the female body, (b) reading against the grain, and (c) Bechdel test) with close reading ((a) textual analysis, (b1) formal analysis, and (b2) audio-visual style analysis) to construct a conceptual framework relevant to the main problem of the study. Similar to cultural studies research, there is thus a ‘bricolage’ of methods and approaches (Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg 1992, 2, Dhaenens 2011-2012, 141) that I engaged with during the research. This framework leads me to reformulate the overarching problem of how female characters are represented (for example formally, visually, and narratively) in certain incarnations of Yugoslav New Film (including its Black Wave subset) into four research questions, which I already announced in the introduction:

1. If female characters are employed, independent, progressive, or sexually active, why are they eventually cinematically punished for these transgressions by the remnants of the patriarchy within the course of the narration: by suicide, violent death, rape, beating or victimization (such as, by illness) (RQ1)?
2. Can the figure of a raped or/and murdered woman in the selected films be interpreted as an allegory of a raped nation, or a stratum of a nation (RQ2)?
3. In the case study of Partisan-themed films, why are civilian or Partisan female characters who fraternize with an enemy or betray information, respectively, punished by death as traitors to the nation (RQ3)?
4. If the selected films under research are set in the pre-socialist past, prior to Second World War, and feature main female characters, do they actually indirectly address the remnants of patriarchy in the socialist present at the time (RQ4)?

In order to examine the representation of female characters, this study applies **close reading analysis**, conducted: via **textual analysis** (McKee 2003, Lincoln 2004, Chapman 2011, Bateman and Wildfeuer 2017), via **formal analysis** (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, Thompson 1988, 1981, Yale 2002) and via **audio-visual style analysis** (see Bordwell and Thompson 2008, Geiger and Rutsky 2005, Gibbs and Pye 2005a) to the Yugoslav New Film movement (including Black Wave). Initially, a preliminary viewing (of 269 films) was conducted, resembling quantitative analysis (see Rose 2016, Bock, Isermann, and Knieper 2011, Neuman 2014, Kelle and Erzberger 2004), in order to select case studies. Thus, quantitative data was used to select the films, and to demonstrate the relevance of certain topics. A **close reading** was conducted: the set of four aforementioned research questions were operationalized in the domain of content through an in-depth **qualitative textual analysis**, and in the domain of form through a **formal analysis** and an **audio-visual style analysis** (of a smaller sample of eleven films).

### **The Construction of the Database**

First, **a database of films was created**. This database consists of fiction feature length films that were projected or were intended for projection (but were released decades later, for example due to censorship for nudity or politically inappropriate content). Of all the film productions between 1961 and 1972 in ex-Yugoslavia, directed by Yugoslav directors (286<sup>37</sup> movies) which include New Yugoslav Films as well as formally and thematically mainstream films (such as comedies, dramas, children's films, and Partisan epics), I was able to view 269 movies. The reason why the database created consists of these films, while it excludes

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<sup>37</sup> I did not count, for instance, the film *Legenda o močvarnom medvedu* a.k.a. *Tvrđava Samograd/Solimano il Conquistatore/Suleiman the Conqueror* (1961), which Yugoslav director Vatroslav Mimica nominally co-directed with Italian Mario Tota. Tota was, according to *Baza HR kinematografije [The Database of Croatian Cinematography]*, enlisted as the director in the opening credits, but only due to co-production rules, while Mimica was credited merely as the supervisor of directing, even though it was Mimica in fact who did all the directing work. This Italian-Yugoslav pseudo-historical film was ordered by Italian production company Produzioni Astor. So, perhaps this film as well could have been included also in the list of Yugoslav films (produced from 1961 until 1972 and directed by Yugoslav directors), but due to the initial dilemma over Mimica's directing role in this film and, since the film was commissioned by an Italian producer, and thus the Yugoslav character of the film could be questioned, I did not include it. I also did not include films such as Boštjan Hladnik's German productions *Erotikon - Karussell der Leidenschaften* (1963) and *Maibritt, das Mädchen von den Inseln* (1964). On the other hand, my decision to include in the list *Nokaut/The Rogue* (1971), directed by Boro Drašković under the pseudonym Barry Norton, could be contested, but this coproduction between Yugoslavia and Italy has significant participation of Yugoslav crew, such as actors. Furthermore, I have not included films by foreign directors, regardless of whether they were made solely by Yugoslav production companies, such as *Sibirska leđi Magbet/Siberian Lady Macbeth* (Andrzej Wajda, 1962) by the Yugoslav Avala Film.

seventeen films that were not available for viewing – out of the total Yugoslavian film production directed by Yugoslav directors from this period – is that I was not able to find these films, even after long and intensive efforts to locate them over a period of three years. With the notable exception of director Makavejev, whose subtitled movies on DVD are part of the international Criterion Collection, or some non-subtitled films by various directors recently sold on DVD by Delta Video in Serbia, most of the movies are rare and difficult to find both abroad and within ex-Yugoslavia, except on VHS or through temporary internet streaming links which are often seen as having poor image and sound quality. More recently (after I had already completed the film viewing phase) several Yugoslav Films, including approximately fifteen Yugoslav New Films, are now available on demand with English subtitles on the webpage *easterneuropeanmovies.com*. Also, the *Slovenian Film Centre* has released a limited of edition DVD films with English subtitles, including Yugoslav New Films, namely two Boštjan Hladnik's pieces *Ples v dežju/A Dance in the Rain* (1961) and *Maškarada/Masquerade* (1971). In addition, a limited edition of Yugoslav films was released in Croatia on DVD (without subtitles) by *Jutarnji list* and *Orfej*, in the collection of *Zlatna kolekcija hrvatskog filma*, which included Ante Babaja's lauded Yugoslav New Film *Breza/The Birch Tree* (1967). Additionally, the *Croatian Film Association (Hrvatski filmski savez)* issued a limited number of DVDs, such as Yugoslav New Films *Živa istina/Real Truth* (Tomislav Radić, 1972) and *Slučajni život/Accidental Life* (Ante Peterlić, 1969). Furthermore, three Yugoslav New Films by Aleksandar Petrović are sold on *amazon.com* on DVD with English subtitles, but it is questionable whether they can be properly reproduced on DVD players outside the US region.

Besides the difficulty of tracking down the copies of Yugoslav New Films, another problem I encountered were their subtitles. As a native speaker of the Serbo-Croatian language, I did not have trouble with films that were produced in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Socialist Republic of Croatia, because the same language, with some minor nuances in dialect, was spoken in these four Yugoslav republics. However, I did have trouble with the films produced in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia and the Socialist Republic of Macedonia where Slovenian and Macedonian are spoken, respectively, as I do not speak these languages. When it came to the copies that I managed to find online, the ones in Slovenian were often without subtitles, whereas the films in Macedonian often had Serbo-Croatian subtitles. Therefore, tracing Yugoslav films made from 1961 until 1972 was a difficult task even for a Yugoslav scholar.

Out of the 269 Yugoslav films (produced between 1961 and 1972) which were available



for viewing, Yugoslav New Films were selected (including Black Wave films) based on their categorization in academic literature and my judgment, whereas formally and thematically mainstream films were not chosen. Besides my personal viewing, the database also relied on information from books such as *Filmografija jugoslovenskog igranog filma 1945-1980* [*Filmography of Yugoslav Fiction Film 1945-1980*] (Petronić, Milenković-Tatić, and Obradović 1981), and *Filmografija srpskog dugometražnog igranog filma 1945-1995* [*Filmography of Serbian feature length fiction film 1945/1995*] (Petronić, Milenković-Tatić, and Obradović 1996). In addition, segments of Volk's book *Istorija jugoslovenskog filma* [*History of Yugoslav Film*] (1986), and Jovanović's PhD thesis *Gender and Sexuality in the Classical Yugoslav Cinema, 1947-1962* (2014) were helpful, which concern certain film lists. The database was also based on excerpts printed in contemporary books from the documentation related to film activities of the time (film reviews, articles about cinematography and photographs from film sets), memoirs and written or filmed interviews of the people directly involved in the filmmaking process, from the early 1960s until the early 1970s, for example Makavejev, Petrović, Babac, and Žilnik.

### **Preliminary Viewing and Sampling**

A **preliminary viewing and sampling** was carried out in order to select the films. It is important to note that I did not watch the films on the big screen of a cinema, but on the small, 15-inch monitor of my computer. The downside was that these films were mostly low-quality copies, but the advantage was that I could pause, re-watch, rewind, forward, skip, and take screenshots of a film. This method facilitated spotting details, which otherwise might be unnoticed.

The discovery of a particular sequence or segment that responds to textual analysis necessarily leads to questions of film form both in terms of material and language. To halt, to return and to repeat these images is to see cinematic meaning coming into being as an ordinary object becomes detached from its surroundings, taking on added cinematic and semiotic value. But delaying the image, extracting it from its narrative surroundings, also allows it to return to its context and to contribute something extra and unexpected, a deferred meaning, to the story's narration.

(Mulvey 2006, 150-151)

With regard to this preliminary viewing and sampling phase, it is important to keep in mind that there are two overall approaches: deductive and inductive (Brummett 2010, 46). The deductive is a ‘top-down’ approach, in which a scholar is led by pre-existing theories (Brummett 2010, 46). It follows the trajectory from general to particular, starting with a pre-existing theory, which is then applied to particular pieces, by using techniques to read a piece in a manner proposed by that theory (Brummett 2010, 29). The latter is a ‘bottom-up’ approach, in which a scholar utilises techniques in order to examine a piece spontaneously, allowing generalisations to develop and consequently new theories to be generated (Brummett 2010, 46). My preconceived, wrong, deductive idea was that numerous Yugoslav New Films feature empowered female characters, who are survivors and winners at the end of a film. This is because I first watched Makavejev’s work, namely *Čovek nije tica/Man is Not a Bird* (Dušan Makavejev, 1965), in which a heroine, despite the workings of patriarchy, rises to become the mistress of her fate. I expected to find many other powerful celluloid heroines, who despite all the predicaments that they encounter, prevail at the denouement of a film. However, I was mistaken. Such strong leading and/or prominent female protagonists are possible to find in other New Wave cinemas, roughly speaking in contemporary films of Yugoslav New Film, for example in the Japanese *Nuberu Bagu*, the Czechoslovakian *nová vlna*, and the French *Nouvelle Vague*. However, after viewing almost all the films directed by Yugoslav directors from 1961 until 1972 (269 out of 286), the material led me in another direction, towards the conclusion, generally speaking (with some exceptions), that in Yugoslav New Film women are often exposed to certain types of violence. Whether this be symbolical, psychological, physical violence, or self-violence, they are often victims of the environment that surrounds them, of the men that they encounter, or of their own passion. Regardless of whether they are passive objects, which is often the case, or active subjects, they are frequently neglected, or beaten, or raped, or killed by male characters. In films in which women are not physically manhandled, they are often psychologically maltreated. I started questioning how come there is so much represented violence. And whether there is a relation between, for instance, female liberated sexuality, or emancipation through employment – which are as if by rule repressed in a brutal manner.

Therefore, in the preliminary viewing and sampling phase, I investigated the basic quantitative information: the amount and types of violence against women, the number of women film workers who have been employed in some branches of the film industry, etc. For example, out of the 286 films directed by Yugoslav filmmakers from 1961 until 1972, in only seven were women the sole scriptwriters. In eight other films women were co-writers together

with men. These numbers testify to the under-representation of women screenwriters. Also, there is a glaring absence of female film directors, from 1961 until 1972 there was only one female director who directed feature length fiction films, Sofija 'Soja' Jovanović. Although, to my regret, I do not classify her important work in Yugoslav New Film movement. In contrast, numerous women were appointed as film editors. Out of 286 films produced by domestic film directors in Yugoslavia between 1961 and 1972, only 44 films were edited by men, whereas 234 films were edited by women. In eight films both men and women contributed to the editing of the film project. Perhaps women were preferred to men as editors because female hands and fingers were regarded as more agile, as in the textile industry, since in the past the film tape was physically cut, glued, and handled on editing table in the process of editing the film. However, the credit should be given to female editors, not only for having delicate fingers, but for their ability to successfully perform with them such a complex technical skill, and to put their creativity at use, otherwise their contributions would not have been predominant in that profession.

In contrast, there were no women in positions such as directors of photography, camerapersons or composers represented in the researched time-period. I believe that the absence and/or rare hiring of women for decisive positions in Yugoslav film production, for instance as directors and scriptwriters, has unequivocally affected the representation of women on screen. Furthermore, based on the results that indicate how common the representations of violence are, namely rape, out of 269 films watched (including Yugoslav New Film and mainstream films), it is in an estimated 41 films (roughly 26 belonging to the Yugoslav New Film) that women suffer explicit, implicit, or attempted rape. Furthermore, out of 269 viewed films, at least fifteen films feature implicit or explicit suicide or attempted suicide of female characters, where the method is known. Out of the 269 films that I managed to find, around 80 films depict explicit or implicit deaths of female characters (by execution, homicide, suicide, accident, and illness), which amounts to more than a quarter of films, that is, to almost one third of the films made in Yugoslavia between 1961 and 1972. The preliminary viewing data pointed out the prevalence of violence in the Yugoslav New Film.

Furthermore, the underpinning research design and the division of empirical chapters emerged during the preliminarily viewing and sampling phase, influenced by the themes and topics that recurred, stood out, or hinted at underlying contradictions in Yugoslav New Film. Also, the selection of themes and topics was inspired by literature. In his research on the representations of prostitutes, Campbell (2006, 11-13) investigates how a fallen woman in a film is usually punished for her misbehaviour. Her grim destiny sets a deterrent example

intended to discourage female audiences from straying away from the right path and alerts the male spectators to beware of the impact of failure as a parent or a spouse. The closure of such film leads to the restoration of a male dominated order, whether through the reformation of the woman who strayed, or through her death by: ‘suicide, illness, accident, murder or execution’ (Campbell 2006, 11-13). I used some of these manifestations of female punishments, as identified above by Campbell, as a helpful tool on how to divide my own empirical chapters that deal with death, namely suicide, murder and execution. In addition, another guiding theory that inspired my division of empirical chapters is by Kaplan (1990, 7). She pinpoints several patriarchal mechanisms how, in the cinema of the United States, female characters are suppressed, and relegated to marginalization or absence: by victimization, murder, fetishization and rape. I implemented this on my division of empirical chapters, but with some modifications, because in my view, fetishization can imbue all other categories as well, so it does not need a separate category. Also, Kaplan’s (1990) category of victimization can encompass Campbell’s (2006) category of illness, so I opted for Kaplan’s taxonomy in this case. Moreover, Campbell’s (2006) category of accident could also be embedded into Kaplan’s (1990) category of victimization, but I did not select for my PhD research the case study films that feature accidents, resulting in the deaths of female characters. Therefore, I conflated Kaplan’s (1990) and Campbell’s (2006) categories of violence, or self-violence towards female characters. In conclusion, my empirical chapter division is as follows: rape (**Chapter 4**), rape and murder (**Chapter 5**), execution (**Chapter 6**), suicide (**Chapter 7**), and victimization (**Chapter 8**). Eleven case study films were selected. *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krsto Papić, 1969), *Doručak sa đavolom/Breakfast with the Devil* (Miroslav ‘Mika’ Antić, 1971), and *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of my Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin ‘Bato’ Čengić, 1971) in **Chapter 4** are amongst only a few Yugoslav New Films that are set in the wake of the Second World War – namely after Tito-Stalin split which took place in 1948 – and which feature a raped woman as an allegory of a politically violated stratum of a nation. In **Chapter 5** a rape and murder of a female character in *Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969) is observed as both an allegory of a brutalised nation, and as a punishment for her emancipation. **Chapter 6** also includes unnatural deaths of women in films, such as in *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965), *Delije/Tough Guys* (Miodrag ‘Mića’ Popović, 1968), and *Jutro/Morning* (Mladimir ‘Puriša’ Đorđević, 1967), which depict executions of women perceived as treacherous: either of civilian ones due to consorting with the enemy, or of female Partisan soldiers due to betrayal to the enemy. In **Chapter 7** the selection rationale behind the case studies *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961), and *Bube u glavi/Bats in the*

*Belfry* a.k.a. *This Crazy World of Ours* a.k.a. *Bughouse* (Miloš ‘Miša’ Radivojević, 1970) is that they are rare Yugoslav New Films which portray suicides of working women. In **Chapter 8** the films analysed include *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967), and *Roj/The Beehive* a.k.a. *The Swarm* (Miodrag ‘Mića’ Popović, 1966), and are rather uncommon due to being set in the pre-socialist, pre-Second World War past, and surprisingly featuring women as main characters, which is somewhat unusual in the Yugoslav New Film movement. These films indirectly address the remnants of real-life patriarchal oppression of women in the family sphere of contemporary Yugoslavia, while depicting stories set in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Ottoman Empire, respectively. Besides the aforementioned selection criteria, it is important to note that these ten case study films are directed by different filmmakers, except for *Tough Guys* and *The Beehive*, which are directed by the same director, Miodrag ‘Mića’ Popović. However, that has nothing to do with my personal preference for this director, but with the selection process based on the thematic, narrative, formal, and audio-visual portrayal of women in the case study films. The studied films are spread evenly, representing most of the years of the Yugoslav New Film movement, starting from 1961 and ending in 1972.

Unlike the cinemas in socialist countries within the Soviet sphere of domination, where filmmakers had no other option but to be employed by the state film studios, and the ownership of all copyrights resided with each respective state. In Yugoslav non-aligned, self-management socialism, starting from as early as the 1950s, filmmakers could be freelancers and/or independents (Mitrić 2018, 186).

Considering that the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia consisted of six constituent socialist republics, it is important to keep in mind that Yugoslav cinematography was not centralised, as opposed to most of the Eastern European ones, which had centralised film industries, where film centres and studios were situated solely in the capitals (Mazierska 2013, 136). In contrast, each Yugoslav republic had its own film centres, whereby the incentives put forward were to produce films in the specific language spoken in the respective republic (be it Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, Macedonian, or the languages of national minorities). Consequently, I selected films from as many Yugoslav socialist republics as possible. However, it should be noted that, based on my viewing, the films made from 1961 until 1972 still had predominantly Yugoslav characters, regardless of the republic of origin. They were all shot with the equipment (and if needed in studios) belonging to the Yugoslav socialist state. Moreover, they were produced and funded (often by the state) under similar conditions. The crews, in most of the cases, consisted of members from more than one Yugoslav republic. These crew members worked together on the same film projects, especially when it came to the actors.

In addition, during the researched period (1961-1972), films were also made as co-productions between production companies that engaged in intra republican or inter republican collaboration, or international co-productions (Mitrić 2018, 186-187). The latter was more common for mainstream films, and less common for the Yugoslav New Films<sup>38</sup>. Besides main Yugoslav film production centres located in each Yugoslav republic, such as Avala film, Jadran film, Triglav, Bosna film, Vardar film, and Lovćen film (Goulding 2002, 4), the production model included more independent and rather free *Filmske radne zajednice/Film Work Associations*, into which filmmakers could self-organise (Mitrić 2018, 186), starting from 1967. Thus, directors themselves could grasp more power over the production process.

For the sake of the representation of Yugoslav republics, the case study films that I selected for in-depth analysis originate from several of them. *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* was made in the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Slovenia by production house *Triglav film* from Ljubljana, by Yugoslav director of Slovenian origin Boštjan Hladnik. The films I selected for analysis which were created in the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Croatia include *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967), by Yugoslav director of Croatian origin Ante Babaja, produced by the *Jadran film* in Zagreb; and *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969), which was a production by the *Jadran film* in Zagreb (SR Croatia), under guidance of Yugoslav director of Montenegrin origin, who lived and worked in the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Croatia. The studied films that originate from the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Serbia are: *Roj/The Beehive* (1966) by *Avala Film* from Belgrade, with a Yugoslav director of Serbian origin; *Bube u glavi/Bughouse a.k.a. Bats in the Belfry a.k.a. This Crazy World of Ours* by *Inex Film* in Belgrade; *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965) by *Avala Film* in Belgrade; *Jutro/The Morning* (Mladimir 'Puriša' Đorđević, 1967) by *Dunav Film* in Belgrade; *Delije/The Tough Ones* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968), an intra republican co-production between *Avala Film* in Belgrade and *Kino klub 'Beograd'* in Belgrade; *Doručak s đavolom/Breakfast with the Devil* (Miroslav 'Mika' Antić, 1971), produced by *Neoplanta Film* from Novi Sad, in The Socialist Autonomous Province of Vojvodina (which was a part of Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Serbia); *Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969) was also produced by *Neoplanta Film*

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<sup>38</sup> Such examples include *W.R. Misterije organizma/W.R. Mysteries of Organism* (Dušan Makavejev, 1971), an international co-production between Yugoslav Neoplanta from Novi Sad and German Telepool. Rumor has it that Yugoslav Avala was also a co-producer of the film, but that it stepped out in the final stage due to political reasons. Also, Aleksandar Petrović's Yugoslav New films were international co-productions: *Biće skoro propast sveta/It Rains in my Village* (1968) and *Majstor i Margarita/The Master and Margaret* (1972). The former was international co-production between Yugoslav Avala film and Les Productions Artistes Associés (French branch of the United Artists), while the latter was international co-production between Yugoslav Dunav film and Euro International Film (EIA).

from Novi Sad, as well as by *Avala Film* in Belgrade. *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of My Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1971) was done by production house from Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina *Bosna film* in Sarajevo, with a director from Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, I conducted a close reading of films from the following Yugoslav Republics: SR Bosnia and Herzegovina, SR Croatia, SR Serbia, and SR Slovenia.

Although I have conducted a close reading of these films, I have not analysed in depth the films from all six Yugoslav republics. To my regret, I only mention in passing films from the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Macedonia. Often neglected, but remarkable films, such as *Žed/Thirst* (1971) and *Memento* (1967) by director Dimitrie Osmanli, and *Vreme bez vojna/Times without war* (1969) by Branko Gapo, which need to be studied and included in the canon of Yugoslav New Film. For the two latter, Jelača (2015) has also noted that they should be classified as Yugoslav New Films.

The Socialist Republic of Montenegro is another Yugoslav republic from which I did not choose case study films to be closely examined. It is for this reason that, when it comes to the studied period (from 1961 until 1972), the production in this republic was rare<sup>39</sup> and rather mainstream, formally and thematically. The reasons are diverse. One of the reasons is due to the implementation of the Basic Law on film in 1956. A consequence of the law was that the film enterprise Lovćen film, located in SR Montenegro, was split into three separate enterprises. In general, similar enterprises were split into three in other republics as well (Volk 1983 [i.e. 1986], 351). One new enterprise was in charge of production, but it could not own a camera (Rotković 1979, 208). The second one was a technical base, while the third enterprise task was distribution (Rotković 1979, 208). Such division significantly increased administrative

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<sup>39</sup> From 1961 until 1972 production houses from SR Montenegro only produced or co-produced following films: *Nebeski Odred /Sky Battalion* (Boško Bošković, Ilija Nikolić, 1961), produced by Lovćen film in Budva (SR Montenegro); *Nasilje na trgu/Square of Violence* (Leonardo Bercovici (Berkovići), 1961), by Lovćen film in Budva; *Ne ubij/Tu ne tueras point a.k.a. Thou Shalt Not Kill* (Claude Autant-Lara, 1961) by Lovćen film in Budva; *Ne diraj u sreću/Don't Disturb Happiness a.k.a. Don' Meddle With Fortune* (Milo Đukanović, 1961) by Lovćen film in Budva; *Muškarci/Men* (Milo Đukanović, 1963) by Lovćen film in Budva; *Provereno nema mina/Provereno min net a.k.a. Clear of Land Mines a.k.a. Safe Passage* (Zdravko Velimirović, 1965) an international coproduction between Lovćen film in Budva and Studio Dovzhenko in Kyiv, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic; *Palma među palmama/Palma Among the Palm Trees* (Milo Đukanović, 1967), a coproduction between Filmski studio in Titograd (SR Montenegro) and Avala film in Belgrade (SR Serbia); *Lelejska gora/Mount of Lament* (Zdravko Velimirović, 1968), a Yugoslav interrepublican coproduction between Filmski studio in Titograd (SR Montenegro) and Kosmet film in Priština (Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosovo within SR republic of Serbia); *Pre istine/Before the Truth* (Vojislav 'Kokan' Rakonjac), a Yugoslav interrepublican coproduction between Kino club 'Beograd', in Belgrade (SR Serbia) and Zeta film in Budva (SR Montenegro); *Sramno leto/Shameful Summer* (Branislav Bastać, 1969), a Yugoslav interrepublican coproduction between Filmski studio in Titograd (SR Montenegro) and Bosna film, Sarajevo (SR Bosnia and Herzegovina); and *Živjeti za inat/Žit' na zlo* (Yuri Ilyenko, 1972), an international co-production between Filmski studio in Titograd (SR Montenegro) and Kino-studio Dovzhenko in Kyiv, Ukrainian SSR).

apparatus and production costs (Volk 1983 [i.e. 1986], 351). Also, overly ambitious and financially unprofitable international co-productions that SR Montenegro engaged in, and in general, high production costs due to inefficient organisation of location and studio shooting, diminished the possibilities for future film productions, and were the causes of the lower output of films per year in SR Montenegro than in all other Yugoslav republics (Volk 1983 [i.e. 1986], 359-362). Another reason for the scarcity of production in SR Montenegro was a reform of funding in Yugoslav cinematography in 1962, which further decentralised it (Rotković 1979, 208). The reform stipulated that each republic was to independently secure a budget for the funding of films that were about to be produced, through the contribution collected from the movie theatres within that republic, of the screenings of films that were already made (Volk 1983 [i.e. 1986], 362). Collected contribution based on the turnout of films was not supposed to be higher than 20 percent of their total revenue (Volk 1983 [i.e. 1986], 133). Until 1962, there was a central film fund, consisted of tax money collected on film tickets, which would then be reinvested in new film production (Rotković 1979, 208). Out of that total sum of tax money, each producer received a percentage corresponding to how much they took part in total domestic film turnover (Rotković 1979, 208). In order to avoid favouring lowbrow, light comedies that attracted wide masses, the biggest film festival in Yugoslavia, in the city of Pula, gave producer awards which consisted of lump sums of money to films with artistic value (Rotković 1979, 208). However, as mentioned above, the central film fund was decentralised in 1962. In light of these changes in funding, Lovćen film suffered losses. Instead of the percentage it received earlier – according to its merits in the turnover of its own films all over Yugoslavia – from the all-Yugoslav central film fund, its financial resources downsized to a republican fond, accrued from 38 cinema theatres in the Yugoslav socialist Republic of Montenegro (Rotković 1979, 208). For example, in the first half of 1962, before the decentralisation, Lovćen film received 96 million old Dinars from the central film fund, whereas in the second half of 1962, after the decentralisation of the film fund, it received six million old Dinars from the republican fond (Rotković 1979, 208), which is sixteen times less. For the republics with underdeveloped cinema networks, as SR Montenegro was, this was a fatal financial blow that inhibited their production of films (Rotković 1979, 208).

The majority of the few rare films that were produced in SR Montenegro from 1961 until 1972 do not have prominent or memorable female characters, nor could be classified as Yugoslav New Films, but rather formally and thematically mainstream films. For instance, otherwise noteworthy *Lelejska gora/Mount of Lament* (Zdravko Velimirović, 1968), which tackles a moral dilemma of a Partisan, haunted with revenge, and *Sramno leto/Shameful*



*Summer* (Branislav Bastać, 1969) about a returnee to his hometown, who initially pretends that he is someone else. Furthermore, two films that stand out in terms of gender representation – although they could not be included in the canon of Yugoslav New Films – are *Palma među palmama/Palma Among the Palm Trees* (1967), and *Muškarci/Men* (1963), directed by Milo Đukanović. It is important to note that in the later period of Yugoslav cinematography, which came after Yugoslav New Film, SR Montenegro offered strikingly poignant and beautiful films by Živko Nikolić that tackled patriarchy and featured empowered female characters.

### **Close Reading**

After the preliminary viewing and sampling phase, a qualitative analysis, namely a **close reading analysis**, was conducted on the sample selected from the database, these being the eleven case study films. As previously mentioned, the sample was selected based on the different forms of violence against women: rape, suicide, execution, and/or victimization. Close reading is the overarching feminist method of my research, which is present in all five of the empirical chapters (Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Chapter 8). Close reading can be undertaken both via deductive and inductive approaches as suitable means (Brummett 2010, 46). A scholar uses a theory that is appropriate to support his/her close reading (Brummett 2010, 33). Many scholars making use of a close reading analysis first immerse themselves in a piece of work (e.g., film), and later develop the theories about the methods they used, which may often be helpful for others to read (Brummett 2010, 44). This describes the very essence of the inductive approach, where a scholar uses his/her specific findings to create theoretical and methodological generalisations (Brummett 2010, 44). My approach to a close reading of case study films was inductive, since I did not want to impose a preconceived theory on a film, but, on the contrary, I let the material lead me to how to read it. This can be established by comparing films analysed in **Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8**, which were approached with an understanding that every film is a special case, with its unique interplay of production and reception conditions. These different approaches to case study films, fortified with the various theories used, testify to the diverse close readings of the films in question. Nonetheless, what these analyses have in common is that close reading is implemented in order to examine the portrayal of female characters in Yugoslav New Film.

Within the scope of this research, I focus on the thematic and cinematographic traits linked to the representation of women in the Yugoslav New Film movement (including the

Black Wave). For the purpose of film analysis, I utilize this close reading method, which is in Kuhn and Westwell's (2012, 425) opinion, in-depth dissection of film, specifically into components concerning narrative and style. As Hornig-Priest (1995, 172) notes, close reading is one possible method of qualitative film analysis, conducted in order to investigate: what reactions a film provokes, and which observations can be made regarding the detection of recurring themes and patterns, the latter being the interest of this research. Smelik finds that a close reading analysis, of the particularly cinematic traits of the medium of film, has rather been neglected as a methodological approach (Smelik 1998, 26-27). According to Denzin (2004, 240) a close reading of a film can be undertaken in two disparate ways: the first, realist, which interprets meanings literally as if they were realist depictions; and the second, subversive, which seeks for the meanings below the surface. However, the latter is of interest to this research because it approaches film as polysemic, and its dominant reading as just one option (Denzin 2004, 241). Namely, it looks into other possible interpretations instead of only dominant and realist ones. For example, in the case of a represented female rape, in my case study of films, I focus on the reading of rape as a political allegory, as opposed to a more predominant realist manner of close reading, which approaches rape as a truthful depiction of real-life violence. Nevertheless, even though the focus in the case studies is on the subversive reading of represented rapes as political allegories, the connotations of rape as grave violence against women should not be ignored. As Bal highlights, '[r]ape, or violently enforced sexual intercourse without consent, is a crime' (Bal 1992, 367). Furthermore, the subversive method is also relevant because it juxtaposes the positions of women and men in the narrative and 'focus[es] on minor characters, not just major characters' (Denzin 2004, 240). For that reason, such a close reading of the subversive meaning is utilized for an analysis of female characters (primarily represented as minor roles in Yugoslav New Film).

Dillon defines close reading as a significant feminist method that undertakes 'the detail criticism of film' (Dillon 2018, 39). She finds that, depending on a point of view, feminist close readings could be perceived somewhere on the continuum between two diametrically opposite extremes, or even as one of them: as an effective feminist subversive practice, which appropriates dominant films, or as a potentially problematic practice, due to its focus on details, which can be adulterated with the tendency of masculine objectivization of a female character (Dillon 2018, 34). Dillon is a proponent of the former interpretation, because, to her, close reading is a 'feminist critical act', since such attention to detail is utilised by deconstructive feminist film criticism, in order to confront the ideological denouement of the narrative (Dillon 2018, 34).

In a similar vein, DuBois reckons that close reading is ‘reading with special attention’ (DuBois 2003, 2). To Blackwell, a close reading approach is a mindful inquiry of film elements, such as film compositions (Blackwell 2005, 533). It is a method related to so-called formalist approaches (Lukić and Sánchez Espinosa 2011, 105). Detailed film analysis follows a trajectory from detail to meaning, which involves the connection of film aspects to the wider theoretical film concepts, such as gender and family roles, genre, narration, and the historical context of a film (Bignell 2005, 42). Gibbs and Pye put forward that close reading is an interpretative strategy, which includes not only pinpointing the interplay of action and reaction between characters, consequently opening possible standpoints on their motives and feelings, but also the analysis of a director’s decisions that construct such characters and their diegetic worlds (Gibbs and Pye 2005b, 125). Mulvey (2006, 160) asserts that close reading tackles both text and context. Moreover, that this critical practice ‘has greatly enhanced understanding of “auteur” cinema’ (Mulvey 2006, 159). Keeping in mind that Yugoslav New Film is considered an auteur cinema movement, in my view, I chose the appropriate method for enhancing the understanding of this movement, its auteurs, their opuses, and gender politics in their films.

Nevertheless, there are critics of this method. Cardwell points towards a bias that a close analysis of films implies repudiating or evading ‘theoretical questions’ (Cardwell 2005, 193). Moreover, as a downside of a close reading is that it is frequently considered as relying on the ‘I’ of the scholar who views a film (Walters and Brown 2010, 65). In addition, Carroll (1998, 1), who is generally speaking, a proponent of this method, is against labelling it as a ‘close reading’, because for him the film is not a language, and therefore cannot be read, closely or otherwise. Consequently, he prefers to use the term ‘close analysis’, where ‘close’ is intended to imply ‘an attention to detail’ (Carroll 1998, 1). Although Carroll acknowledges the significance of a close analysis—which, to him, is mainly an interpretative strategy—he stresses that it must be complemented with other kinds of film inquiry (Carroll 1998, 13). Carroll’s claim that film should not be read as language is a legitimate warning, especially keeping in mind, as Chapman notes, that some film historians read films merely as narratives, as novels, without recognising that films also produce meanings through their *mise-en-scène* (visual and formal elements of the film, such as editing, lighting, costumes, set design, art direction) (Chapman 2011, 361). Also, each film style differs depending on a particular moment in history and the culture in which it is developed (Chapman 2011, 361).

In order to alleviate this, there are two ways the **close reading method** can be put to use: via **the textual analysis method** (McKee 2003, Lincoln 2004, Chapman 2011), which roughly speaking mostly focuses on content, and via **the formal and audio-visual style**

**analysis** (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, Gibbs and Pye 2005a, Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, Bordwell and Thompson 2008, Babac 2000, see Arijon 2015), which addresses questions of form and style. By combining these two avenues and sub-methods a comprehensive close reading of case studies can be undertaken.

#### *a) Textual Analysis*

In my study, the textual analysis examines how various forms of violence against women are represented. The usage of this method uncovers the workings of underlying (patriarchal) ideology, via film feminism. Geiger and Rutsky state that reading a film, implies critically analysing, interpreting, and approaching a film as a text, which could be ‘any cultural object or form that has potential meaning’ (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 21). They highlight that a close textual analysis of a film can give cues about the social, historical, and economic factors of film production (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 38). The practice of reading requires meticulous attention to the film itself, in order to find not only the meanings that are in plain sight, but also the ones that are frequently hidden and overlooked as well, and that might even be contradictory (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 21). Every film has a range of diverse meanings, which are not necessarily obvious and are beyond their apparent meanings (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 19). Careful analysis can unveil such concealed or ambiguous meanings, unintended by their directors (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 27).

Similarly, Benshoff (2016, 129) notes that a close textual analysis investigates the ideological implications of a film by disclosing what is absent and hidden. It opens a space for not only one truthful interpretation, but for numerous possible truths, meanings and diverse techniques to how a film can be interpreted (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 23). Moreover, a close study of a film not only strives to reveal its less apparent meanings, but also how those meanings are produced (Geiger and Rutsky 2005, 23). The term close (textual) reading originates from literary theory, and, correspondingly, it is a method for ‘the careful “reading” of cinema as text’ (Cesereanu 2009, 52). According to literary theory, feminism utilises close reading, which is an interpretative method that prepares the ground for oppositional readings, and reduces the differences between diverse models of reading (Lukić and Sánchez Espinosa 2011, 116). To borrow from literary theory, close (textual) reading is a careful, disciplined reading of an object, undertaken with much deliberation in order to deepen the consideration of its meanings (Brummett 2010, 9). Brummett claims that some people have a natural predisposition for a

close reading (Brummett 2010, 28). With regard to reception, since some types of recipients have preconceived notions, close reading can help to investigate whether a piece fits into these preconceptions and expectations, or if it fails them (Brummett 2010, 63).

In film studies the term close textual analysis is often used interchangeably with the term close analysis, which is a close reading, as if they were considered synonymous. I do not agree. Clayton and Klevan (2011, 14) try to delineate these two terms, although somewhat vaguely. To them, there is a sequential close reading, which should have been called ‘close viewing and listening’, and it is a practice undertaken shot-by-shot, intended to divulge the detail of a film (Clayton and Klevan 2011, 14). It should be demarcated from close textual analysis, which has diverse aims, to ‘locate the underlying structure of an individual film or a group of films’ (Clayton and Klevan 2011, 14). Furthermore, in Clayton and Klevan’s view, more recently, textual analysis has somewhat expanded as a category, and also encompasses any scholarly work that discusses a film’s image and/or soundtrack (Clayton and Klevan 2011, 2). They state that close textual analysis inclines to be rather formalist, systematic, neutral, seemingly objective, and is thus in opposition to any type of subjectivity in interpretation (Clayton and Klevan 2011, 2). As an example, they refer to Raymond Bellour (2000), and David Bordwell (2015). This is contrary to the view put forward by Walters and Brown (Walters and Brown 2010, 65), whereby a close reading is dependent on the subjectivity of the spectator. In my view, the difference between close reading/analysis and close textual analysis is not about subjectivity and objectivity, because both methods are imbued with a personal opinion. The delineation between the two is that close analysis is a wider category that can investigate both form and content, whereas close textual analysis focuses mainly on content, for example the ideology behind a film. However, this does not mean that ideology, especially patriarchal, cannot be embedded in film form, detected, and confronted.

### ***b) Formal Analysis and Audio-visual Style Analysis***

The methods that tackle ideology, with the predominant focus on the form, are formal analysis and audio-visual style analysis. They are used to examine case study films, that is, their sequences or scenes, analysing filmic parameters, such as, camera movement and position, editing, light, music, composition and colour, and how these function within the narrative content of gender violence. Formal analysis not only tackles the understanding of form (e.g., framing, colour, mise-en-scène), but also the understanding of the ideological meaning of the

form used. Kuhn finds it as a disadvantage that feminist film theory has seldom systematically utilised formal textual analysis, which is ‘a *sine qua non* of a feminist analysis’ (Kuhn 1994, 203, emphasis original). To Gocsik, Barsam and Monahan (2013, 33), formal analysis is a process of dissecting the elements of films that are on the screen for the viewers to see. It scrutinizes the intricate interplay of its many formal aspects, such as: camera, acting, sound, editing, composition, costume, *mise-en-scène*, narrative and lighting, as they are envisioned by directors, scriptwriters, editors, directors of photography, actors, sound editors, art directors, as well as many other crew members who contribute to film making with their creativity and craft (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 33-34). The meaning of a film is communicated through the complex relationship of these formal elements (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 34). Therefore, the narrative intent of such elements should be considered. Also, the setting of a particular scene, its mood, and tone should be investigated; as well as recurring motifs; gestures of actors and usages of their voices, and processes of meaning-making that directors employ in a film (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 34). Formal analysis is about paying meticulous attention to the details (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 37). While there is a possible risk of overreading a component of a film if a reader is overenthusiastic in terms of attributing more meaning than the director planned. It is therefore important to keep in mind that in a well-directed film most of the events that happen and are shown within a frame are for a reason (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 34). However, often both filmmakers and viewers might be unaware of the cultural attitudes that mould films, consequently encompassing implicit ideological, cultural and political messages (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 51). Cinematic stories are palimpsests, which include not only the levels of meaning that the directors intended, but the unintended ones as well (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 51).

Besides formal analysis, another method that successfully scrutinizes form is the audio-visual style analysis. However, focus on style and meaning was criticised as rather problematic due to being perceived as not being scientific enough (Gibbs and Pye 2005a, 2). To Gibbs and Pye, its proponents, the significance of film style analysis ‘is inevitably to be involved in interpretation’ (Gibbs and Pye 2005a, 2). They find it not merely ‘subjective’ and grounded in individual tastes, but grounded in concrete details of a film, which are the results of particular decisions made by film directors (Gibbs and Pye 2005a, 4). The style could be defined as ‘a director’s distinctive or habitual approach’ (Gibbs and Pye 2005a, 9). Furthermore, Gibbs and Pye deem interpretation as the producer of knowledge (Gibbs and Pye 2005a, 4). In contrast, Bordwell (1991, 261) is dismissive of interpretation, namely in the cases when it neglects medium specific traits, if the films are read as literary texts. To him, style is:

a film's systematic and significant use of techniques of the medium. Those techniques fall into broad domains: *mise-en-scène* (staging, lighting, performance, and setting); framing, focus, control of color values, and other aspects of cinematography; editing; and sound. Style is, minimally, the texture of the film's images and sounds, the result of choices made by the filmmaker(s) in particular historical circumstances.

(Bordwell 1997, 4)

Drawing on these authors, I interpret medium-specific traits of Yugoslav New Films, with the focus on the formal and stylistic audio-visual representation of heroines.

### **Feminist Critical Approach, and its Methods**

I use feminism as a theoretical framework, as a critical lens to explore a film's depiction of women. Giving prominence to otherwise invisible, secondary female characters, can be considered one of my methods. This is in line with feminist film research because, to borrow from Coates' observations on German cinema, feminists seek 'to re-vision the story by elevating the female figures it marginalizes' (Coates 2005, 107). Correspondingly, my method in several case studies could also be described as an attempt to review and elevate marginalised heroines. Furthermore, my research is in accord with Buikema and Zarzycka (2011), who elaborate on how to conduct a gender-sensitive reading of images. Firstly, it needs to be investigated whether male and female characters are systematically depicted in dissimilar ways (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 121). Secondly, the meaning of those dissimilarities should be studied (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 121-122). In addition, Goscik, Barsam, and Monhan (2013, 57-58) suggest several useful questions when investigating gender in films. For example, whether the prominent female characters are as fully-fledged as the male ones? What does such representation reveal about how the directors situate their heroines? Is the identity of a celluloid woman mostly perceived through her sexuality? Does a film portray gender relations as naturalized and/or essentialist, or does it criticise them? Is the film in line or does it oppose the expectations about gender roles that were held at the time of production and screening of an analysed film? Do the formal elements of a film (such as camera, editing, acting and so on) impose ways of seeing a female protagonist from a male perspective? Are you emphatic with

the female lead or not? (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, 57-58). Such questions are in accordance with my methods of film analysis.

In order to conduct a film analysis, I weaved an assortment of methods and theories into a bricolage and use them as guidelines during my study. For the close analysis, in the above-mentioned viewing and sampling phase, I selected eleven films that feature various types of violence and self-violence. In these films, I investigate whether a director condoned or condemned the violence, or sometimes both because the narrative and images can contradict. For example, a director can sexually objectify a female character via framing in a rape scene, whereas he can be critical of a sexual assault throughout the narrative. In addition, I examine whether female characters have closure, or whether they just disappear from the narrative after they have served a purpose for a director. For example, if there was a rape in the film, whether a female post-rape perspective is offered. Furthermore, where possible, I pay attention to sound, if it is used, for example, to subvert the meaning of a scene, add a political dimension to it and so on. Besides literature that addresses violence towards female characters as political allegory related to a nation, I also made use of literature that focused on interpreting violence (e.g., execution) or self-violence (e.g., suicide) towards female characters – emancipated in terms of work, education or sexuality – as an underlying patriarchal punishment for their progressiveness.

I offer a female gaze, that is, my gaze, on the films that were directed by male directors and feature violence towards female characters, with a note that I definitely do not claim that my point of view is universal. Nor that it can stand for an opinion of other Yugoslav women, women of different countries, minorities, women of colour or various sexual orientations. I try to revisit Mulvey (1989[1975]), who initially introduced the concept of the male gaze in 1975, in her influential film feminist study *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Mulvey (1989, 25) argues that there are three types of male gaze directed at a celluloid woman: (1) the gaze of a male character within a movie diegesis, (2) the gaze of camera as a proxy for a male director's, for a male cameraman's gaze, etc., and (3) the gaze of a male spectator. I strongly agree with Mulvey's first two points and implement them as guidelines in the empirical analysis of my case studies. However, I am at variance with Mulvey's third point. Namely, feminist film theory has often criticised and widely pointed out the shortcomings of Mulvey's third point, which focuses only on the gaze of a male spectator. Such an approach disregards the variety of possible spectatorships and real-life audiences, and the assortment of their readings, for example, depending on their differences in educational background, race, nationality, class, religion, sexual preference, age, social status, country of origin, and gender (see Bergstrom and Doane 1989, 9-10), not to mention Mulvey's neglect of female spectatorship, particularly lesbian



(White 2007, 131-132), gay male, transgender person, that is, in general, of queer spectatorship. One of the critiques of feminist film theory grounded in a psychoanalytic framework is that it is ahistorical and gives priority to sexual difference, which omits acknowledgment of race, echoing the absence of black femininity that takes place in films, thus stifling any debate about a specific type of sexual difference, namely racialized sexual difference (hooks 2015, 123). Numerous film feminists still construct their argument as if it were about women in general, while in fact, it refers only to white women (hooks 2015, 123). Furthermore, in the 1980s, film feminists made the distinction between audiences, which is a concept suggesting social and cultural cinema-going, and spectatorship, which is a concept connoting a mental engagement with the film text (Kuhn, Biltereyst, & Meers, 2017, p. 5). As opposed to spectatorship, frequently (mis)interpreted as homogenous, audiences are perceived as heterogenous, differing in their place of living, time in history, identity, race, nationality, salary, social or cultural standing (Biltereyst & Meers, 2011, p. 416). Every film's mode of reception should be considered on an individual basis, Biltereyst and Meers contend that, due to the singular interaction of circumstances in a specific historical place and time, influenced by the context of a film's pre-production, production, postproduction, and reception (Biltereyst & Meers, 2016, p. 15).

After being criticised for overlooking the heterogeneity of spectatorships and audiences, namely due to the third aspect of the gaze, which she tackles as if a viewer is exclusively male, Mulvey revised her theory and stated that 'masculization' of the viewers takes place regardless of their biological sex (Mulvey 1989, 29). This is a point which I do not quite agree with. Nevertheless, although the third aspect of the male gaze has been perceived as problematic, I find two other aspects of Mulvey's theory ground-breaking and applicable to my research. Furthermore, in defence of Mulvey, her third point could be interpreted more subtly, namely that a spectator is not necessarily male, but is addressed as male, irrespective of their actual gender. By all means, by the time when Mulvey incepted her theory, most of the films were directed by men (including Yugoslav New Films), and most of the lead characters were male, often as if they were an alter ego of a male director. Also, taking into consideration how frequently the actresses who were cast were beautiful and young, how their figures were framed and edited as fragmented, sexualized body parts, and how lighting sculpted their bodies in eroticised ways, it is undeniable that such films communicate to the viewers as if they were white, heterosexual men. Nevertheless, even though those films knock on my door as if I were a man, I open the door as a woman, as a feminist critic, who deconstructs them, detects contradictions, and patriarchal ideology behind them. That is why Mulvey's third point should

be interpreted as if the films she refers to are tailored for heterosexual men, but it is up to us, the viewers, how we will read them. Although my research does not focus on real audiences due to time constraints, as they are an important segment of film studies, a suggestion for further research would be to investigate the reception of Yugoslav New Films.

All things considered, my method is to detect the objectifying male gaze: of a male character and the male-oriented framing of the camera. Such strategies reveal whether a film addresses its spectator as a man, or, to borrow from de Lauretis, it '*addresses its spectator as a woman*, regardless of the gender of the viewers' (de Lauretis 1985, 161, emphasis original). According to my findings, in Yugoslav New Film the male gaze is prevalent, while the female gaze – in those rare cases where it is present – is fleeting and followed by unavoidable punishment.

#### ***a) Fragmentation and Gaze***

My approach is that theories on Yugoslav film are coupled with international film feminist theories, in particular the ones that reveal how film grammar is used to represent and visually frame women. After reading feminist film theory, I understood it to address the workings of patriarchy, but I was perplexed that often, at least at its inception, it is inclined more towards textual than filmic aspects, in a sense that film was read as a text without paying particular attention to the audio-visual nature of the medium. By drawing on film feminist theory as a guideline, on the one that pays attention to medium specific aspects, I closely observe formal and stylistic elements of the film, such as camerawork, framing, editing, light, and sound. Therefore, my focus is not only on narrative and text, but also on the audio-visual aspects of the film, examined from a feminist perspective. To give an illustration, I apply Ostrowska's (2006, 58) premise on the film analysis, which asserts that the physical positioning of a man above a woman in a film can suggest patriarchal dominance, further amplified with the usage and juxtaposition of high and low camera angle, respectively.

Another way to conduct close reading, via formal analysis, is by investigating the fragmentation of female bodies, which is a crucial method for my study. For example, I searched for the sequences or scenes in which there is a male character, who observes a woman. More precisely, I pinpoint whether there is a close-up shot of a male character, followed by his point-of-view (POV) shot of a female character. If such POV is depicted in a close-up cut-out of a segmented, sexualised female body, then it offers a male character's perspective in

eroticised manner. This is in accordance with Mulvey's point as noted above, stating that one of three ways a male gaze manifests itself is via the gaze of a male character (1). Nonetheless, there are also cases when there is no close-up of a male character, so a featuring close-up of a sexualized, fragmented female figure is not a male character's point-of-view, but it appears as if it were in direct rapport with a (male) spectator. In that case, I identified such a close-up of a female body part as the gaze of the camera, which is the proxy for the male gaze of a male director. This corresponds to Mulvey's previously mentioned point, asserting that one of three ways how the male gaze manifests itself is via the gaze of a camera (2).

In regard to both types of shots of segmented female body parts (the ones that are male POV, as well as the ones that are not), I draw on Mulvey (1989), and Kuhn (1992), who put forth that if a female body is fragmented in terms of framing, consequently it is sexually objectified and fetishized. Their observations on the visual segmentation of female figures are useful guiding theories on how to spot the dehumanisation of female characters. As an exception amongst such fragmented, eroticised shots of a female body, Kuhn (1992, 36), singles out the close-up portrait of a face, which is the only framing that can be considered as an acceptable substitute, a stand-in body part, for a whole person, without dehumanising her. Other than a portrait, any fragmented body part may be perceived as an appropriation of a person's individuality (Kuhn 1992, 37).

In addition, I investigated whether female characters are deprived of corresponding subjective, point-of-view shots, which would, on the one hand, confirm Mulvey's theory that the gaze is male, or, on the other hand, would refute it if women are granted such point-of-view shots (POV). Chaudhuri finds that it is pointless to swap the gender of the gaze, because the gaze itself is repressive (Chaudhuri 2005, 651). However, Smelik (1998, 85) sets forth that the male gaze is significantly divergent from the female look. The ownership of gaze implies who is in power and it is habitually a man (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 122), who scrutinises with the male gaze. If female characters actively return the gaze or become a danger to their own gaze or agency, they are punished for it with demise (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 122). Along the same lines, when it comes to Yugoslav New Film, the gaze is fleeting and often followed by the imminent punishment of a female character who dared to, even briefly, possess it. Correspondingly, my analysis of the case study films shows that female POV shots are seldom shown. On those very rare occasions when they are indeed shown, I looked into whether female POVs objectify men, and my findings show that they do not, particularly not in an equivalent manner to how female bodies are denuded or fragmented. Point-of-view shots imply a certain character's perspective. Since women are almost never given such types of shots, their

perspective is not shown. Therefore, gaze, enunciation, and film grammar, as for instance editing, could prove decisive in establishing who owns the look, or whose perspective is being shown, what can be viewed, which identification options are available and which ones are marginalised (Buikema and Zarzycka 2011, 122). Smelik (1998) writes about the possibility of female perspective in terms of, for instance, narration or inner monologue. It has been noted in film studies that a film narrator is often male, implying that the voice and perspective are male. This corresponds to investigated Yugoslav cinema because the examples when female characters are given a voice in such a manner are extremely rare.

### ***b) Reading Against the Grain***

One of the methods I used in order to examine gender roles and underlying meanings is ‘reading against the grain’. It was incepted in the virtual absence of female directors in Hollywood. Feminist critics mastered implementing this reading strategy on male-dominated classical films (Doane, Mellencamp, and Williams 1984, 8). The name ‘reading against the grain’ is given because such a strategy ‘resists the dominant viewing/reading grain’ (Cairns 2006, 5). There are several definitions of this reading method. To borrow from Ponzanesi, reading against the grain offers ‘a space for feminist interventions’ (2017, 33). Similarly, Kotsopoulos believes that reading against the grain serves a feminist film critic as a beacon of ‘what to look for’ in films (Kotsopoulos 2001). Feminist film criticism utilises this text-based method for reading ideological ambiguities and contradictions between manifold discourses, while taking into consideration context via dynamics between gendered spectators and the films they view (Kotsopoulos 2001). For Devereaux reading against the grain is an interpretative strategy with the objective of reappropriation and critique (Devereaux 2002, 396). In Kamir’s opinion, it deliberately substitutes the message of the film for a clear diverse one (Kamir 2006, 71). Thus, such an interpretation, instead of criticising or dismissing a film, intentionally chooses to ‘redeem’ it by attributing a new meaning to it, via reading film components out of context, that is, via their deconstruction (Kamir 2006, 38).

Reading against the grain enables the switch of focus in feminist film criticism from the male to the female spectator, which addresses the female spectator’s ‘relationship to cinema in a way that does not exclude nor marginalise her experience’ (Kotsopoulos 2001). Smelik (1998, 14-15) notes that feminist film theorists appropriate the notion of the resisting reader from feminist literary theory, for the purpose of restoring the pleasures of the female audience in the

cinema. The active feminist resistant readership is intended to counter the male gaze, and is 'designed by out of power groups to counterbalance the dominant textual traditions by offering alternative interpretations of works within those traditions' (Devereaux 2002, 396). Zoonen puts forward that this reading strategy aids feminist film researchers to pinpoint the niches in (mainstream) cinema for 'female spectator positions, with women as well as men functioning as objects of the female gaze' (Zoonen 2000, 149). As Diane Waldman notes, 'behind every hypothetical female spectator is a real or empirical spectator, the feminist critic' (in Kotsopoulos 2001). However, Mayne stresses the importance of differentiating between the words: 'feminist' and 'female' (Mayne in Kotsopoulos 2001). If feminist critics can unsettle and challenge the ideology of the cinema, this does not necessarily mean that female spectators resist the ideology of spectacle – which puts the female body on display as an object – solely by being a woman (Mayne in Kotsopoulos 2001). Accordingly, in my opinion, the feminist critic is not behind every female member of the audience. Feminist criticism in the arts on the one hand reinterprets the male canon by foregrounding the workings of patriarchy, which were initially concealed by male-oriented scholarship (Fischer 1989, 3). On the other hand, it examines the renowned male-authored works from another perspective by interpreting them (in a deconstructionist manner) against their grain for feminist elements and ambiguities (Fischer 1989, 3).

Bobo finds that reading against the grain is viewer-oriented and subversive, and is initiated when something in a film comes across to a viewer as strange, so 'she/he may then bring other viewpoints to bear on the watching of the film and may see things other than what the filmmakers intended' (Bobo 2004, 181). Subversive reading against the grain unveils intricacies and contradictions of (Hollywood) films that depict the predicaments of female characters in a chauvinist environment (Smelik 1998, 15). For Staiger, reading against the grain can be used for an argument in which there are numerous possibilities for interpreting a film and that 'no single valid interpretation exists' (Staiger 1985, 17). Along a similar line, Stam and Spence point out how the understanding of films is affected by the differences in audiences, that is, their race, class and gender, so the likelihood of different readings, including the ones which go against the grain, should be taken into consideration (Stam and Spence 1985, 646). My understanding of what this reading strategy means is in line with Kuhn's observation,

And the acts of analysis, of deconstruction and of reading 'against the grain' offer an additional pleasure – the pleasure of resistance, of saying 'no': not to 'unsophisticated'

enjoyment, by ourselves and others, of culturally dominant images, but to the structures of power which ask us to consume them uncritically and in highly circumscribed ways.

(Kuhn 1992, 8)

She contends that reading against the grain as a process of deconstruction invokes an assortment of inadvertent meanings, resistant to the preferred meanings which a film invites (Kuhn 1992, 7). A feminist textual analysis via reading against the grain challenges those preferred readings of films, bares how they construct patriarchal ideology, and by detaching contradictory elements from their initial context (within dominant, classic Hollywood cinema), unveils the processes with which meanings attributed to a woman are produced in a film (Kuhn 1994, 79-93). Not only classical narrative, mainstream cinema is appropriated by feminist film criticism, via practices of oppositional reading and textual analysis, but independent, art cinema as well (Kuhn 1994, 188). Thus, such reading to some extent also alters the film itself (in its reception phase), and undermines ideological operations by proposing different ways of looking at films, which may be understood as an intervention within patriarchal ideology (Kuhn 1994, 92-93). In a similar vein, Hayward argues that reading against the grain rejects to normalize patriarchal socialisation, by unveiling how a female character is constructed cinematically (Hayward 2001, 159). Feminist reading against the grain divulges the tension between the workings of patriarchal ideology, since a hegemonic discourse strives to impose its dominance on its subordinate discourses, which consequently results in ideological contradictions (Kotsopoulos 2001). Along similar lines, Mayne puts forth that all feminist study is, in a way, a reading against the grain of patriarchy, an uncovering of seemingly inexistent paradoxes and inconsistencies, while paying attention to sexist cinematic ways of seeing as voyeurism, which became naturalised (Mayne 1984, 63). Correspondingly, Kaplan observes that in reading against a grain, 'interesting contradictions emerge to expose the underlying working of patriarchy' (Kaplan 1990, 4). Also, Carroll notes that contradictions, often ideological, can be uncovered 'against the grain' in films (Carroll 1998, 10). However, if a researcher is to analyse against the grain, to begin with, he asserts, the grain has to be found (Carroll 1998, 10).

Nevertheless, there are authors who warn against such reading, especially the ones who consider audiences. For instance, Obiaya cautions that the concept of reading against the grain approaches a film with a preconceived idea, in which the film is supposed to fit into, for example with the notion that the film 'contains a dominant patriarchal discourse, which should be undermined by seeking alternative readings' (Obiaya 2017, 344). Minh-Ha states that a feminist reading against the grain lifts 'images out of their contexts so as to make them serve a

new context' (1992, 210). She has somewhat a critical stance on it, due to implying that reading against the grain does not make those images '*speak anew*' (Minh-Ha 1992, 210, emphasis original). In a similar vein, while Walters (1995, 77) acknowledges the possibilities of 'reclaiming' the representations of women and unveiling counternarratives by reading against the grain, she also advises heeding warning signs, as noted by Judith Mayne. In her observations of Hollywood's classical narrative cinema, Mayne notes that a feminist reading against the grain uncovers its repressed elements, and 'cracks in the seams of dominant ideology' (in Walters 1995, 77). One of the main pros of a reading against the grain is that it enables us to examine films from the perspective of the viewer (Mayne in Walters 1995, 77). One of the major cons of reading against the grain is that it does not consider the female audiences throughout film history, as Mayne finds (in Walters 1995, 77). Similarly, in Kuhn's view, since reading against the grain is a textual analysis, one of its downsides is that it universalises or omits the context of the production and reception of a film (Kuhn 1994, 79). Furthermore, Walters puts forward that a reading against the grain rejects the narrative that appears to overtly maintain the subjection of female characters, and reads the subliminal subversions and feminist counternarratives instead (1995, 77-78). While such alternative, resistant reading may be empowering, it also may fail to notice that in some cases the vast majority of female viewers might not interpret it in an empowering manner, but, in contrast, as if the dominant meaning is explicitly patriarchal (Walters 1995, 78). Walters warns against finding feminist resistance and ideological fissures everywhere, 'simply because we *want* it to be there' (1995, 78, emphasis original). Relatedly, Kotsopoulos expresses concern that if contradictions are essentialised and carved out of the narrative, without taking into consideration the ideological issue of the whole film, they can be misinterpreted and overestimated as progressive (Kotsopoulos 2001). Also, such readings run the risk of remaining limited to a hypothetical female spectator, who is by rule heterosexual and white (Kotsopoulos 2001). Not only women, but any other viewers belonging to a marginalised group, such as people of colour, and the economically disadvantaged ones, are capable of taking an oppositional stance to (mainstream) films (Bobo 2004, 181). For example, Mulvey puts forward that throughout film history queer viewers have read against the grain Hollywood films, consequently subverting normative gender roles, queering the gaze and claiming their own visual pleasure (Mulvey 2019, 246). Thus, it is important to keep in mind the variety of readings, since every individual who watches a film creates an opinion about it which is influenced by his/her racial, social, sexual, political, economic, or cultural histories (Bobo 2004, 181).

Although in the history of film feminism, reading against the grain was initially applied to mainstream, popular, dominant, classical, Hollywood films, I decided to implement this reading strategy in Yugoslav New Films. This is because these films, envisioned by mainly male directors, do not differ significantly from Yugoslav mainstream films in regard with the presence of violence towards female characters (Slapšak 2000, 135), nor, in my view, from Hollywood films in that sense. However, my understanding of the concept of reading against the grain was somewhat modified, due to it not being in line with some interpretations, for example, Kamir's, which describes it as a process that highlights potentially feminist parts in order to interpret the subliminal feminist undertones (Kamir 2006, 38). On the one hand, my reading against the grain does not focus on searching for feminist elements or trying to appropriate a film for the feminist cause. I let the material lead me. Since female characters in the analysed films are mostly presented as sufferers of violence, instead of as overcomers of violence, I do not impose feminist undertones where there are none, or engage in overinterpretation. On the other hand, my feminist reading against grain does search for feminine elements in frequently male-oriented narratives of Yugoslav New Films. Consequently, I foreground not only (rare) lead heroines, but less prominent female characters as well, often overlooked in analyses in favour of male characters, who are proverbially leads. Staiger remarks that in order to make the process of selection of films less unfavourable to marginalised people, the evaluation should take into consideration factors such as 'a politics of eliminating power of some groups over others, of centering at the expense of marginalizing classes, genders, sexual orientations, or cultures' (Staiger 1985, 18). In line with Staiger's theory, my selection process of films puts at the centre female characters (and, therefore, female viewers and readers, and perhaps also lesbian ones), who were, generally speaking, marginalised in the Yugoslav New Film movement, in favour of male characters (and male viewers). Such a selection strategy redresses this imbalance to some extent. In addition, my analysis is class-conscious.

I believe that the foregrounding of relations amongst celluloid women, such as female bonding or enmity, while underplaying their relations with male characters, is a form of reading against the grain, especially keeping in mind that, generally speaking, in films and their readings usually women's relations with men are given prominence. Furthermore, one might argue that my reading of films that are set in the pre-socialist past before the Second World War, as if they were actually addressing the issues of gender inequality in the domestic sphere of post-war socialist Yugoslavia, is in fact, a feminist reading against the grain. Also, since I give prominence to women's emancipation by employment, which is, in general in films and their



analyses, neglected in favour of their romantic involvements, or at least depicted as less important, my reading could be described as being against the grain.

In conclusion, I did not necessarily use a reading against the grain strategy in order to appropriate films for feminism, but to foreground fissures and contradictions in them. Also, I utilised feminist reading against the grain in order to shift focus from male to female characters, in chiefly male oriented or male enunciated narratives of Yugoslav New Films. Consequently, as a feminist critic and as a female viewer, I could turn the prevailing violence that permeates Yugoslav New Films into an object of study, without declaring them misogynist and with the appreciation for their artistic merits. To borrow Kotsopoulos' words on popular cinema and apply them to auteur Yugoslav New Film: 'The notion that I can write as both a feminist critic and a female spectator opens up my capacity to consider the contradictions of popular cinema, particularly its ability to attract and repulse me at the same time' (Kotsopoulos 2001). Besides making use of reading against the grain, I use the Bechdel test to investigate Yugoslav films and the portrayal of women in them. I discuss this further in the section below.

### **c) *Bechdel Test***

If the presence or absence of proper gender representation is assessed, from my viewing of Yugoslav New Films, only a few of them would pass the Bechdel test. Namely, the test can be used to review whether the representation of female characters is adequate in media, including film (Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 19-20). Originally, the test was created as a witty insight from a comic writer, not intended to be applied to cinema; but recently the test has frequently been implemented as a method for assessing the silencing of female characters and their representation in films (O'Meara 2016, 1120). The test was conceived in Alison Bechdel's comic *Dykes to Watch Out For*, when a female character states that she watches movies only if they fulfil three requirements (Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 19-20). Therefore, the Bechdel test is undertaken by posing three questions: (1) Whether there are minimally two female characters in a film? (2) Whether they speak to each other? (3) Is the topic of their conversation something else except for a man? (Hole et al. 2017, 5). Sometimes, other sources put the fourth requirement that both female characters must be named (Racic 2018). Bechdel (2013), who in 1985 devised the concept of the test and included it in her above-mentioned comic strip, gives credit to her friend Liz Wallace for the idea for the test. That is why the test is also occasionally

called the Bechdel-Wallace test (Chivers 2017, 74). Bechdel (2013) believes that Wallace got inspired by Virginia Woolf's book *A Room of One's Own*:

But how interesting it would have been if the relationship between the two women had been more complicated. All these relationships between women, I thought, rapidly recalling the splendid gallery of fictitious women, are too simple. So much has been left out, unattempted. And I tried to remember any case in the course of my reading where two women are represented as friends. [...] They are now and then mothers and daughters. But almost without exception they are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that. [...] Suppose, for instance, that men were only represented in literature as the lovers of women, and were never the friends of men, soldiers, thinkers, dreamers; how few parts in the plays of Shakespeare could be allotted to them; how literature would suffer!

(Woolf 2007 [1929], 90-91)

The test is an implicit critique of the films that fail it, since it reveals that they portray women as absorbed only in heterosexual romantic relationships with men, which are, therefore, prioritised (Spade and Willse 2016, 556), whereas the other types of their relationships are underplayed or underrepresented, as female friendships, or queer relationships. Although the Bechdel test might appear to be simplistic, it can produce thought-provoking results that reveal patriarchal strategies (Mulvey 2019, 248). The Bechdel test bares 'how media representations enforce harmful gender norms' (Spade and Willse 2016, 556). Such patriarchal strategies and norms will be difficult to eradicate until women are equally represented in filmmaking (Mulvey 2019, 248).

Regarding to the relations amongst female characters, the Bechdel test does not reveal the nuances between them, for instance whether celluloid women are rather hostile, indifferent, or amicable towards each other. This is when Bogojević's theory on late Yugoslav cinema comes to aid, namely her concept 'reversed masquerade' (Bogojević 2011), as well as Simić's concept of 'cryptomatriarchy' (Simić 1999) from sociology, which I borrow and implement to Yugoslav New Film. The limitations of the Bechdel test are alleviated with these two concepts,

which illuminate not only individual depictions of women, but their interactions and relations between them, and the presence or absence of female camaraderie.

Based on my observations, in Yugoslav New Film, women are more frequently supporting characters and extras rather than leading actors. Men are, as if by rule, leading characters. There are rarely two female characters in the narrative, whose names are known, and who converse about anything else other than men as a subject, implying that the majority of Yugoslav New films do not pass the Bechdel test. I have not applied the Bechdel test to all 269 films I viewed, nor I can make generalisations, but from the eleven films I closely read, only three do not fail the test (*The Beehive*, *The Birch Tree*, *Breakfast with the Devil*). I applied the Bechdel test as a tool for scrutinising two of those films: *The Beehive*, and *The Birch Tree*. Thus, I utilised it as a guiding theory during the interpretation of a studied film, when I would come upon two female characters, but I did not select films on that merit. I only took into account the Bechdel test, when I examined case study films that feature two female characters.

Therefore, other methods should be combined with the Bechdel test, because it oversees the nuances in the interaction between female characters. It does not tackle race, the presence or absence of gender non-binarism, nor the quality of relations between women, ranging from enmity to friendship. Nonetheless, the Bechdel test is useful for determining inadequate representations of women, and it should become a norm in the film industry worldwide.

**In summary**, the research is divided into several steps. Firstly, the preliminary viewing and sampling (1) are performed. Secondly, the compilation of the available Yugoslav film database (1.1) (269 films) is undertaken. Then, the selection of Yugoslav New Film (including Black Wave films) (1.2) is made. In the next, main, qualitative phase (2) feminist close reading analysis of the list (after thematic grouping of Yugoslav New Films (including Black Wave films)) is carried out. Hereafter, textual analysis (2.1) is applied to research questions 1, 2 and 3 and 4. In the second step, both a formal analysis and audiovisual style analysis (2.2) are implemented to research questions 1, 2 and 3 and 4. The results are then integrated into the third phase (3). The aforementioned steps have been applied thoroughly in the empirical chapters: **Chapter 4, Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8.**

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## **Chapter 4. Violated sex: rape, nation and representation of female characters in Yugoslav new film and black wave cinema**

### **Contextualisation**

This article began as a paper presented for the conference *Sex and the Cinema: A Film Studies Journal Conference*, held in 2016 at University of Kent, UK. An expanded version of my presentation was later developed into a full-length article, which was published in the journal *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*.

Chronologically, this was the first empirical article I wrote during my PhD studies. It broaches the second research question, which addresses the representation of raped female characters as embodiments of a politically ‘raped’ nation, or stratum of a nation. The trope of woman as nation has been observed in several cinemas, including Indian, Polish, Chinese, and French. Below, I draw attention to the fact that such representations also appear to exist in Yugoslav cinema, namely Yugoslav New Film. Furthermore, this article discusses medium-specific (e.g., the usage of camera, editing, etc.) traits of the depictions of sexual violence, as shown by Yugoslav male auteurs.

### **Reference**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to reveal how women are represented in the Yugoslav New Film and Black Wave films. I argue that they show a recurring pattern of rape. I interpret a raped woman in Yugoslav films as an allegory of a raped nation. To investigate this motif, I have selected three fiction films, all addressing a short pro-Stalinist phase of Yugoslav history: *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969), *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of my Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1971), and *Doručak sa đavolom/Breakfast with the Devil* (Miroslav 'Mika' Antić, 1971). In my investigation I will draw on feminist film scholarship as the conceptual framework. Furthermore, I use close reading as the method to explore the movement's oeuvre.

## **Keywords**

Rape; woman; nation; representation; Yugoslav New Film; Black Wave Cinema

## Introduction

The focus of this article is the fictional representation of female rape as an allegory of a political ‘rape’ within former Yugoslav nations. In this context ‘rape’ stands for physical and ideological abuse of power on domestic soil. My approach builds on Mostov’s theory of links between sexuality, gender and nation in former Yugoslavia, where a female body figuratively embodies feminine national territory – farms, homes and battlefields (1999, 91).

A woman as a symbol of the nation is a reappearing motif in feminist film theory (Taylor-Jones 2013, 31). This motif has been observed in diverse cinemas: Middle Eastern cinema (Atakav 2017, 234), Chinese cinema (Cui 2003, 20), Indian cinema (Banerjee 2016, 71), Polish cinema (Mazierska 2006, 161) and French cinema (MacDonald 2010, 58), where a female rape scene serves as a powerful political and social critique.

## Methodology

This article draws on literature regarding rape in American cinema, rather than Eastern European or Russian cinema because I have no data on them. In addition, there is the scarcity of relevant literature discussing sexual violence towards women in Yugoslavian cinema, with rare exceptions such as in a segment of De Cuir’s (2011) book on Black Wave Cinema, in Slapšak (2007) and Bogojević (2011) research, and in parts of Jovanović’s (2014) PhD thesis. My intention is to contribute towards closing the literature gap on the portrayal of sexual assault in Yugoslav cinema.

An American screenwriter Andy Horton, after viewing several Yugoslav films, ‘found love scenes to be rather rare, [but] rape scenes were commonplace’ (Slapšak 2007). Between 1961 and 1972, 284 movies were directed by Yugoslav directors (Petronić, Milenković-Tatić, and Obradović 1996; Jovanović 2014; Kovačević 2014; Volk 1986). When viewing most of these films, I noticed that 41 of them (28 belonging to Yugoslav New Film), or approximately 15.30%<sup>40</sup>, feature the motif of explicit, implicit or attempted rape. In American cinema more than fifty films produced from 1903 to 1979 portrayed rape, as Projansky (2001, 28) estimated based on her own viewing. This is indicative of 0.21%<sup>41</sup>, out of the estimated 26,657 feature

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<sup>40</sup> This rough estimation excludes 16 Yugoslavian films produced between 1961-1972 that I was unfortunately not able to find.

<sup>41</sup> I put Projansky’s ‘more than fifty’ as 55 films when I roughly calculated the percentage.

films that were made in the U.S. during that period (Sterling and Haight 1978, 30; Finler 2003, 367; IMDb), suggesting that rape is a common motif in roughly one decade of Yugoslavian cinema (1961–72).

In the next step, from this group of 41 films (all directed by males), the mainstream films were excluded. The films presented as case studies, therefore, were selected on the merit of belonging to the Yugoslav *novi film* (New Film) movement, more precisely to its subdivision – Yugoslav Black Wave. In addition, they all address a specific historical moment of instability due to the rift between the President of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, and the leader of the Soviet Union, Joseph Stalin, triggered when the Cominform expelled Yugoslavia in 1948 and demanded the replacement of the leadership of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, to which Yugoslavia disobeyed (Kullaa 2011, 25).

All of the above-mentioned selection criteria have narrowed down the number of films and based on this, three were selected for this analysis: *Lisice/Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969), *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of my Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin ‘Bato’ Čengić, 1971) and *Doručak sa đavolom/Breakfast with the Devil* (Miroslav ‘Mika’ Antić, 1971). *Mali vojnici/Playing Soldiers* (Bahrudin ‘Bato’ Čengić, 1967) and *Rdeće klasje/Red Grain* (Živojin ‘Žika’ Pavlović, 1970) also fulfil the criteria, but due to space constraints, I have not included them in the analysis.

### **Yugoslav New Film and the Black Wave Movement**

The Yugoslav New Film (1961-1972) gathered Yugoslavian avant-garde film theorists, critics and directors (Goulding 2002, 66). It emerged as part of worldwide New Wave movements, such as the French Nouvelle Vague, the Brazilian Cinema Novo, and the Czechoslovak Nová Vlna. The most recognizable features were: the auteurist approach by the directors, the innovation in film form, the focus on marginalized characters and location shooting and sound recording. 1961, the year when annual feature film production doubled compared to previous decade, marks the beginning of films directed by the new generation of cineastes, with Aleksandar Petrović’s *Dvoje/The Couple* (1961) and Boštjan Hladnik’s *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (1961) being the harbingers of the new wave (Goulding 2002, 63-7). 1972 is considered to be the last year of Yugoslav New Film, which was dismantled due to the economic crisis in the film industry, combined with an unfavourable ideological atmosphere. Such sentiments started around 1969 with a counterattack on what was then labelled as Black

Wave – dark, pessimistic films with politically provocative content (Goulding 2002, 78-83). The state apparatus exploited the director Lazar Stojanović as a scapegoat due to an affair with his student movie *Plastični Isus/Plastic Jesus* (1971). The campaign resulted in his incarceration in 1972 and served as an excuse to suppress the politically dangerous film movement, culminating in a persecution towards Black Wave directors, some of whom subsequently fled the country (Sudar 2013, 230-5).

Black Wave Cinema, therefore, is a subdivision of the Yugoslav New Cinema (De Cuir 2012; Goulding 2002; Levi 2007; Sudar 2013). There was no manifesto, nor unifying style, instead it varied from director to director. Even though most of the Black Wave films were produced in Serbia, Black Wave was a pan-Yugoslav phenomenon because they were also made in other republics, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia (De Cuir 2011, 253; Šijan 2011, 9–10). Notable Yugoslav New Cinema and Black Wave directors include Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Želimir Žilnik, Živojin Pavlović, Bahrudin ‘Bato’ Čengić, Miroslav ‘Mika’ Antić and Krsto Papić.

### **Rape in cinema**

During same period (the 1960s through to the beginning of the 1970s) in American cinema, there is an unprecedented amount of movies featuring rape, a means with which patriarchy, threatened by the woman’s liberation movement, suppressed active female sexuality through (Hollywood) cinematic representations (Kaplan 1990, 7). Two diametrically opposed rape narratives were carved out: the ones portraying independent women facing rape because of their emancipation or sexuality, and the ones representing vulnerable women, raped because of their innocence or powerlessness (Projansky 2001, 31), the latter being of interest to this article.

In Yugoslavia, the stereotypical role of women as housewives started changing during the revolutionary struggle in the Second World War (Jancar-Webster 1999, 68). Female efforts took place on the frontline and in the rear, as Partisan soldiers, recruiters, suppliers or nurses, significantly contributing to the victory over the German enemy. Gender equality was on the political agenda for communists that organised the Partisan liberation struggle, hence the widespread participation of women in the war (Jancar-Webster 1999, 69). As a consequence of that ideology, and justified with the sacrifices that female Partisans made, women were granted equal status by the law in liberated Yugoslavia, which was ratified in 1946 by the first post-Second World War constitution (Ramet 1999, 94). Women gained vast freedom in the realm of reproductive rights, economic, social and political empowerment; and their position was in



many aspects better than in the Western countries (in terms of the policies defining social and legal equality) (Kralj and Rener 2015, 42-3).

De Cuir argues that women gradually progressed in terms of education and presence in the workforce, which resulted in the increased sense of empowerment and sexual freedom, and consequentially perturbed their past fixed roles of Partisan fighters or patriarchal housewives. Hence, the representation of rape, the most frequent method of attack towards women in the Black Wave Cinema, signifies, in De Cuir's view, the inhibition of female sexuality, caused by the intimidation and even fear towards the power of women (2011, 109). Kralj and Rener (2015, 42) observed that socialism had a delineation between public and private, which resulted in the concerns of domestic violence not being properly addressed.

The approach of this article is that many films are not mere reflections of social realities of women, but also act as allegories. A significant number of films featuring rape scenes belonged to the mainstream cinema and addressed the issues of occupation of the national territory by the foreign invaders throughout history, such as the Ottomans in *Makedonska krvava svadba/Bloodshed at the Wedding* (Trajče Popov, 1967) and *Republikata vo plamen/Republic in Flames* (Ljubiša Georgijevski, 1969); the Bulgarians in *Istrel/A Shot* (Branko Gapo, 1972); and the Germans and their allies in *Kozara/Kozara* (Veljko Bulajić, 1962), *Dve noći u jednom danu/Two Nights in One Day* (Radenko Ostojić, 1963), *Bomba u 10 i 10/Bomb at 10:10* (Časlav Damjanović, 1967) and *Cenata na gradot/The Price of a Town* (Ljubiša Georgijevski, 1970).

In all of these films female characters are sexually assaulted by foreign invaders and face death in narrative, as if it serves as a cautionary tale that loss of virtue is a fate worse than demise. Even though women are susceptible to becoming ravaged, dishonoured and inseminated by the ethnic/national 'other', in former Yugoslavia they are expected to remain chaste as symbols of the nation, designators of its space and fertile reproducers (Mostov 1999, 90-91). Therefore, in the above-mentioned films, sexual violation of a woman is metaphorically linked to the violation of the country's physical space. Besides what is seen in the mainstream cinema, this metaphor can also be found in Yugoslav New Film, such as in *Roj/The Beehive* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966), where a raped woman – a mother – stands for a national territory 'raped' by Ottoman conquerors. Similarly, throughout the literary history of the nations that became constituent Yugoslavian republics, a recurring theme was a woman as 'an idealized symbol of an oppressed and rebellious homeland' (Crnković 1999, 245). I therefore presume it is possible to trace the roots of the representation of a woman as a metaphor of a nation, originating in the literature and later incorporated into Yugoslav New Film.

Contrary to mainstream cinema, where the rapist was an external enemy, the directors of Yugoslav New Film mostly addressed the internal issues of a Yugoslav nation, but likewise conveyed political messages with rape metaphors. The purpose was to amplify the abuse of power by the element of a society that rapes, both physically and ideologically. The sexual imagery of violation was paralleled with the ‘gendering of boundaries and spaces (landscapes, farmlands and battlefields) in the former Yugoslavia’ (Mostov 1999, 90). In the films selected as case studies, the sexual abuse of women’s bodies correlates to the seizure of the farmland, livestock and property done by force, but also by persuasion; or general misuse of power by the pro-Stalinists in Yugoslavia. In *Handcuffs*, Višnja’s murdered body becomes one with the barren mountain karst, which it personifies. A mother’s rape corresponds to lawful confiscation of parts of the house in *The Role of My Family in the World Revolution*; while a peasant woman, who is coerced into sex in *Breakfast with the Devil*, mirrors the blackmail of peasants to give up their land and join soviet-modelled collective farms.

Grounded in Mostov’s theory regarding ‘metaphoric figurations of the nation as mother (homeland/Motherland) and as female body’ (1999, 91), I argue that the prevalent fictional representations of rape in Yugoslav New Film could imply a link between raping of women and nations in some films.

### **Humiliation and shame**

As an intertitle in the first part of *Handcuffs* states, the movie is about: ‘A wedding in the Dinara mountain region in tumultuous 1948 when Stalin accused Yugoslavia for not getting along with his politics.’<sup>42</sup> In Yugoslavia, especially the rural parts, there is a traditional wedding custom that requires a bride to throw an apple over the roof of her new home for good luck. The director Papić utilized the recurring motif of the apple, organized into a triad. When the *Handcuffs* marriage procession stops in front of the groom’s house, Višnja thrusts an apple over the household and succeeds (Figure 1). Ante, the groom, follows her example and thrives as well. People congratulate them because it symbolizes a good omen for the prosperity and happiness of their marriage.

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<sup>42</sup> All translations from Serbo-Croatian are my own.



Figure 1. Višnja (Jagoda Kaloper) throwing an apple over the house in *Handcuffs* (Krstó Papić, 1969).

Later in the movie, a group of three girls belonging to the wedding party, together with the bride, enter the bedroom of the newlyweds' house. There are two apples placed on the head frame of a large wooden bed. Višnja sits on the bed while two girls lie on the bed and giggle. One of them takes an apple off of the bed frame and tells the bride: 'Before the two of you kiss, you bite in first, then he [bites]' Afterwards the two girls enact the fondling events they anticipate will take place during the first wedding night and bare one of the girls' nipple in the course of the staged lovemaking, whilst the remaining girl and Višnja watch, laugh and blush. This carefree caressing performance underlines the innocence of the virginal bride, portrays her imminent defloration as something pleasurable and is concluded with the statement of one of the play-acting girls: 'You are lucky, Višnja'. The happy overtones of the yearned coupling reverberate in the spectator's memory when a brutal scene of rape occurs, because it takes place in the same setting and features the third appearance of the apple leitmotif. The rape of Višnja perpetuates the stereotype 'of rape victims as young, sexually attractive women' (Projansky 2001, 54).

When Andrija, a prominent village member, decorated Second World War partisan hero and the groom's godfather, obtains a head injury in a bloodthirsty frenzy to shoot a small crow with a rifle, he is taken to the bedroom in the groom's house. One of the elderly men suggests that Višnja tends to Andrija's wound, a customary belief that whomever is nursed by a bride must recuperate. The two of them are left alone in the bedroom. When Andrija regains

consciousness, he takes advantage of the situation, locks the door, overpowers Višnja and rapes her twice, once on the floor and a second time on the bed.

Papić depicts this scene in a realistic manner, accentuated by the black and white photography of the movie. The shots are mostly framed from a third person omniscient perspective. Nevertheless, there are also shots from Andrija's point of view that fetishize Višnja due to, as Kuhn notes, fragmenting of body's unity into sexualized body parts in close-ups, which expropriates the personhood (1992, 37), underscoring Andrija's carnal lust. For example, camera pans from a close-up of Višnja's face onto a detail of Višnja's breasts covered with traditional white shirt, which is low-cut so it slightly exposes cleavage; followed by a big close up of Andrija, suggesting that the previous shot was depicted as subjectively seen by him; which is then cut back to the same shot of the shirt with cleavage, in which Andrija's hand grabs Višnja's clothed breast. Later, Višnja too is given a subjective point of view in a shot of Andrija as a big close up. He becomes more and more threatening as he approaches her, while his intimidating face blurs, a moment before he shuts her mouth with his hand to silence her scream.

When Andrija subdues her on the floor, there is an objective shot of Višnja's barren breast and nipple that mirrors the shot from the abovementioned, cheerful scene of the girls' coupling enactment. Similar framing underscores the juxtaposition of those two scenes, opening the gap between the virginal expectations of young girls and the aftermath, in which joyful laughs during the sex performance are replaced with Višnja's cries of defilement.

At the very end of the first rape, Andrija's body completely pins down Višnja's on the floor, until there is only his to be seen, as if her flesh disintegrates and disappears as it is entirely consumed beneath him. The rape scene is intercut in parallel editing with an exterior scene of men dancing the traditional folk dance *kolo*, named after the circle that the dancers form by holding each other's hands whilst performing rhythmical steps. The sound of the dancers' footsteps continues as a sound bridge into the medium long shot of Višnja, prostrated on the floor, on her back, with arms outstretched as if crucified in the aftermath of the rape. Andrija lies on the bed and eats one of the apples that were placed on the bed frame. He devours the apple in a grotesque manner, as if it is a symbol of Višnja's youth and innocence which he has forcefully taken away from her.

From Višnja's perspective of a rural girl from the patriarchal Dalmatian karst, she is the one responsible, the one who bears the blame for the loss of her virginity. This can be deduced from the line she utters aloud: 'God, you see everything. May the punishment strike me for the shame I brought on my husband and my home'. Višnja's reaction is a consequence of chauvinist discourses widespread in patriarchal societies that 'hold women responsible for their sexual

attack through their behaviour, manner of dress, and/or suggested promiscuity' (Carter 2003, 63) and to me it seems like the film tries to denounce such patriarchal behaviour.

Andrija, completely unaffected by both Višnja's predicament and her speech, rapes her the second time. This time the rape is implied and not explicitly shown. Projansky (2001, 1) made the connection between the humiliation of a woman by rape, and humiliation of a nation, which in the case of *Handcuffs* was done within the borders of Yugoslavia by pro-Stalinists who took whatever they wanted, by persuasion or force. This parallels how Andrija wanted to kill a small crow by any means, and craved to sexually possess Višnja, regardless of her humiliation and shame. Hence, the movie has strong political overtones, because Andrija is a Stalin sympathizer. The plot is placed in 1948, the year of the irreversible rift between Tito and Stalin, which resulted in purges of pro-Stalinists. From then on, Stalinism was officially regarded as a rigid, negative version of communism and instead the more liberal socialism was nurtured in Yugoslavia. The film is a complex depiction of the inner political conflict because it criticises both Informbiro followers who experienced the fall from grace and the Tito followers who persecuted them, embodied in the figure of Čazim, an executioner that collects pens of his pro-Stalinist victims as trophies.

Patriarchal punishment by death for the loss of the virtue befalls Višnja and is regarded as unfair by the viewer. The film could therefore be read as narratively taking a stance against patriarchy, whilst at the same time, visually reinforcing patriarchy by objectifying Višnja during the rape. When the rape becomes known to the peasants at the end of the movie, Višnja is taken by force from Ante by a pack of self-righteous males belonging to the wedding party, with intent to return her to her family as damaged goods. In the midst of the bare mountain karst, they come up with the idea to strip the 'whore', as they called her, naked, so she would be publicly shamed, but Višnja manages to break free. Nevertheless, the patriarchal punishment takes its toll because one of the peasants shoots her in pursuit with Andrija's rifle. According to Kaplan (1990, 6), in *film noir* the gun symbolises the phallus, which dominates woman by murdering her, as it can be applied also in Višnja's case. In the end of the movie Andrija as well is punished by death, although not for the rape of Višnja, but as a part of the purge of the Stalinist clique held accountable for the ideological violation of the country, whereas the rape of Višnja stands for a political abuse of power within a Yugoslav nation.

## Explicit and implicit rape

Similarly to *Handcuffs*, in *Breakfast with the Devil*, directed by Antić, the rape of a peasant woman symbolises the mistreatment of peasants, according to the rule that ‘the topography of the nation is mapped in gendered terms (feminized soil, landscapes and boundaries, and masculine movement over these spaces)’ (Mostov 1999, 89). Antić exposes the flaws of Soviet-influenced agrarian reforms that were implemented immediately after the Second World War. The peasants must either join the farming collective union (by giving up the ownership of their *feminized soil*) or give away a compulsory amount of crops, animals and their own bodies for the sake of the state.

In 1947 pro-Stalinist Yugoslavia, a state official named Karan, who came from the city, takes advantage of his position and forces himself on the peasant woman (Figure 2). She is a



Figure 2. Rape scene in *Breakfast With the Devil* (Miroslav ‘Mika’ Antić, 1971).

minor, episodic character, of no importance except as a director’s cautionary tale about how any power could become abusive - in this case the pro-Stalinist apparatchiks, who bullied the Yugoslav peasants. When Karan orders the peasant woman to go upstairs to the attic and get undressed, she replies she doesn’t owe that to the state. As she is pressured to climb the ladder, she says that it is an act of free will as everything else they (the party and people’s rule) achieve by force. He justifies his action by asserting that peasants are whores.

The rape scene itself is explicitly shown. As in *Handcuffs*, there is a stereotypical shot of a woman's naked breast being groped by a man's hand. Her representation conforms to Mulvey's (2000, 46-7) claim, that in mainstream films, a female character is a sexually objectified, rather passive spectacle, that connotes 'to-be-looked-at-ness', while subjected to an active male gaze on three levels: of a camera, of a male character and of a spectator identifying with a male character. Hence, when in one of the following shots Karan's face immerses into the breast in a close-up, the woman's image is reduced to a cut-out - butchered and objectified. The shots of the sexual assault are intercut with the shots of pigeons fluttering about with their wings in the attic, at the scene of the rape. The pigeons symbolize the trepidation of the woman and underline the gravity of the act to which she has been cornered.

On a broader scale, the scene is intercut in parallel editing with the outdoor scene where a representative of people's rule vomits, while a colleague is holding his forehead. The drunken man is rambling about how the revolutionary thought will crush all the maggots. This juxtaposed to the rape scene leaves a bitter feeling regarding the revolution, the sacredness it meant for the people who fought for it in the Second World War, and the sacrilege it became in the aftermath because of people who abused their position of power, such as Karan the rapist.

The rape could therefore be read as an allegory of exploitation of the peasants by pro-Stalinists within the Yugoslav nation. The director draws a parallel between the woman as a member of peasant stratum, who eventually succumbs to being raped by the representative of the state, and the peasants in general, who at first vehemently resist to the forceful collection of goods, yet have no other choice than to submit themselves to the coercion, '[b]ut submission is not equivalent to consent' (Peterson 2009).

If Antić's opus is taken into consideration, in *Sveti pesak/Holy Sand* (1968) the director also uses sexual metaphor, but this time in regards to the male character. The purpose is to criticize the mistreatment of pro-Stalinists during the so-called Informbiro period (from Tito-Stalin chasm in 1948 onwards), when they were punished for their political views by being purged, sent to work camps or prison. Some of them were wrongly incarcerated, such as the main character of the movie, whose sexual impotence signifies the inability to restore his dignity and life once he is given back freedom. In spite of his bravery, shown in combat as a Partisan fighter, he will never be re-inscribed to history from where his war comrades have deleted him, which he becomes aware of when his name is not mentioned during the commemoration day two decades later, as if he had never existed.

Similarly, Papić also criticized the rigidness of the Informbiro period in his opus by linking sexual and political repression, such as in *Život sa stricem/My Uncle's Legacy* (1988),

where the young hero is literally castrated with a ricochet bullet after being intellectually castigated. The incident occurs as Martin is being expelled from school and publicly shamed, after denouncement by his uncle to whom he sent a letter, in which he had criticized the unfairness of the new reforms towards the peasant stratum, and therefore questioned the infallibility of the Communist party.

However, allegorical representations such as in *Breakfast with the Devil*, are deeply problematic since they neglect the rape victims' perspective. It appears that the peasant woman even starts enjoying the act because of a shot in which her fingers are interspersed with the rapist's. If examined for a degree of verisimilitude, this is quite an unconvincing depiction of the rape, especially having in mind that such sexual aggression is a traumatic experience. It absolves sexual violence towards females, implying that subliminally 'they want it' (Vincendeau 2017, 33). Also, the feminists scholars are alarmed that viewing on-screen rape potentially influences a normalization of male sexual violence (Barker 2010, 146). The film raises the question if there is a necessity to show explicit rape scenes, especially those that do not offer a female point of view, due to the concerns as to whether they are exploitative and the possibility that some male viewers might take sexual pleasure from them (Kuhn 1982, 227).

Surely director Antić failed to criticise rape as sexual instead of political violence and could have taken a different stance: chose a narrative that does not represent the peasant woman as if she takes pleasure from being raped, framing that does not sexually objectify her and depict sexual assault from her angle if it had to be shown. Does all above-mentioned imply that Antić's representation of the raped peasant woman was misogynistic? Yes, because women do not enjoy being raped. Is Antić a misogynist director? No, since in the same film he also represented a former Partisan woman Olga as a more fleshed out character in a non-misogynist manner. Was he an exploitative director? Yes, because the peasant woman is raped and Olga is later accidentally killed. Films are usually not binary objects, but multifaceted – they can be misogynistic somewhere, but feminist elsewhere.

*Handcuffs* is another example where sexual assault is represented in minute detail by the usage of fleshly close-ups, which according to Mulvey, fragment a female body's unity, embroider eroticism into film narrative by transforming a woman into a cut-out, flatten the image by depriving it of depth of field, and hence leave a fetishistic rather than veritistic impression (2000, 40). Contrary to these overt representations with fetishized close-up shots of breasts and thighs, in *The Role of my Family in the World Revolution* the rape is clearly implied, however not explicitly demonstrated. Only the struggle is shown, in wider, long shots. When



the implicit penetration begins, the scene ends, which underlines that the director has deliberately chosen not to show rape bluntly.

The necessity of portrayal of rape is questionable even in cases where a film aims to criticise the misogyny because rape narratives ‘perpetuate rape discursively’ (Projansky 2001, 19). Therefore, even though there are nuances, in all the analysed films women were debased; the escalation of degrading portrayals is with Antić's representation of rape which I find most misogynistic because he condones the sexual violence towards the peasant woman, since it is depicted as if she likes it. Less problematic is Papić, who condemns patriarchy in the narrative and even gives few point-of-view shots from Višnja's perspective during the first rape. This was done whilst simultaneously objectifying Višnja by providing an abundance of fetishized, close-up shots of breasts and thighs, from objective instead of subjective perspective, as if the director himself is a perverted sadistic voyeur instead of the charismatic pro-Stalinist rapist. Contrary to him, Čengić does not objectify female body by fragmenting it, but completely fails to address the experiences of two women after sexual assaults. He neglects their stories once they served his allegorical purpose and therefore narratively misuses their portrayal to his own means. Thus, regardless of differences in visual style and the varying degrees of objectification of women, all the directors exploited images of women by subjecting them to the violence in the narrative in order to metaphorically convey a wider political critique, and hence increased the presence of rape in the discourse.

### **Sexual Abuse in the Family**

Čengić's *The Role of my Family in the World's Revolution*, shot in colour and highly stylized in terms of departure from veritism, is another movie with strong political implication and prevalence of the motif of rape. A former Partisan woman aggressively coerces an adolescent boy, who belonged to the pre-war bourgeoisie strata, into sex. This could be seen, metaphorically, as his final step of initiation into a new classless society, after previously obtaining a tattoo of Stalin and becoming a member of the Communist party.

One part of the boy's bourgeois family house was appropriated by the state due to the disproportionate size of the space compared to the low number of tenants, so few people were appointed by the state as new lodgers, among whom was comrade Strogic<sup>43</sup>. He uses every opportunity to take advantage of this cohabitation by forcing himself onto household women:

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<sup>43</sup> Stern.

the boy's sister Leposava, but he fails because she faints, and the boy's mother, whom he rapes in the bathtub. In this scene of sexual assault, director Čengić relies more on camera and actor movements than on editing, resulting in a lower number of shots with longer duration. The rape is implied and juxtaposed to creatively used sound.

The sound in this scene is a non-diegetic 'happy birthday' instrumental tune, as if it came from the invisible music box. It reverberates the mood of the previous scene that featured a variation of the same 'happy birthday' tune, where the old and the new household members are eating together from a birthday cake shaped like Stalin's head (Figure 3). They are eating Stalin's brain made of whip-cream, which could have multiple interpretations, such as a metaphor for being fed with Stalin's ideas in Strogić's case, or anthropophagic desecration of Stalin's authority in Miodrag Vaculić's case.



Figure 3. Leposava (Milena Dravić) carrying the Stalin-cake in *The Role of my Family in the World Revolution* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1971).

The two men represent the oppositional strands of communism: the dogmatic one embodied in Stalin and the liberal one. The rape scene that follows could possibly have strong political implications. If a raped woman's body is perceived as a metaphor of a violated nation/home, then the sexual assault on a member of the remains of pre-Second World War

Kingdom of Yugoslavia's vieux riche - the mother, by a state official of the post-Second World War Yugoslavia - the new compulsory house tenant Strogic, could be interpreted as an allegory of how the new ruling pro-Stalinist communist stratum was both literally and figuratively 'raping' the old remnants of capitalist bourgeoisie stratum, designated to disappear in the new communist society, where everybody was supposed to be equal.

Later in the movie, in the scene where Strogic sentences Vaculic to be demobilised and expelled from the Communist party, Vaculic, positioned on the left of the frame below Lenin's portrait, stands for the moderate, literally leftist strain, while Strogic, placed on the right and exactly below Stalin's portrait, signifies a rigid strain of political thought.

This chasm is also visible in one of the preceding scenes when the Russian soldiers in military tank, completely covered with flowers, mistakenly stop in Belgrade, thinking it is Prague in Czechoslovakia. One soldier exclaims while he exits the tank: 'Forward for Stalin!'. He initially tries to grope Leposava, but her mother and Vaculic protect her. Then another Russian goes to the enormous huge white banner, which reads in red letters 'Long live Comrade Tito' on the left and 'Long Live Comrade Stalin' on the right-hand side. When the Russian crosses out 'Long Live Comrade Tito' with a brush, Vaculic angrily pours a bucket with red paint over 'Long Live Comrade Stalin'. Strogic appears, suddenly, from behind the banner and says 'They have been building communism for forty years, so they surely know better than you what it is'.

The increasing discontent with the pro-Stalinist strain of communism is depicted through another allegory of sexual abuse. Two Russian soldiers on the tank adorned in flowers are about to leave, the bourgeois family bids them goodbye, but a woman lingers with them. At first, she appears to consent to the advances of one of the soldiers, however the manner in which the second soldier shoves her down into the tank and closes the lid, implies it is turning into rape. This is cut onto a close-up shot of a phallic tank gun that moves upwards, followed with a shot of rocking tank, both suggesting people inside of the tank are having intercourse. Eventually the thick layer of flowers falls off the rocking tank, possibly implying that whatever is embellished eventually will be unveiled. The tank gun, in close-up, moves downwards. The completely naked woman runs out of the tank, suggesting that what started as consent spiralled out of control and turned into abuse. This is all underscored with a song: 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star, we'll be ruled by USSR. Hail Stalin, magic might, all you do is double right! Hail Stalin, fragrant flower, proletarians you embower'. Then Strogic appears again, unexpectedly, by popping out of the tank, gives a political speech about greatness of Russia and Stalin, and

concludes by saying: 'There is just one way to socialism and all those who go astray will be relentlessly swept by iron broom'.

This sexual abuse illustrates the relation of Soviets with Yugoslavs, at first embedded in likeness, then denigrating - sexual violation of the woman being an allegory for political violation of Yugoslavia by USSR. In addition, due to being followed by Strogic's political speech given from that very tank, it simultaneously becomes an allegory of ideological violation by the domestic dogmatic subdivision, consisting of Stalin's sympathisers. Director Čengić criticizes pro-Stalinists, who took advantage of their position (until they experienced a loss of power in 1948).

The attention was paid when reading the representations of sexual assaults as to whether the films seek to empower the female protagonists, for example by showing how they successfully overcame the rape, or rather disempower them by augmenting the feeling of vulnerability without offering the alternative reading from feminist point of view (Projansky 2001, 61). In *Breakfast with the Devil* and *The Role of My Family in the World Revolution*, the issue of how a female character feels after the rape is not addressed at all. It is a disconcerting because the directors turned female characters into objects in order to convey a political message. In *Handcuffs*, in the imminent aftermath of the rape, the broken posture of the victimized female body speaks disempowerment.

Also, in *Breakfast with the Devil* there is a lack of closure of raped female character because she literally disappears after the rape. The closure occurs in *Handcuffs* where Višnja is lynched by a mob of self-righteous men as if it is her fault she was raped and *The Role of My Family in the World Revolution* where the mother seldom appears, but goes on with her life as if nothing happened. None of the case study films offer empowerment for women because they either have narratives that end with the death of a female character or lack the punishment of the rapist for the act of rape. If the rapists are punished, such as Andrija and Strogic by death (Karan is only sent back to a city), it is never by the victim nor for the rape itself, but for their general political misbehaviours. Therefore, female characters function as cyphers in service of the Yugoslav New Film male directors.

## Conclusion

This article explored why rape is a recurrent motif in the Yugoslav New Film Movement. I argued that represented rapes could be interpreted as allegories of oppression and humiliation of the country during a period of Yugoslav history when pro-Stalinists were in power.

I showed that both mainstream and Yugoslav New Film displayed penchant for sexual abuse of women and exploited their representations in order to convey a political message to the viewer. The result therefore confirms that the division between two groups of films should not be approached in oversimplified binary terms. However, Yugoslav New Films address internal political problems within the nation, embodied through sexual abuse of female characters, as opposed to mainstream films, which mainly focused on troubles with external enemies (whom penetrated the borders/female bodies of the Yugoslav nation) and featured closure with the death of a raped woman (either by murder or suicide).

The analysed representations of rape varied from director to director, some of them depicting rape in a more salacious manner than others. While Antić's representation is the most problematic because he debased the female character both visually and in the narrative, from where he disposed her off once she was raped; Papić has tried to narratively criticise patriarchy by showing the injustice of the heroine's punishment. He has even given her some point-of-view shots during the rape scene yet he simultaneously sexually objectified and fetishized her from the third person perspective, by breaking the unity of her body and giving preference to cut-outs of thighs and breasts. Čengiđ chose to imply sexual assaults instead of showing them and did not fragment female body but depicted it naked in its entirety, which resulted that it was less objectified than in Antić's or Papić's case. All of those representations fail to address rape as grave sexual violence.

Would it be wrong to perceive at first glimpse that analysed Yugoslav New Films express misogyny and perpetuate discursive presence of representations of rape? Probably not. Even though the directors clearly locate the rapists on the side of evil, and although rape is condemned as one of the wrongdoings and abuses of position of power, it is still problematic because in order to paint the pro-Stalinists black, the directors objectified and violated female characters. They did not undermine patriarchy, nor reproached sexual violence specifically. Nevertheless, if read against the grain, those movies have in common that they utilize a representation of a raped woman to illuminate an allegory of an ideologically violated nation and therefore criticize certain political phenomena. The characters of *Višnja*, the peasant

woman and the mother, transcend their individual existences through the filmic expression and embody the political violation within their homeland through the violation of their bodies.

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## **Chapter 5. Yugoslav(i)a on the margin: sexual taboos, representation, nation and emancipation in Želimir Žilnik's *Early Works* (1969)**

### **Contextualisation**

This article was incepted for the occasion of the *The NECS 2018 conference: Media Tactics and Engagement*, which took place in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The paper I presented focused on the political engagement of the male director, Želimir Žilnik, via representations of female rape and murder in his *Rani radovi/Early Works* (1969). I further explored the same film, but this time by paying particular attention to sexual taboos, emancipation, and nation. These developments were sparked by the conference *Picturing the Margins: Peripheries, Minorities and Taboos in the Films of Marcel Łoziński, Pál Schiffer and Želimir Žilnik*, organised by Sorbonne Université, EUR'ORBEM in 2021 (which took place online instead of being held in Paris, France due to Covid 19), where I presented a paper. Such an inspiring event, incidentally, coincided with a call for papers for a Special issue on Želimir Žilnik in the journal *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*, where I ultimately contributed with my piece.

Chronologically, this is the fifth, that is, the last empirical article I wrote during my PhD research. The article introduces the theme of punishment of emancipated female characters: for their active sexuality, for empowerment by work, or education, etc., which is addressed in the first research question. In addition, the article also addresses the second research question which tackles the representation of a female character as a symbol of a violated nation or stratum of a nation. In addition, this article investigates the auteur's audio-visual approach to representations of nude female body.

### **Reference**

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## **Abstract**

In socialism, Yugoslav women became empowered by employment and income, but gender equality stayed rather nominal in the family domain. Such gender inequity is addressed in the works of the Yugoslav *novi film/New Film* (1961–72) auteurs. They occasionally turned to allegories in order to communicate political criticism. One of them was Želimir Žilnik. His most internationally lauded film, winner of the Golden Bear in 1969, is *Rani radovi/Early Works* (1969). It features a heroine Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović), whose name is eponymous of Yugoslav nation. Bearing in mind that in the majority of Yugoslav *New Films* a leading character is a man, *Early Works* is exceptional for having a woman as the main heroine. I will approach Jugoslava's character: as an allegory of Yugoslavia and its revolutionary spirit, as well as a prototype of an emancipated woman, punished by rape and killing. My research studies the link in the film between Žilnik's political critique via strong heroine as a proxy, and her objectification. By reading the film from a feminist perspective and building my arguments on close analysis, I contend that Jugoslava is concurrently empowered and disempowered, an active subject and sexually objectified object, a raped nation and a raped feminist.

## **Keywords**

Yugoslav New Film; Želimir Žilnik; female rape and murder; nation; representation

## Introduction

‘My mother would be more liberated by a washing machine than by a right to vote!’

Jugoslava

*Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969) features a female character Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović), whose name is not accidental, but the director’s deliberate choice to create a link between the heroine and the Yugoslav nation. Jugoslava can be seen both as an allegory of Yugoslavia and as a prototype of an emancipated woman (both sexually and by education), punished by rape and murder. I undertake feminist film criticism, grounded in authors such as, Mulvey (1989), Kuhn (1992) and Dillman (2014) – of Žilnik’s political questioning of Yugoslav socialism and revolutionary spirit, which is partly based on objectification of a woman and the female body. I investigate how Žilnik’s approach can be considered problematic despite Žilnik’s intention to side with a discriminated woman in *Early Works*, and the women’s question in general.

Starting from 1946, three subsequent Yugoslav Constitutions, and much legislation, ratified what women won by participating in the Second World War: legal gender equality in all aspects of Yugoslav society, including the right to vote (Ramet 1999, 94). This was a reward for their indispensable contributions to the liberation struggle as Partisan fighters, nurses, doctors, spies, and food suppliers. In socialism, Yugoslav women became empowered by rights to work, to have equal salaries with men, to have access to free education, to health and social insurance, political representation, to abortion, to one-year paid maternity leave, and to inheritance, marriage and divorce rights (Morokvašić 1986, 125). Nevertheless, gender equality remained nominal in the family sphere, and remnants of patriarchy lingered in interpersonal relations between men and women (Morokvašić 1986, 127). Such gender asymmetry is tackled in the works of the Yugoslav *New Film* directors.

Yugoslav *novi film/New Film* (1961–72) was a Yugoslav contribution to world-spread new wave movements, as the French *Nouvelle Vague*, Czechoslovak *nová vlna*, or Brazilian *Cinema Novo*. Yugoslav New Film directors were often (but not exclusively) debutants when it comes to feature length films, and their styles were disparate in terms of thematic and formal aspects (Novaković 1966, 6). However, what they often had in common included a new audio-visual sensibility of their films, fragmented narratives, open-endedness, proneness to metaphors, and openness to free interpretation by the viewers (Novaković 1966, 6). Usually, Yugoslav *New*

*Films* address some form of conflict in socialist society, such as generational, or between the individual and the environment where he<sup>44</sup> lives (Novaković 1966, 6). This heterogenous movement, without a manifesto, brought a freer stance towards sexuality and eroticism (Petrović 1988, 331). In addition, Yugoslav *New Film directors*, ‘by breaking the old rules of directing, also break numerous *bureaucratic* barriers (both in the manner of thinking and in the manner of film production), due to which certain topics and delicate social problems were pronounced for “taboos”<sup>45</sup> (Novaković 1966, 6, emphasis original). Yugoslav *New Film* directors sometimes resorted to allegories in order to convey a certain political message or critique. One of them was Želimir Žilnik.

Žilnik’s most internationally acclaimed film is his fiction debut *Early Works*. After being already screened for four months (from March 1969), both in Yugoslavia and abroad, the film was taken to District Court in Belgrade, due to a lawsuit, a decision on the temporary prohibition of screening, signed on 19th June 1969 by Spasoje Milošev, District Public Prosecutor, for ‘heavy injury of societal and political morals’ (in Miltojević 1992, 73). It was defended, at a trial open for public, by Žilnik himself, who was a lawyer by vocation, by arguing that the film was aligned with the main principles of Yugoslav politics, as well as with its generally accepted democratic rights and freedoms, such as: of thought, expression, critique, and art (in Miltojević 1992, 78–86). Ljubomir Radović, the judge who presided over the jury, acquitted the film. The court was of the opinion that the administrative bodies cannot categorically act as objective artistic critique (Radović in Miltojević 1992, 88). As reported by the newspaper *Borba*, although the District Public Prosecutor’s office appealed on the acquitting decision to the Supreme Court, the appeal was withdrawn by a higher instance on the republican level, Public Prosecutor’s office of (Yugoslav) Socialist Republic Serbia (*Borba* in Miltojević 1992, 89). Finally, the film was released on 1<sup>st</sup> of July, just barely on time to participate at Berlin International Film Festival and to win the Golden Bear on 6<sup>th</sup> July 1969 (*Borba* in Miltojević 1992, 90).

Žilnik’s *Early Works* is titled after the eponymous collection of early Marxist classics, *Early Works* (Marx and Engels [1953] 1961) – published in 1953 in Yugoslavia for the first time – including the letters that young Karl Marx wrote to Arnold Ruge (mostly dating from 1843). Their excerpts, as well as fragments from other Marxist classics, such as *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), are spoken verbatim by the main heroine Jugoslava. Žilnik listed Marx and Engels in the opening credits, as the authors of additional dialogue. Film *Early*

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<sup>44</sup> Men are mostly main characters.

<sup>45</sup> Own translation.

*Works* is made in the wake of, and under the influence of the student demonstrations that took place in Yugoslavia's capital Belgrade in June 1968. At that time, there was a wave of student protests in other countries, starting with France in May 1968. In Yugoslavia, *Early Works* was often screened in the movie theatres as a double bill with Žilnik's short documentary *Lipanjka gibanja/June Turmoil* (1969) about Yugoslav student protests (Tirnanić 1986, 57). To Gržinić, 'Žilnik hijacked the basic framework of the 1968 student riots and filled it with scopophilia, rape and murder' (2006, 68). Also, *Early Works* refers to and is critical of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

The plot of Žilnik's seminal film revolves around Jugoslava, who leaves her home, critical of the 'feudalism' that reigns in her household and the intimate partner violence her mother is exposed to from her husband, Jugoslava's father. She and her three male comrades: Dragiša (Bogdan Tirnanić), Kruno (Marko Nikolić) and Marko (Čedomir Radović) embark on a quest to emancipate peasants in the countryside and workers in factories. They do this by propagating communist principles. The clique of four youths encounters several predicaments during their quest, including their beating by peasants and Jugoslava's gang rape, problems with the police, as well as the indifference of the factory workers. Eventually, realising that the group has failed, Jugoslava leaves without notice and returns to her household with patriarchal relations. Consequently, her three angry comrades kill Jugoslava for injuring their male prides, and for witnessing their political and sexual failures. They cover her body with the flag of League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that is, the proletarian flag, and burn her corpse with a Molotov cocktail, which marks the end of the film.

My research examines the correlation in the film between Žilnik's engagement in political critique via the strong female character as proxy, and her objectification. Such objectification under the cover of political activism is self-evident, although under-researched, in many other critically acclaimed Yugoslav *New Films*, including the ones by Dušan Makavejev, Živojin Pavlović, Krsto Papić, and Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić. Considering that in most Yugoslav *New Films* the protagonist is a man, the shift in *Early Works* from a woman as the Other to a lead heroine, from periphery to the centre, is worthy of attention. Grounded in film feminist theories and through close reading, I argue that Jugoslava is simultaneously empowered and disempowered, an active subject and a sexually objectified object, a raped nation and a raped feminist. Nevertheless, Jugoslava's feminism comes more from Marxism than from the Western feminists, since she refers to Clara Zetkin, German advocate for women's rights, theorist and activist. Jugoslava breaks gender and sexuality taboos, because she freely chooses her partners, has an active stance towards sexuality, and gives a lecture on

contraception.

Jugoslava belongs to a group – women – that was concurrently empowered and somewhat marginalized in the Yugoslav real-life private sphere, due to their frequent double burden and the remnants of patriarchal mores in interpersonal relations, as was also the case in other socialist countries. The film demonstrates how the celluloid gaze switches to a woman as a main heroine, as opposed to the usual woman's place on the margin of Yugoslav *New Film*. In Žilnik's case, that results in problematic aesthetic solutions, namely her visual exposure to the male gaze. The heroine's empowerment and subsequent ultimate disempowerment by death, reveal her simultaneous emancipation and marginalization, and open the question of Žilnik's ambivalent stance towards Jugoslava.

I argue that there are two possible readings of Jugoslava's brutalisation: (1) rape and murder of a woman as an allegory of violated nation and (2) rape as a punishment of an emancipated woman. The first interpretation in which 'woman and nation are equated' (Naaman 2006, 277) recurs in many cinemas worldwide: Middle Eastern cinema (Atakav 2017), Chinese cinema (Cui 2003), Indian cinema (Banerjee 2016), Polish cinema (Mazierska 2006), French cinema (MacDonald 2010) and Yugoslav cinema (Vuković 2018). As Iordanova (1996, 25) notes about male-dominated Balkan cinema, when the focus is on female characters' destinies, it is not necessarily for the purpose of any feminist cause, but rather for creating allegories about other matters that the directors find significant, such as for promulgating political points, embedded into the fates of disempowered women. Moreover, Yugoslav *New film*, as Daković finds, handles 'topics such as poverty, ethnicity, marginal social groups and oppression of society towards the individual, frequently placing "woman" as the oppressed figure' (1996, 42).

### **Woman as nation**

Jugoslava, eponymous of her country's name, embodies the Yugoslav nation, its revolution and the betrayal of its promises. In two different scenes the heroine is juxtaposed to a crudely-drawn star, which further emphasises her role as the symbol of Yugoslavia: in one with a subtext of the sexual revolution of Yugoslav women (Figure 4), and in another scene in which Jugoslava shouts slogans about the cultural revolution with a clenched fist (Figure 5). The red star stands



Figure 4. Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) and the crudely-drawn star in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

for communism and the Yugoslav Partisans, who fought and won against the occupiers in the Second World War. The red star has a prominent place on the Yugoslav flag. Also, it is featured on the flag of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that is, the proletarian flag, on which is written: ‘Proletarians of all countries, unite!’.

The proletarian flag, that is, the flag of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia appears twice in the film. The first time it is shown in a sequence consisting of several shots, each composed like a *tableau vivant*, filmed from the same camera position and in the same space, and edited together with jump cuts. For instance, the shots are of the main actors in a Citroën 2CV car that changes its position in space, then of the director himself and his co-scriptwriter Branko Vučićević, both in the car, who make a cameo appearance in the film, followed again with the shots of the actors in the car, while Jugoslava, the only one of them who is standing, holds and waves the flag of League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that is, the proletarian flag (Figure 6). The sequence is underscored with a non-diegetic male voice: ‘Tirke and Milja. That’s them. A banner with a star!’ So, the main audio-visual focus is on the flag and star. In this sequence Žilnik deliberately breaks the film’s illusion by including himself and Vučićević, as well as by the usage of the names Tirke and Milja in the voiceover, which are Dragiša’s nickname and Jugoslava’s name in real-life, respectively. At the end of the film, Jugoslava will be associated with the flag of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (and of the proletariat) once more. She is shot to death, covered with the flag (Figure 6) and burned



with a Molotov cocktail; all by her comrades, whose political and sexual impotence she has witnessed.

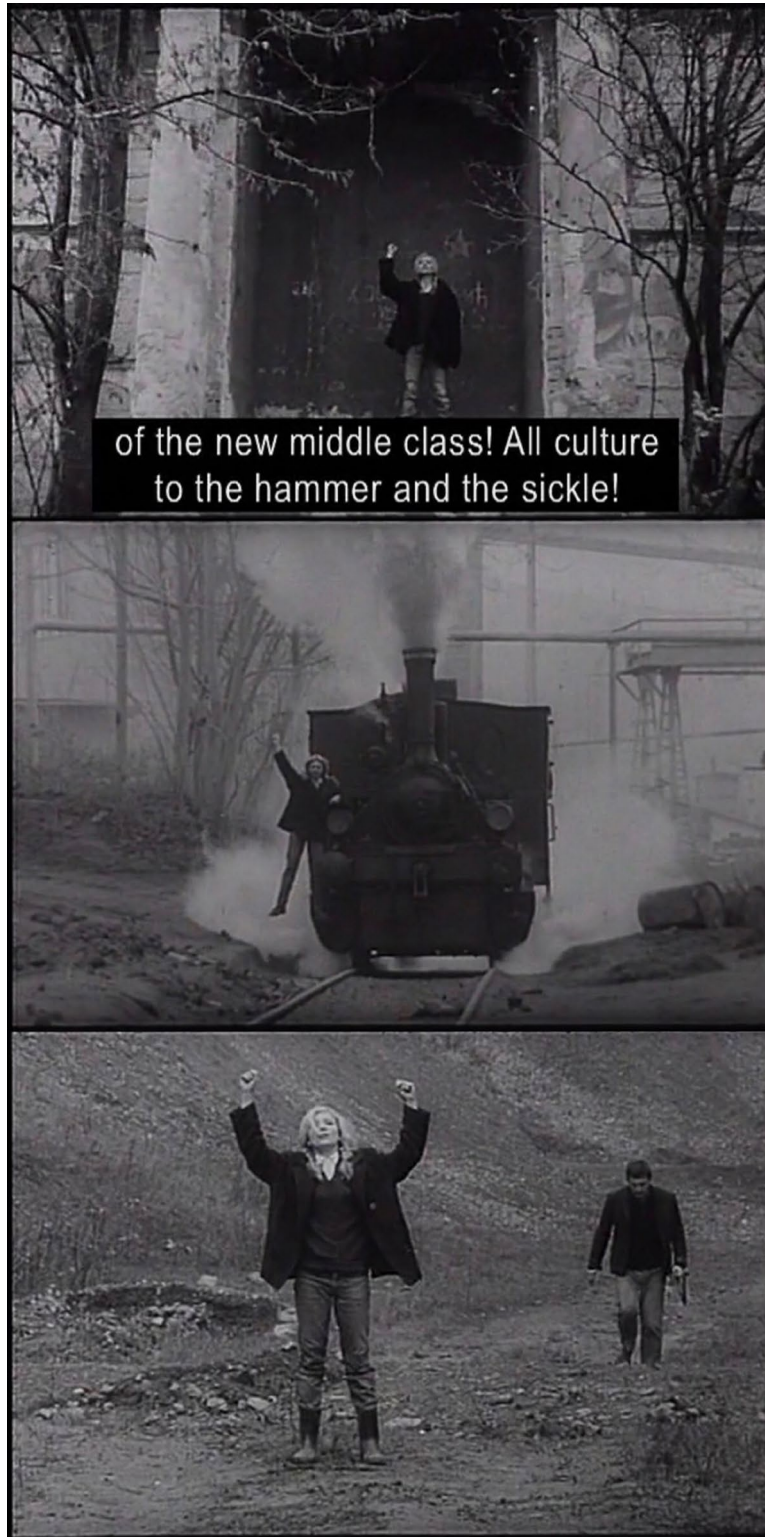


Figure 5. 1–3. Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) and the clenched fist in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

A sequence which stages Jugoslava on a railway locomotive also uses the style of the *tableau vivant*.<sup>46</sup> At first, she is shown sitting on it, with a subtitle – in fact, a quote by Marx – that reads ‘Revolutions are the locomotives of history’, indicating that Jugoslava is the personification of Yugoslavia and its revolutionary spirit. Then, another shot follows, where she stands on the steaming locomotive, with her arm defiantly raised and fist clenched (Figure 4). Such gesture was recurrent motif in art and media, found in the representations of a woman as the symbol of Yugoslavia. As Sklevicky observes, the New Year number of newspaper *Vjesnik* in 1946 had an illustration on front page, which included a woman with ‘a five-pointed star in her raised hand, who personifies the [Yugoslav] Republic’<sup>47</sup> (Sklevicky 1996, 178). Similarly, Jovanović, following the art historian Bojana Pejić, finds that in sculpture and painting in Yugoslavia at the end of 1940s, ‘female allegorical figures [were frequent] which stood for the revolution, the anti-fascist struggle, and freedom’, but later they were gradually outnumbered by corresponding male figures (Jovanović 2014, 10). Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that there is something monumental in the representation of Jugoslava, which evokes Yugoslav Partisan-themed art, namely sculptures dedicated to Partisan women. For instance, the *Victory* sculpture atop *The Battle of Batina Monument*, created by Antun Augustinčić in 1947, and *Monument to the Revolution* in Kranj, sculpted by Lojze Dolinar in 1961 (Niebyl 2020). Such monuments feature female Partisan or civilian women, as embodiments of Yugoslav nation, its struggle for liberation and its victory. However, ‘modern viewers, rather than the works themselves by virtue of their original purpose, assign meaning and significance to a monument’ (Riegl 1996, 71).

Jugoslava’s monumental gestures throughout the film lead back to the opening thought of this article, ‘My mother would be more liberated by a washing machine than by a right to vote’. Jugoslava utters these words during a *tableau vivant*-like, one-shot scene, when she and

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<sup>46</sup> Perhaps this is a creative contribution by Karpo Aćimović Godina, the director of photography (DOP) and editor of the film, because such staging is also prominent in Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić's Yugoslav New Films: *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of My Family in the World Revolution* (1971) and *Slike iz života udarnika/Scenes from the Life of a Shock Worker* (1972), in which he also worked as the DOP.

<sup>47</sup> Own translation.



Figure 6.1–2. Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) and the proletarian flag in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

Marko are playacting her execution by him with a firearm, foreshadowing her actual murder at the end of the film by her three comrades. Jugoslava delivers the line while looking straight at the camera, therefore directly addressing the viewer in a Brechtian distancing effect fashion, which, to borrow from Forbes, ‘elicits reflection on what has just been seen’ (2016, 196). Her line, as well as the gestures of her hands clenched in fists (Figure 5), are references to Yugoslav Partisan women, who earned the right to vote for all Yugoslav women, given in the wake of the Second World War as a reward for their indispensable participation in that war. Žilnik’s mother Milica Šuvaković was one of the courageous Yugoslav Partisan women who gave their lives for the liberation of the country, as did his father, Konrad Žilnik, a National Hero of Yugoslavia (see Žilnik in Jovanić 1988). Estimated two million Yugoslav women contributed to the People’s Liberation Struggle (Jancar-Webster 1999, 70). Out of that number, 282,000 female

participants perished in the concentration camps (Jancar-Webster 1999, 70), including Žilnik's mother, who was a member of the League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia, as well as of clandestine resistance of Yugoslav People's Liberation Army against the occupier (Žilnik in Jovanić 1988). Approximately 100,000 women were soldiers of combat units, who fought on the battlefields (Sklevicky 1984, 97). One fourth of those brave female Partisans died, and 40,000 were wounded, out of which number around 3000 had to live with severe permanent disability (Sklevicky 1984, 97). The utmost bravery of Yugoslav women was recognized, so 2000 became officers of People's Liberation Army during the war, while 87 became National Heroes after the war (Sklevicky 1984, 97). In one of his interviews, Žilnik states that the 'film is intended for youths and old [Partisan] fighters because it speaks about experiences of both' (in Prelog 1969). Considering that Jugoslava is executed by Marko in the previously mentioned enactment scene, it could be argued that this is Žilnik's condemnation of the Yugoslav state's partial betrayal of the legacy of female Partisans. It failed to fully fulfil the promise of gender equality, namely in the private sphere, in Yugoslav households where women frequently had a double burden.

When it comes to the representation of women in modern Yugoslav *New Film*, Yugoslav film critic Boglić (1980, 122) observes that they are depicted somewhere on the continuum between myth and degradation, more leaning towards the latter. Jugoslava's body is both mythicized and degraded throughout the studied film, in the service of being a symbol of Yugoslavia and its revolutionary spirit. A woman as a metaphor for a nation is a frequent motif in art worldwide. For instance, in the painting *Liberty Leading the People* (1830) by Eugène Delacroix, a woman with denuded bust, carrying the French flag, stands for France. Similarly, a giant sculpture *The Motherland Calls*, by Yevgeny Vuchetich and Nikolai Nikitin, erected in 1967 in Volgograd, depicts a woman, holding a sword, that symbolizes contemporary Russia. Analogous to it, in her metaphorical meaning of a nation, is *Statue of Liberty* (Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi and Gustave Eiffel, 1886, New York City, USA). As Pejić (2021, 54) notes in the same vein, other allegorical female statues, eponymous of their nation-states, include *Germania*, *Hungaria*, *Polonia*, *Hispania*, *Hellas*, and *Serbia*.

Besides the interpretation of the portrayed violence towards Jugoslava as the allegory of the nation's violation as well as of its revolutionary spirit, another possible reading of her brutalization is as the patriarchal punishment of an emancipated woman, for her active sexuality and independence. Depictions of sexual abuse are one of the main sites for shaping and discerning prevalent notions about femininity and feminism (Horeck 2004, 8). Moreover, a 'liberated' heroine's rape and death are 'punishment for refusing to submit to the codes that

define her place and limit her possibilities to what patriarchy demands' (Kaplan 1990, 7).

## Rape

According to Slapšak (2000, 134–135), rape is one of the most common sexual motifs in Yugoslav film at the end of 1960s. The heroine Jugoslava will be raped, after citing political slogans in an attempt to emancipate the peasants in the countryside. In this sequence, Žilnik condenses time by utilizing ellipsis, a narrative and editing device that omits a section of the story (Yale 2002), for the purpose of shocking the spectators. When the shot of Jugoslava, who is addressing the peasants via megaphone while standing in the moving car, ends with: 'We support you, you should support us'<sup>48</sup>, it is suddenly cut and juxtaposed to a shot of Jugoslava and her three male comrades being beaten by male peasants. Ironically and to some extent comically, Žilnik underlines the futility of the group's failed attempt to revolutionize the countryside by shouting political slogans. He mocks his characters by showing the discrepancy between Marxist theory and practice. The men of the countryside are obviously not appreciative of the group's attempts to enlighten them. On the contrary, they are shown being infuriated and offended by Jugoslava's Marxist announcement via megaphone, stating, amongst other slogans, that 'the peasants are stuck in the idiotism of rural life like in the mud'. Consequently, Jugoslava and her three male companions are literally stuck in the mud because they are being dragged through it by the angry peasant mob. They flop in the muddy puddles like drowning fish while the (male) peasants pull them, push them, and kick them. The sound of flopping is accentuated. Throughout this scene, the camera is handheld, shaky and unsteady, contributing to the dramatic tension. The usage of the zoom lens, combined with whip pans and black and white photography creates the suggestion of a real event, simultaneously disclosing Žilnik's background in documentary filmmaking. Dragiša, in a cowardly fashion, manages to escape. Two peasants pull Jugoslava through the mud (Figure 7), away to some hay, each holding by force one of her hands. She tries to fight back and kicks with her leg, but to no avail. They rip off her shirt. The scene ends with an abrupt cut, while Jugoslava is pinned down by them, so gang rape is clearly implied, but not depicted further. Žilnik deliberately decided to finish the scene when the implicit, off screen penetration begins, presumably in order not to show sexual violence explicitly or engage into voyeuristic eroticised objectification of the abused female body.

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<sup>48</sup> All quotations from the film are translated by the author.

If the character of Jugoslava is examined with regard to one of the feminist debates noted by Rich, 'of woman-as-agent versus woman-as-victim' (1986, 556), she temporarily breaks the victim mould, usual in Yugoslav *New Film*, and refuses to be a victim. Her only remark in the aftermath of being raped by the peasants, while sitting later that night around a bonfire with her three comrades, is 'I am happy that peasants will no longer exist in communism'. Jugoslava's phlegmatic reaction to her sexual abuse does not seem to stem from her repressed memories of the rape trauma, but rather from deliberately not allowing the trauma to get the best of herself. However, Žilnik keeps the audiences' empathy at bay by only briefly depicting Jugoslava in this post-rape scene, from a third person, objective perspective, instead of by showing her subjective perspective (for example, in her point-of-view shots), which is also not given during the sexual assault. The fact that neither the heroine or her comrades address the impact of rape trauma on her, but move on as if nothing happened, in combination with the complete absence of the indictment or punishment of the rape perpetrators in the film, is rather problematic.

### **Seven times**

It is important to keep in mind that the actress who played Jugoslava, Milja Vujanović, was in real-life crowned Miss (Yugoslav) Socialist Republic of Serbia, the most beautiful woman of 1967, at a beauty contest (Tirnanić 1986, 57). At the time when the shooting of the film began, in the autumn of 1968, she was still the actual Miss SR Serbia (Tirnanić 1986, 57). Since in the newspaper interviews with Vujanović, journalists only focused on the fact that she was to appear nude in the film, as Tirnanić – film critic-turned-actor, who interpreted Dragiša – finds, Žilnik decided to take advantage of such interest, and advertise *Early Works* from the very beginning of its shooting as a film that shows 'the beauties of the homeland and the beauties of a female body'<sup>49</sup> (Tirnanić 1986, 57). However, Žilnik himself argued in one interview that 'the film advocates the beginning of a sexual revolution because the position of a woman is infinitely unequal', while sex is envisioned as socio-political action (in Prelog 1969).

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<sup>49</sup> Own translation.



Figure 7. Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) degraded in mud in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

I will analyse a sequence of a sexual encounter between Jugoslava and Dragiša, one of her comrades, which begins with Jugoslava's amusement in the foreplay phase, eventually to be concluded in a negative manner in the postcoital phase. The dominant role she assumes, in both sex and life, can be deduced when she steps on Dragiša's chest during the foreplay. However, the camera undermines this empowerment by fragmenting her body. For instance, a tilt flows upwards from Jugoslava's feet, all over her nude figure, until it stops on Jugoslava's smiling face in a close-up. Consequently, the unity of her body is broken down into fragmented details: legs, buttocks and breasts. In Mulvey's (1989, 20) opinion the fragmenting of the female body by close-ups, such as of legs (which thus become a substitute fetish object), permeates the film narrative with eroticism by transforming a woman into icon or cut-out. Consequently, the depth of field is significantly reduced, so the image gives impression of flatness instead of

realism, which introduces fetishism into representation of a female character (Mulvey 1989, 20). Although the described part of the scene is portrayed as playful and liberating, it is also important to note Kuhn's observation that the pornographic penchant 'to isolate bits of bodies may be read as a gesture of dehumanisation' (1992, 37). Furthermore, the dialogue that accompanies the tilt is of a sexual nature. Dragiša lasciviously asks Jugoslava whether she has ever made love until her teeth tingled, and she responds laughingly that he is too green for that. Despite the fact that Jugoslava seems to be enjoying the stepping game and the foreplay in general, the sexual objectification of her body is an indicator of an ambivalent stance of Žilnik towards representation of his heroine. He simultaneously disempowers Jugoslava by transforming her nude body into the object of the male gaze and empowers her by making her a subject of her actions, be it sexual or otherwise. The stepping game could be taken as an example of Dillman's (2014, 5) argument that there can be contradiction between the narrative and images because, for instance, the images can sexually objectify women and have sexist connotations, whereas simultaneously the narrative can have feminist undertones. This theory can be fully applied to *Early Works* since there is a tension between the narrative and the visuals.

Then, there is a shot abundant with many uninterrupted camera movements. Firstly, it starts from Dragiša's close-up, in which Jugoslava's hand pushes his head away playfully. Secondly, it is followed with a pan to Jugoslava's close-up in profile, as she reclines on the floor on her back. Thirdly, from there the camera glides all over her recumbent body, panning leftwards over her breast, stomach and thigh with a hint of a pubic hair. Therefore, her body parts are again isolated, sexualised and offered on display through camerawork in the sexual foreplay sequence. Moreover, during the segment of the camera movement when camera pans over her naked body, Dragiša inquires Jugoslava in voiceover how many times per night is her record to have had sex. Fourthly, the uninterrupted camera movement continues with an upwards tilt over Dragiša's naked chest, until it finally stops on a close-up of gazing Dragiša. The tilt is underscored with Jugoslava's voiceover: 'You are so dumb. Tell me something nice.'

Dragiša's close-up is followed with an unexpected cutaway scene, consisting of one extreme long-shot of Dragiša in an exterior. He is walking on a grass-covered, bushy landscape, reminiscent of pubic hair (Figure 8), whilst the diegetic wind howls and his voiceover, belonging to the previously shown scene with Jugoslava, is heard: 'With you, I could do it seven times per night.' There is a cut back to his face in an interior, in a big close-up, looking upwards (Figure 8), followed with a fast, unmotivated pan towards the right, that stops on the detail of Jugoslava's upright thigh shown from profile (Figure 8). The pan, therefore, strongly suggests that Dragiša was gazing at Jugoslava's pubis. Thus, Dragiša's previously mentioned strolling



on the grass could be interpreted as the metaphor of desired sexual intercourse. From Jugoslava's thigh in profile, camera tilts upwards (Figure 8), and again, for the third time during the sexual foreplay sequence, flows over her fragmented nude body parts, such as her breasts, until it stops on her smiling face in a big close-up in profile. Regardless of how aesthetically pleasing it might be for a spectator, Jugoslava's deconstructed nude body is visually erotically overemphasised, so it contradicts the egalitarian narrative that the film propagates, especially keeping in mind that none of the male characters is represented in such a sexually objectifying manner.

Thereafter, a palm reading that Jugoslava gives Dragiša is embedded within the sexual foreplay sequence. Incidentally, the actress Milja Vujanović, who interpreted Jugoslava, was famous for practicing chiromancy and astrology in real-life. Žilnik utilises palmistry to foreshadow the unbound sexuality of his heroine Jugoslava, as well as Dragiša's failure to satisfy it. While touching with her index finger a line on Dragiša's palm, as shown in a close-up detail (that also encompasses Jugoslava's nipple), Jugoslava's chiromantic observations in voiceover include the one that his Mount of Venus is crumbling away. In palmistry the term Mount of Venus 'shows a person's passions – or lack of them' (Vernon 2018, 25). However, the phrase is also referred to in Latin as 'mons pubis' and 'Mons Veneris', under which name it appears in the medical dictionary, meaning 'a pad of fatty tissue and thick skin that overlies the symphysis pubis in the woman. After puberty it is covered with pubic hair' (O'Toole 2017, 1160). Clearly this is another allusion of the director to intercourse, keeping in mind that previously, in the foreplay sequence, there was an exterior shot of Dragiša walking on the grass, which stood for Jugoslava's pubis. Jugoslava continues reading from Dragiša's palm and states that he is a quick man, which again has sexual connotation. While she is saying that, the camera tilts from the close-up of his palm with her index finger on it, over Jugoslava's nipple, onto her big close-up, in which her gaze is directed downwards and thus sexually suggestive. The impending sexual act will not be shown, but only implied due to an ellipsis.



Figure 8. 1–5. Sexually Objectified Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

The next scene begins with a shot of Jugoslava's hands cutting bread with a knife in a close-up detail. This implies looming symbolical castration of Dragiša. Thereafter, Jugoslava puts some spread on a bread slice and gives it to Dragiša. While they are eating, she comments

how the first-time sex that they had, just moments ago, was fine, but then taunts Dragiša to fulfil his vow to have sex with her seven times in a row. Žilnik visually suggests Dragiša's sexual inferiority to Jugoslava, by positioning him lower than her in space, because he is seated on the floor, whereas she sits on a chair, higher, placed in the position of power. Intimidated with her words, Dragiša fails to even try to have more sex with her and instead resorts to playacting with a gun, as a crutch for injured, challenged masculinity. He aims at his target Jugoslava, whom is heard saying in a frightened voiceover: 'Why are you fooling around', whilst seven gunshots in total resound, without wounding her, as if Dragiša were firing blanks. Instead of off-screen Jugoslava are shown, for instance, extreme close-ups of Dragiša's face, as well as close-ups of the gun. Every gunshot is symbolic, and each substitutes a sexual act, out of seven promised in a row. The gun is a phallic symbol which must subjugate a sexually active woman by murdering her (Kaplan 1990, 6). Žilnik does what Vincendeau described as a point made 'to punish a woman with power, portraying her as castrating' (2017, 33). Since Jugoslava exhibits open sexuality and dominant personality, this sequence foreshadows that sexually inadequate, patriarchal, hegemonic masculinities, for instance embodied in Dragiša, feel intimidated by her, which results in symbolical and physical violence. It is a premonition of how in the closure of the film Jugoslava will be killed with a gun by another member of the group, Marko, with Kruno's and Dragiša's help.

### **Sexual emancipation**

In Mazierska's view, the violence in *Early Works* 'can be seen as stemming from the frustration of the men that the goals of their journey were not being achieved, and that for their female partner this is a proof that they have failed as males' (2013, 139). Similarly, Daković (1996, 47) notes that in some Yugoslav films there are conservative fears about female sexuality, namely of younger women, who are the incarnations of carnal desire and slaves to it. Cinematically, such sexually active female characters are put under control: either by marriage, or by punishment for their purportedly unchaste conduct, often by killing (Daković 1996, 47), as happens in *Early Works*. Along the same line, Beard finds that Žilnik himself cannot be absolved of culpability for gendering the narrative, because the film, in which Jugoslava is silenced by death, 'both reinforce[s], as well as critique[s], the wider social fear of strong women, whilst also indulging in stereotypes of women as sexually dangerous' (2019, 110).

Furthermore, Dillman argues that 'what happens in the visual realm and what happens

in the narrative chain are sometimes at odds' (2014, 103–104). In contrast to the images that objectify Jugoslava's body throughout the film, the narrative stresses her emancipated feminist stances, such as her free outlook on sexuality, and the critique of the 'feudal' state of her family where her mother and herself are subjugated to her abusive drunkard father. Also, Jugoslava briefly does difficult physical labour at the factory, embodying the gender equality principle, even though at certain point she collapses due to the over strenuous work.

Another occasion when Jugoslava expresses feminist concerns, is when she gives a lecture to peasant women on birth control. She demonstrates a contraceptive coil and contraceptive spermicide foam. The women who attend Jugoslava's lecture are shot in documentary style, as in a talking head interview, sometimes even looking straight at the camera. They are authentic peasants, most likely instructed by Žilnik on what to ask Jugoslava during the emancipatory presentation, which the director does not hide, but on the contrary underlines by leaving audible male voiceover, possibly his, signalling peasant women when to start their questions regarding birth control. The rural women are concerned: whether the pill or coil is a better contraceptive; how many times a woman can have abortion and stay healthy; how old should a woman be when she gives birth; and whether health is affected if the couple controls reproduction with coitus interruptus. During the address to the peasant women, Jugoslava mentions Clara Zetkin, a German Marxist and leftist propagator of equal opportunities for women. Jugoslava further stresses that:

We won't achieve anything significant there as long as in the family a man behaves as a boss, as a proprietor, and as long as a woman is exploited like the proletariat. A woman could be liberated from subservience only by exchanging the structures of employment and by deconstructing the monogamous family, which could not had been fulfilled even by the overthrowing of bourgeois state. But third, the Technological revolution towards which we are going will bring it for sure. After all, biologically, women are the stronger sex, and they will rule in a decade or two.

Following that, an unidentified male voice yells in voiceover 'Long live the 8<sup>th</sup> March, the International Women's day', supported by other unidentified male voices. It is ambiguous whether this is a mockery or a genuine expression of support, perhaps both. In general, Žilnik mocks not only Jugoslava but all the main characters by showing the discrepancy between practice and theory consisted of slogans. The 8<sup>th</sup> March is another reference to Clara Zetkin,

who, together with Käthe Duncker and other female comrades, that is, the participants of the Second International Women's Conference at Copenhagen, held in 1910, proposed that 'the Socialist women of all countries will hold each year a Women's Day, whose foremost purpose it must be to aid the attainment of women's suffrage' (Clara Zetkin, Kathe Duncker and Comrades in Zetkin 1984, 108).

The first time an international feminist conference, named 'Comrade Woman', took place in Yugoslavia was in Belgrade in 1978, which inspired eight Yugoslav feminists to form the first feminist group in Yugoslavia the same year (Drakulić 1993, 128). Nevertheless, years before in socialism also existed egalitarian initiative which is nowadays occasionally referred to as state feminism (Imre 2017, 89). Continuing the pre-Second World War efforts of Yugoslav women's movements (of both feminist civic and communist workers'), the Antifascist Front of Women (AFW) – a communist women's organisation where they could join on voluntary basis – shaped the lives of Yugoslav women during the war, as well in the wake of the war. It was incepted during the war by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (from 1952 renamed to League of Communists of Yugoslavia), formalizing its existence in 1942 at the First Conference of AFW of Yugoslavia, held in Bosanski Petrovac (Sklevicky 1984, 91). One of the goals of this women's organisation was to mobilize Yugoslav women into supporting war efforts, as equals to men – for instance, in the front line as Partisan fighters and nurses, and in the rear as suppliers, caregivers, and clandestine resistance in occupied territories. Besides being a major backbone to the antifascist struggle, the key contributions of AFW were also the antipatriarchal efforts on the political (e.g. active and passive voting rights) and cultural emancipation of women (e.g. literacy courses and female press) (Sklevicky 1996, 25–30). Also, their struggles were the preparations to integrate women, on equal basis to men, in the future society that they were creating, as well as to change traditional mindsets of men, which were euphemistically dubbed as 'low political consciousness'<sup>50</sup> (Sklevicky 1996, 30). Gradually, the autonomy of this mass women's organisation was reduced by its maker, League of Communists of Yugoslavia (via organisations that acted as its transmission), culminating at the Fourth Congress of Antifascist Front of Women, held in 1953, when the decision was made about its (self)disbandment, and the founding of the Alliance of Women's Associations of Yugoslavia instead (Božinović 1996, 170). A big number of female delegates experienced this 'as the degradation of women's organisations and women themselves. And many activists of the AFW organisations reacted in such a manner that they stopped working'<sup>51</sup> (Božinović 1996, 170).

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<sup>50</sup> Own translation.

<sup>51</sup> Own translation.

Even though no parallel can be accurately drawn between socialism and western systems in regard with the position of women, in the former there was an overall egalitarian initiative from which women generously profited, but it was not in the least specifically feminist in its motives (Ivekovic 1995, 12). This is because the concept of feminism was regarded negatively, due to being linked with the capitalist West and the bourgeoisie (Imre 2017, 89). However, the socialist state programmatically encouraged female emancipation (Slapšak 2007, 38), which can be induced from Jugoslava's stances that sound quite feminist and sexually empowered.

Since Jugoslava exhibits active sexuality and personality, patriarchal, hegemonic masculinities feel threatened by her, which results in violence. This can be seen in a scene in which Jugoslava and Lepa, a girl whom the group of four comrades befriends, draw lots. On each paper there is a male name written: Kruno, Dragiša and Marko. Jugoslava draws Kruno's name, implying she will have sex with him. Lepa gets the paper with Dragiša's name. The lot with Marko's name was not drawn by any of the two girls. So, he is dismissed by Jugoslava and told to return in the morning. Nevertheless, Kruno is not eager to have an intercourse with Jugoslava, as has already been shown in a previous scene, in which – although he is already naked because his clothing is wet – he does not respond to her advances under the pretext of not wanting to spoil their comradeship. Perhaps he is intimidated with her open sexuality, because she does not behave like a prey, but like a huntress. Similarly, when the lot with his name is drawn, Jugoslava takes the initiative, and he does not seem to be comfortable with it. Kruno tries to convince Dragiša, who already started foreplay with Lepa, to go to Jugoslava instead of him, but to no avail. Dragiša tells him to call Marko, who was previously dismissed by Jugoslava because the paper with his name was not drawn. The dominant woman becomes angry. As a retribution she tells Lepa to come, so they both sit on the pile of sacks. She insults the two men: 'Why are you sitting, you faggots!' Consequently, the men seek revenge because their patriarchal heteronormative identities are insulted with this nowadays completely politically incorrect and pejorative term for gay men. They drag Jugoslava out of the room, in a manner which is reminiscent of the rape scene, when she was dragged by the peasants prior to the rape. Nevertheless, the intention of Dragiša and Kruno is to punish her, by banishing her outside and excluding her from the sexual orgy. The last thing she manages to utter before being thrown out is: 'Lepa, don't do it with both of them, please!'

Unlike many Yugoslav *New Film* heroines, Jugoslava is not a passive victim, but even manifests sadism. The fact that she is not only shown as dominant, but also as sadistic, can be inferred from the sequences when Dragiša is willingly tortured by his comrades, for his

cowardly escape from the enraged peasants, on the occasion when his comrades got beaten and Jugoslava gang-raped. In one of the torture sequences, Jugoslava sets Dragiša's feet on fire. Nonetheless, in contrast to Jugoslava's fleeting empowerment due to being an active agent in the narrative, the visuals objectify her by sexualising her nude body that is frequently exposed and foregrounded, such as in a shower scene, in which sexual act between her and Marko is interrupted by Kruno and Dragiša.

### **Shower**

In the shower scene, Jugoslava is seen washing in a large communal shower, having been covered with cement dust during a factory shift (Figure 9). She invites Marko, who has remained in the locker room, to come in, but under condition that he is not going to look. It is a small courtship game, because moments before, when she was undressing in his presence, she most likely has been aware that he took advantage of her nudity by gazing at her in secret, whilst pretending to have his back turned to her.

Consequently, he accepts her invitation and joins her in the large shower room. They are both seen showering, but separately. He drops the soap and loses it amongst the wooden floorboards. She approaches him and soaps his back with her soap. He takes her soap and soaps her breasts. One thing leads to another, and they start making out. Given that the film is saturated with politics, it is not surprising that even the lovemaking scene features revolutionary slogans. Jugoslava says to Marko: 'If Engels didn't say that sincere sexual love exists only between the proletarians, you would get nothing today'. This controversial shower scene, although shortened due to the censorship (*Reklamna obmana* 1969), perhaps seeks to display the beauty of the female form, but its cinematic style inevitably leads to the objectification of that which it seeks to celebrate. Kruno and Dragiša, who are clothed, interrupt the sexual act between the nude Jugoslava and Marko by entering the shower room. Dragiša, Jugoslava's former sexual partner, even spits. This action implies a sadistic pleasure in punishment by



Figure 9. 1–3. Sexually Objectified Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

humiliation, which emerges from being in the position of power of the voyeuristic gaze (Mulvey 1989, 23). The two men are the active bearers of the look, whilst the couple are being looked at. Consequently, the lovers part, objectified and suddenly aware of their nudity, like Adam and



Eve. Once Dragiša and Kruno have stopped the lovers by making them feel ashamed, they leave with an air of contempt, as if their mission has been accomplished.

In an aforementioned scene, for a brief instant, Dragiša and Kruno are as voyeuristic as the old men depicted in the *Susanna and the Elders* recurrent motif in painting, whom are, according to Berger (1977, 50), the proxies of the spectators, because they all spy on a represented naked woman while she is bathing alone. Several different painters depicted this theme, as Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti), Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri), and Jan Brueghel the Younger. What most of such paintings have in common is, as Berger would have it, that female '[n]udity is placed on display' (1977, 54), just like in the analysed film Jugoslava's nudity is exhibited. The paintings in question are inspired by the biblical narrative from the *Book of Daniel*, in which Susanna is a chaste married woman, who is, after refusing the advances of two voyeuristic, lecherous, elderly men, falsely accused by them of having sex with a young man. In contrast, in *Early Works* shower scene, Jugoslava is an unmarried, sexually active young woman, who actually engages in a sexual activity with a young man. Moreover, in the story depicted by paintings the sight of the naked Susanna's body causes sexual urge of two voyeurs, while in *Early Works* hypocrisy arises amongst the scopophilic men instead of sexual arousal. Considering that '[to] be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself' (Berger 1977, 54), whatever pleasure and empowerment might have been present in the beginning of this scene, its effects of sexual liberation are annulled when Jugoslava starts being an object of scopophilic gaze, stops experiencing pleasure and starts experiencing shame. Ways of seeing and representing female body did not fundamentally change from Baroque painting times to Yugoslav *New Film*.

## **Death**

Besides being caressed, throughout the film, Jugoslava's body is also dragged through the mud, raped, shot at, murdered and burned post-mortem (Gocić 2003, 21). The escalation of violence culminates towards the end of film. Jugoslava quits the group after the failed emancipation of the peasants in the countryside and of the workers. She returns to her 'feudal' family. After some time, her former comrades barge into the courtyard in front of her house. Their arrival is shown in overlapping in several shots, meaning that the part of the action at the end of each shot is repeated at the beginning of the next one. So, the walking distance the three men have already passed in the previous shot is partially repeated in the following one, which Žilnik

perhaps did in order to amplify the dramatic and ominous nature of their unexpected appearance. They find Jugoslava chopping wood, with an axe (Figure 10). She is shown for the first time wearing a skirt, as opposed to the pants that she had always worn earlier in the film. Krijnen and Van Bauwel assert that when a woman wears the attire often associated with her gender, such as a dress or skirt, ‘she also simultaneously articulates a certain type of femininity’ (2015, 41). Žilnik contrasts Jugoslava’s feminine aspects, such as her beauty and quite womanly clothing, with her tomboyish aspects, such as chopping wood, which was a common task for women in rural, patriarchal setting. Such juxtaposition is perhaps a hint: at the real-life fact that



Figure 10. Tomboyish Jugoslava (Milja Vujanović) in *Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969).

in the Yugoslav post-war society female Partisan veterans, and women in general, were relegated to the domesticity – even if they were employed, which often was the case – as well as at their feminization, because the emphasized femininity once again became the ideal of a woman’s prettiness (Jovanović 2014, 11). However, in Jugoslava’s case the process of apparent feminizing in her ‘feudal’ family, reflected in her outfit, has not affected her assertive, tomboy personality.

The three men order Jugoslava to come with them. After she refuses, they taunt her that before she was not afraid. She defiantly responds that she is not afraid now either, throws away the axe and goes with them. They bring her to a secluded meadow. When she asks them what they wanted, Dragiša mockingly replies: ‘To see if you could do it with the three of us.’ She tells them she already said everything is finished and that she is not interested in them. Although

she walks away, they grab her. After manhandling her for a while, the three men push her away, whereas she utters indomitably: ‘Let’s see who will do it first’. That has an emasculating effect on the men, so they freeze temporarily. When none of them makes a move, Jugoslava voices that they have always horsed around. Then, full of contempt, she spits in their direction insolently and utters the words: ‘You are never able to finish anything!’, further injuring the already inflamed egos of male characters by stressing their ineptitude. When male peers of a dominant woman feel emasculated, their frustrated sexual energy can become vented in a dangerously retributive manner (Dillman 2014, 102). Consequently, the three men jointly punish Jugoslava. Marko shoots her with a gun on behalf all of the men, while Kruno and Dragiša fiddle around with a bottle bomb. When Kruno approaches to cover Jugoslava’s murdered body with a cloth – which is the flag of The League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that is, the proletarian flag, shown earlier in the film – a funeral march starts, and then Dragiša burns Jugoslava’s body by throwing the bottle bomb at it.

Originally, the funeral march is a Russian song *Вы жертвою пали/You Fell Victim*, often linked with death and revolution (Titus 2016, 138). Its versions are featured in few films from the Soviet Union, such as *Юность Максима/The Youth of Maxim* (Grigori Koznitsev, Leonid Trauberg, 1935), and *Великий гражданин/The Great Citizen* (Fridrikh Ermler, 1938–1939) (Titus 2016, 138). However, in the Yugoslav film *Early Works*, the Serbo-Croatian, language version of the song titled *Posmrtni marš proletera/Funeral March for the Proletarians* – often heard at commemorations and funerals of Second World War Partisan heroes, while its lyrics were inscribed on their tombstones and monuments to the national liberation struggle (Beard 2019, 105) – has a completely different connotation. It functions rather as a sharp criticism than as a collective epiphany and lament full of pathos over unjustly fallen revolutionaries, martyred for the greater good of the people. This can be inferred because, on the one hand, in the denouement of the film, there is an intertitle with a quote by Louis de Saint-Just, which reads: ‘Those who make revolution halfway only dig their own graves’, implying that the four young revolutionaries did not live up to their proclaimed goals. On the other hand, the intertitle is underscored with the following verses of the funeral march, ‘Lie calmly in your tomb, under the banner of liberty we will carry on the battle!’. Such juxtaposition of image and sound implies the director’s ironical stance towards Jugoslava’s death, allegorically connoting the death of revolutionary spirit, while he simultaneously pays her respect by including the commemorative, ceremonial music in the sequence, as well as the gesture of covering her body with the flag of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, that is, the proletarian flag. The film ends with a very long-shot of the three men, as they are walking

away from the camera in the background, while the flames of Jugoslava's funeral pyre are visible in the foreground, and as the non-diegetic, mournful, female voices of the funeral march resound. Žilnik used Jugoslava's brutal demise in order to convey political allegory that the revolution was betrayed halfway through, by the students, peasants, and workers.

## Conclusion

In Yugoslav socialist society, women were simultaneously encouraged by the state to emancipate, and hindered from progress by the remnants of patriarchy in interpersonal relations between men and women. It is not surprising that those contradictions are interwoven into the studied film. They manifest as the director's ambiguous stances towards his female character, whom he empowers, but ultimately deprives of both power and life. On the one hand, Žilnik clearly condemns the murder of Jugoslava by placing the compassion of the spectators on the side of the slain victim. On the other hand, even though the director does not condone misogyny, he still uses Jugoslava for his own means in order to convey a political critique, regardless of as whether she is interpreted as a punished emancipated woman, or as a metaphor of a violated Yugoslav nation and its revolutionary spirit. Dillman (2014, 20) contends that films which feature violent demises of female characters annul any feminist messages, produced by, for example, the existence of strong heroines within the plot. If Dillman's theory is applied to Jugoslava's case, this means that although Jugoslava is rhetorically empowered and gesturally monumentalised by Žilnik, in praxis she is ultimately disempowered by death and the effects of her feminist stances are nullified.

In addition, Žilnik visually sexually objectified Jugoslava by the usage of pans and tilts that flow all over her nude body, fetishistically fragmented by them for the visual pleasure of the viewers addressed as male. The director argued, when interviewed, that by showing nudity, he actually confronted the false bourgeois morality (Žilnik in J.A. 1969), which was in line with the zeitgeist of sexual revolution in the 1960s. However, it is rather questionable that the real-life status of actress Vujanović – as the woman with the most beautiful body, due to being the Miss of Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Serbia – was used in promotional materials to advertise the film, such as in a booklet handed out before its premiere at Berlin International Film Festival (Dikić 1969). Moreover, both Vujanović's and Žilnik's interviews in the press before the release of *Early Works*, as if by rule included the promotional stills from the film shooting that showed Jugoslava's naked breasts, sometimes accompanied with excerpts from the screenplay

imbued with sex (Munitić 1969). To borrow from Žilnik himself, although I take his statement out of context, ‘despite all erotic freedoms, some taboos should not be broken, simply because the human body has some limits’<sup>52</sup> (Žilnik in J.A. 1969). In Žilnik’s defence for breaking all taboos after all, Vujanović was complicit with her sexual objectification, because in those interviews about the film, she herself emphasised her own nudity. Namely, she drew a parallel between it and the nudity in Francisco Goya’s painting *La Maja Desnuda/The Nude Maja* (1797–1800) (Vujanović in Husić 1969). This relates back to Berger’s (1977, 63) aforementioned observation on how women have internalised to perceive themselves as a sight. Žilnik’s insistence on female beauty in the studied film, since pretty women as Jugoslava and Lepa<sup>53</sup> are brought to the fore, evokes Marx’s observation in a letter to his chauvinist friend Dr Kugelmann, that ‘[s]ocial progress can be measured exactly by the social position of the fair sex (the ugly ones included)’ (Marx [1936] 1941, 83). The director’s concern for the social position of a Yugoslav woman is commendable, but perhaps it should have also included the more rounded portrayals of those less endowed with outer beauty or youth, such as the depicted peasant women.

Also, Jugoslava’s represented gang rape is not addressed as a grave sexual violence, because the male peasants who raped her are not penalised at all for it, just as her three comrades do not face any consequences for her murder. Regardless of the director’s actual allegorical, or critical intent to side with the brutalised woman, the fact that the film features unpunished represented female murder and rape is rather problematic or, to say the least, ambivalent, in light of severe physical and sexual violence towards women in real life world-wide, of which the latter is recently confronted in the #MeToo movement. Contrary to his debatable stance towards Jugoslava’s rape and death, the director simultaneously portrayed his heroine as a strong-minded, independent, modern woman. The film testifies about an ambivalent state of gender power relations, which affects how the spectators view the condition of women in SFR Yugoslavia, the extent of the sexual liberation movement of the 60s, and the representation of the female body on screen. Even though it is uplifting to watch such an indomitable lead female character such as Žilnik’s heroine (which is rare in Yugoslav *New Film*), it is difficult to observe her downfall and demise that strip her of agency. In conclusion, although Žilnik’s Jugoslava is one of the most powerful heroines created in Yugoslav *New Film*, by meeting a grim end, she is ultimately disempowered by the director, who was, thus, discursively simultaneously complicit and critical of depicted patriarchal, violent oppression of women.

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<sup>52</sup> Own translation.

<sup>53</sup> Beautiful.

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## **Chapter 6. Treacherous Women: Representation of Female Characters as Traitors of the Nation in Partisan-themed Yugoslav New Films**

### **Contextualisation**

This piece, published as a book chapter, emanated from my presentation at The Third International Conference on Balkan Cinema titled *The Great War(s): Our Story*, which took place in Bucharest, Romania in 2018. Such a fruitful event, attended by many experts on Balkan cinema, was eventually crowned with a publication of an edited book *Balkan Cinema and the Great Wars: Our Story*, featuring the book chapter that I wrote. My chapter received the designation of “honorable mention” for the 2021 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Central/East/South European Cinemas Outstanding Essay Award competition.

Chronologically, this was the second empirical article I wrote during my PhD studies. However, this piece should be regarded as a continuation of the investigation into the issue of why female characters are penalized for their active sexuality and emancipation, which is introduced in the previous chapter, Chapter 5. The first research question grapples with this issue. Both Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 feature violent deaths of sexually liberated female characters. Furthermore, in contrast to the exploration of the trope of a violated woman as an allegorical embodiment of a violated nation or its stratum, stressed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, Chapter 6 probes into the representations of women as traitors of nation. In the case of Partisan-themed films in the case study, female treachery is twofold. It comes as a sexual betrayal undertaken by a civilian woman due to consorting with an enemy soldier during the wartime, or as an ideological one by a Partisan woman, due to her betrayal under torture by the enemy soldiers. Female treachery is followed with their imminent executions, which ultimately polices women into obedience by death. This is the essence of my third research question. The article pays particular attention to real-life legacy of Partisan women, who showed utmost bravery during the Second World War, and were anything but traitors.

### **Reference**

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## **Abstract**

This article explores Yugoslav *novi film* (New Film, 1961–1972) representations of female characters that did not conform to the norms of chastity or patriotism imposed on women during the Second World War. Those gender norms are visible in films that thematically dealt with the Partisan struggle. Partisan-themed films tackled the sensitive task of invoking the sacred memory of the Partisan efforts for liberation of the Yugoslav nation, which was occupied by Germans and their allies with the help of domestic collaborationists. Even though those Yugoslav New Film wartime female characters were represented as nuanced, erroneous and therefore human, it was at the expense of their empowerment. Three Yugoslav New Films are selected for formal analysis via close readings from a critical film feminist perspective: *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965), *Delije/Tough Guys* (Miodrag “Mića” Popović, 1968) and *Jutro/Morning* (Mladimir “Puriša” Đorđević, 1967). Although only these films follow the pattern of execution for treachery by Partisans, they are a part of a larger investigation into represented violence towards women in Yugoslav New Film. The article contributes to the Yugoslav film studies field by detecting the recurrence of castigation of female characters for active sexuality. These case studies reveal contradictions in the gender order, in the memory and portrayal of the crucial role that women played in the Second World War. Their enormous efforts were gradually marginalized by representational sexualisation of both Partisan and civilian women, disarmament of female Partisans, and nostalgia for the dissolved bourgeoisie, expressed through the penchant for unattainable higher-class women, who fraternised with enemies.

## **Keywords**

Yugoslav New Films, women, representation, Second World War, Partisan

## Introduction

This study explores Yugoslav *novi film* (New Film) representations of female characters that do not conform to the norms of chastity or patriotism imposed on women during the Second World War. Those gender norms are visible in films that thematically deal with the Partisan struggle, appearing both in Yugoslav New Film and in mainstream cinema. Partisan-themed films tackle the sensitive task of invoking the sacred memory of the Partisan efforts for liberation of the nation, occupied by Germans and their allies with the help of domestic collaborationists.

Linked to social critique and modernism, Yugoslav New Film was a nonhomogeneous movement as it lacked manifesto and coherence, due to thematic and stylistic variety consequential of auteurism (Petrović 1988, 329–49). New Film revolutionized both themes and film language (Liehm and Liehm 1980, 414). It introduced personal films that subjectively portrayed society and people, and served as “open metaphors”, thus instigating viewers to actively interpret them (Liehm and Liehm 1980, 417).

Krelja states that the common denominator for Yugoslav New Film was the representation of a female character, because many films imply that a woman and her moral decline are to blame that this world is not a better place (1979, 409). Yugoslav film authors frequently stressed that evil lurks beneath a woman’s beautiful, often innocent look (Krelja 1979, 410). They found that the representation of a woman in Yugoslav film, “in her fragile organism and feeble spirit perhaps even subconsciously nurtures and carries society’s seed of vice”<sup>54</sup> (Krelja 1979, 414).

Alongside Yugoslav New Film, which according to Dušan Stojanović lasted from 1961 until 1972 (in Petrović 1988, 355), also existed its contemporary cinema that was mainstream in a sense as it retained traditional: form, themes, usage of sound and classical narrative structure with closure. Mainstream cinema often conformed to the trend of high moral and ideological expectations for women during the occupation of the Second World War. Nevertheless, I argue that Yugoslav New Film – the Yugoslav version of wide-spread New Wave movements – occasionally challenged those gender norms by portraying with sympathy morally or ideologically flawed women in the whirlwind of war, instead of idealized ones.

My investigation focuses on these female characters, both Partisan and civilian, who were penalized by death for their transgressions, whilst the directors rendered their punishments unjust and thus channelled the empathy of viewers towards them, therefore de-stigmatizing them.

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<sup>54</sup> All translations from Serbo-Croatian are my own.

However, there was a tendency that could be described, if theory on German cinema is applied, as “the mapping of political treachery on to sexual licentiousness” (Erhart 2018, 106).

The selection criteria for the case studies were: that chosen films had to be classified as the Yugoslav New Film; they had to have a female character, perceived as a traitor for either having a love affair with an occupier (as a civilian), or for divulging information to enemy soldiers under torment (as a captured Partisan); and featured death by execution by Partisans as a closure of the errant woman’s destiny in the narrative.

The three Yugoslav New Films, all directed by male directors and selected due to being similar in themes, are: *Tri/Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965), *Delije/Tough Guys* (Miodrag “Mića” Popović, 1968) and *Jutro/Morning* (Mladomir “Puriša” Đorđević, 1967). They are subjected to formal analysis via close readings from a critical film feminist perspective. Although only these Yugoslav New Films follow the pattern of capital punishment for treachery by Partisans, I interpret their portrayal of females as an indicator that nominally gender-equal society gradually started underplaying the merits of female participation in the Second World War. The films are a part of a larger investigation<sup>55</sup> into represented violence towards women in Yugoslav New Film, where I detect a recurrence of castigation for active sexuality or emancipation.

The seldom featured ideologically corrupt women appear in the mainstream films as totally vilified and often conveniently deprived of life during combat instead of execution; whereas in the Yugoslav New Films directors question the necessity of their trial and execution, or condone them to some extent because they are not judgmental towards their “sin”. Although those Yugoslav New Film wartime female characters were represented as more nuanced, erroneous and therefore human than in mainstream films, it was at the expense of their empowerment, which was, on the contrary, frequently one of the commendable traits of mainstream films (but in the case of ideologically correct women).

This article develops a synthesis between the representation of Yugoslav women in films and the evolution of their role in society. The Second World War marked an enormous, rapid transition in terms of women’s rights – from the Kingdom of Yugoslavia where women were disempowered to communist Yugoslavia where women gained civil and legal equality, such as the right to vote (Jancar-Webster 1999, 86–87). The pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia was permeated with tradition and patriarchy. It was a society where the law was enforced according

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<sup>55</sup> Out of 286 fiction feature films directed by domestic directors in Yugoslavia from 1961 until 1972 (both mainstream and Yugoslav New Films), I watched 269 and estimated that roughly every third or fourth film produced depicts explicit or implicit deaths of women.

to an outdated civil code from 1844, which divested married women from right to govern their own property, and legally equated them with children, the mentally disabled, the vagrants and indebted persons, who were also forbidden from administering their own assets (Emmert 1999, 37). As a consequence of communist agenda, in the new communist Yugoslavia's post war constitution in 1946 gender equality was ratified, justified with the great female efforts in battles during the revolutionary struggle (Ramet 1999, 94). Besides suffrage, women got the opportunity for education and to enter the labour market on higher scale (Vittorelli 2015, 132).

Under the guidance of Josip Broz Tito, the Yugoslav Partisans were perhaps the most resilient antifascist resistance in Europe, with "a degree of female military involvement unprecedented and unrepeated in the region" (Batinić 2015, 2–3). During the liberation struggle, two million women had contributed to the Yugoslav Partisan movement, out of which an estimated 282,000 perished in concentration camps, and around 100,000 fought in the Partisan army, of whom 25,000 gave their lives and 40,000 suffered injuries in battle (Jancar-Webster 1999, 69–70). Women were not drafted but joined the liberation struggle voluntarily (Vittorelli 2015, 126). They played important historical roles in the war, such as: nurses tending wounded comrades, educators of both civilians and soldiers, suppliers with food and clothing, and soldiers (Kirn 2015, 207). Filipović emphasizes that the war would have never been won without Partisan women (as cited in Bogojević 2013, 214–15).

However, a female fighter, who wears uniform, carries weapons, and is thus ready to take someone's life in the war for her ideological beliefs, challenges gender norms because it "contradicts conventional images of femininity" (Vittorelli 2015, 117). Due to misogynistic enemy propaganda during the war, trying to discredit the extraordinary presence of female Partisans in military by inventing stories about their alleged promiscuity, and since the most of the male Partisan recruits were patriarchal peasants, holding a traditional outlook on women's chastity, female Partisans were expected to be sexually ascetic (Batinić 2015, 169). Throughout the occupation, civilian women were also expected to support the struggle, be chaste or at least not to mingle with the enemy. It was due to a tendency present even nowadays in former Yugoslav territories, intended to "discourage sexual activity outside of proscribed norms" (Mostov 1999, 100). Thus, having in mind the traditional standards of moral impeccability imposed on actual female Partisans and civilian women, it is not surprising that female characters would seldom transgress societal boundaries. In numerous Yugoslav films a woman appears as "object of environment, family, prejudices, society, class, nation" (Boglić 1980, 123).

According to the data by film critic Čolić (1984), I estimate there were more than 200

Partisan war films in whole history of Yugoslav cinema<sup>56</sup>. Munitić assesses that during entire Yugoslav production there were 250 Partisan themed feature fiction films (2005, 264). Although Partisan films are often referred to as a homogenous genre, Stanković (2015, 246) contends they are stylistically diverse and only feature a common topic – the Partisans and their struggle for liberation of Yugoslav peoples; therefore a distinction should be made between Yugoslav Partisan films in general and Partisan epic spectacles, which are more stylistically unified.

The cinematic portrayal of a Partisan woman in mainstream film (especially earlier) “was an image that stressed heroism and sacrifice” (Batinić 2015, 231). Inspired by the real-life participation of female Partisans in the Second World War, Partisan war film “often featured noble female soldiers who fought valiantly side by side with their compatriots and contributed to the revolutionary struggle” (De Cuir 2012, 414). Reflecting the Communist agenda, represented female Partisans were dedicated “to social justice and gender equality” (Wurm 2015, 190). In addition, they were always treated in respectful manner by their war comrades (De Cuir 2012, 414). Although in mainstream Partisan film (especially earlier) Partisan heroines were asexual, idealized symbols of suffering Yugoslav nation and its martyrdom, their representations were of empowered, brave, active women.

Yugoslav New Film dealt with the Partisan theme in a way that often had a critical approach to the history of the war and offered nuanced or flawed individual characters. On the other hand, Partisan-themed mainstream films glorified the victorious struggle of Yugoslav peoples, portrayed as a collective rather than individuals, fighting against all odds – enemies superior in numbers and supplies. However, this does not necessarily mean that in mainstream cinema there were no films that also took a critical stance and relinquished the binary stereotyping of villains versus heroes (Jovanović 2015, 295). Since the breakup of Yugoslavia there is a revisionist tendency amongst scholars to reduce the multitude of art dealing with Partisan topic to mere state art and to belittle the historic significance of the Partisan movement portrayed in arts in general, namely in film (Jakiša 2015, 11). It is not my intention to depreciate the crucial role of Partisans in the liberation of the Yugoslav people, nor to underplay the importance of Partisan films. Nevertheless, I criticize the remnants of patriarchy (in socialist society that ratified gender equality), which caused a societal trend of diminishing and forgetting the contributions of women in the war, without whose decisive participation it would not have been won. The trend corresponded to sporadic, ambivalent, objectified and disarmed portrayals of treacherous female characters, best exemplified in Yugoslav New Film case studies. Since in

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<sup>56</sup> From 1961 until 1972, I approximate there were 77 Partisan-themed feature fiction films (both Yugoslav New Film and mainstream) directed by Yugoslav directors.

the representational norms of behaviour and patriotism were breached, they quickly exposed, but also reinforced the labelling of female characters as the binary opposite of the symbol of the nation – traitors of the nation. The perception of women as embodiments of the nation and its reproducers, expected to provide “pure” lineage, results in tendency to place their bodies and sexuality under control, just as borders and territories (Iveković 2000, 13). In the “New Film”, fallible depictions were convincing because they stood for a human being instead of myth, but the verisimilitude was at the expense of female empowerment and subjectivity.

### **Gaze, Love, Duty**

In a ground-breaking article for film feminism, Mulvey stressed that the male gaze pointed at female characters is threefold: as seen by a male character within a film diegesis, through a viewfinder of camera by a cameraman and viewed by male spectator (1989, 25). She corrected herself later by noting that the “masculinization” of the spectators occurs irrespective of their sex (Mulvey 1989, 29). Nevertheless, Mulvey’s theory becomes problematic in regard to female spectatorship, especially lesbian (White 2007, 131–32). It excludes the variety of spectatorships and their polysemic interpretations, for instance based on level of education, gender, sexual preference, race, age, class and nationality (see Bergstrom and Doane 1989, 9–10). Therefore, I do not agree with Mulvey’s third point because it renders the spectators passive and generalized. However, I do concur with her two arguments on the pervasiveness of the male gaze by male protagonists and in cameramen’s shots, tailored for viewing by male, white, heterosexual audiences. Hence, I seek for the moments of women’s objectification or subversion, such as the return of the gaze by the female character in *Three*.

The film *Three* is named after the three stories which make up the narrative and therefore has an episodic structure. In each of them the main character Miloš Bojanić (Velimir “Bata” Živojinović) witnesses an unjust death. The first story takes place at the very beginning of the Second World War, when Miloš, a student at the time, saw an execution of an innocent man by the military of Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which was in state of chaos because the country was attacked by German forces. The second story takes place during the war, when Miloš is forced to eyewitness the gruesome murder of his Partisan comrade by the Germans, without being able to help him, because he would have been killed himself if he had tried. The third story features an implicit, off screen execution of a girl (Senka Petrović), who was sentenced to death by the Partisans at the end of the war for having a relationship with a man from the Gestapo. The girl is first shown when brought together with other captives into a yard, as observed by the Partisan



Miloš. The male protagonist's gaze could have twofold meaning: it conveys the message that he likes the girl, but also eventually underlines his status of a bystander by highlighting his lack of agency, present as a leitmotif throughout the film.

Ostrowska's theory regarding women in Polish Cinema states that patriarchal dominance can be implied by the *mise-en-scène*, if a male character is physically positioned above the female character, visually overpowering her (2006, 58). The fact that in *Three the Partisan* Miloš is observing the girl from the window located up, in the first-storey of the house, while the girl is down in the yard, enhances the impression of power imbalance between them: she is a captive and his word could change her destiny. The camera imitates the look of the male protagonist in the position of power. It scrutinizes the girl but also the other male captives. Nevertheless, the gaze of the male protagonist is different when it is directed towards the girl because she is singled out multiple times in closer shots. The camera's/male protagonist's gaze examines her portrait – the only visual framing of fragmented human figure which is “generally regarded as an adequate substitute of bodily part for whole” (Kuhn 1992, 36).

The girl returns the gaze to Miloš and they return each other's gaze. Besides Miloš', the camera imitates her gaze as well, panning over the obstacles in the foreground and mimicking the girl's movement, while it/she keeps Miloš' face in close-up as the focus of attention. Their point-of-view shots are, therefore, “following shots”. Thus, the camera constantly reframes shot composition in order to keep up with the movement of characters, which consequentially stay onscreen. In addition, the point-of-view shots correspond to the place where the actors are located in diegetic space. Miloš is up, so accordingly the shots of the girl are made from a high angle as subjectively seen by him, whereas the girl is down, hence her point-of-view shots of Miloš are filmed from a low angle. When the girl stops moving, the following shot of her stops and becomes static, framing her face in a close-up through the spokes of a wooden wheel, located in the foreground. A Partisan man approaches a well and rotates the wooden wheel, which serves for pulling out a bucket filled with water. The girl is shown again in a creatively composed medium close-up shot, enriched by the movement of the spokes in the foreground, which are out of focus, while her face is sharp in the background, as subjectively seen by Miloš from the window, whilst she gazes back at him (Figure 11). Close-ups are shots that leave the strongest emotional impact upon viewing and build proximity of the spectator to the character.



Figure 11. Senka Petrović in *Three* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1965).

Later, Miloš's point-of-view shots of the girl gradate from investigative to slightly erotic. They start with her portrait in a close-up, followed with Bresson-like details of her hands adorned with a ring, while the camera flows over her body parts as the hands move. The main protagonist's subjective shots culminate with a big close-up of the girl in profile, then transformed into a tilt that glides down across her body. It stops on a lustful detail shot of her short skirt and barren legs, which as "an abstracted bodily part other than the face may be regarded as an expropriation of the subject's individuality" (Kuhn 1992, 37). However, if the "voyeur's pleasure depends on the object of this look being unable to see him" (Kuhn 1992, 28), the captive girl is not a typical object of the gaze since she returns the look to Miloš. Her look has agency. It pleads and implores Miloš to help her. Although the girl's point-of-view shots are significantly outnumbered by the male hero's and do not have sexual connotation like his, still director Petrović gave her fleeting agency through the power to return the gaze – a form of empowerment that will unfortunately be annulled with her death.

Further situations in which the female gaze is granted temporary agency are to be found in the "New Films" *Tough Guys* and *Morning*. *Tough Guys* examines the expendability of Partisan veterans in the wake of the war, unable to adjust to demobilization. In addition, it

tackles ethically questionable punishments of Prisoners of War (POW), traitors and collaborators, which is a theme in common with *Morning*. The title of *Morning* signifies the last day of war and the first dawn of peace, ambivalent and bitter as the dawn in *Popiół i diament/Ashes and Diamonds*<sup>57</sup> (Andrzej Wajda, 1958).

In all three case study films, male voyeurism is present. Similar to Miloš's, in *Tough Guys* in a jail sequence it is exhibited by a voyeuristic guard peeking through an ajar door. His object of interest is an imprisoned civilian girl (Zlata Numanagić), who fraternized with an enemy (as the captive girl from *Three*). She makes advances on Partisan Gvozden (Danilo "Bata" Stojković), after his brother Isidor (Jovan "Burduš" Janićjević) escorted out a female Partisan (Ljerka Draženović), suffering of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), who the brothers had put a stop to beating the imprisoned girl. Perhaps out of gratitude, or in a futile attempt to save her own life, the imprisoned girl touches gently the muzzle of Gvozden's rifle, but he pulls it back towards himself, feeling uncomfortable due to probably being attracted to her. If Kaplan's theory on phallic symbolism of armaments in *film noir* is applied, the weapon could be interpreted as a phallus, which will impose control on the temptress by murdering her (1990, 6), considering that eventually Gvozden will execute the female prisoner with it.

Contrary to Miloš's voyeurism in *Three*, which transforms into exchange of looks, in *Tough Guys* the imprisoned girl does not even acknowledge that she is observed by the guard nor return his gaze, but instead looks intently at Gvozden, who tries to avoid her gaze. Also, the framing is different because as opposed to showing the close-up of the peeping subject followed with his point-of-view shot of the female captive, which would be director Petrović's pattern, Popović encompasses all three actors in a multiplane shot. Hence, the guard peeks through the half-open door in the background, framed in a medium long shot, whereas the imprisoned girl is shown en face in a close-up in the foreground, together with Gvozden who is in profile (Figure 12). The imprisoned girl asks Gvozden whether he will be the one who will execute her and puts the right hand on his chin. After that, in a medium close-up two-shot from profile, the imprisoned girl kisses Gvozden. This is cut to Gvozden's close-up over the girl's shoulder, in which he pushes her away when he sees something. In the next shot, it is revealed that he saw his brother Isidor, who entered the cell, while the guard remained at the door, peeking. Therefore, the number of voyeurs doubled. Gvozden drinks some water Isidor brought for the female prisoner, shoves Isidor out and leaves completely confused. The erotic drives she instigates, as in *film noir*, will eventually "be found guilty and punished" (Johnston 2007, 93).

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<sup>57</sup> As kindly pointed out to me by Dr Alex Forbes.



Figure 12. Voyeurism in *Tough Guys* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968).

Likewise, Partisan General Milan Prekić (Ljubivoje “Ljuba” Tadić) in *Morning* gives direct order for hasty execution of his former lover Partisan Alexandra (Milena Dravić), with words: “Peace is starting tomorrow. Courts, oaths, contracts... Climate health resorts, promotions... and in rare occasions, shootings.” Director Đorđević underscores Alexandra’s double inconsistency in matters of moral: parallel relationships she had with general Prekić and Partisan Mali (Ljubiša Samardžić) as a sexual betrayal, followed by her treachery and torture by Germans (Krelja 1979, 409).

The first encounter with Alexandra, sentenced to death for treason, is a voyeuristic shot of her from outside, through a rectangular peephole in the door, visible in the foreground as a frame, whilst she is sitting inside her death row cell in the background. It appears as if Alexandra looks into the camera and returns the gaze to us, the viewers, because the gaze is at first not connected to any specific character, whereas the composition suggests it is a point-of-view shot. Thus, the director creates a direct link between spectators as voyeurs (including himself) and the heroine. However, it is afterwards implied that the gaze belongs to Mali, Alexandra’s former lover who came to visit her in prison. In addition, at the very end of the sequence, after Mali escorted Alexandra from a prison yard back to the jail cell, there is a close-up shot of him in a

profile, as he lifts a lid in order to look at her through the peephole inside the wooden door. In the next shot, his subjective shot, a detail of Alexandra's face is shown, framed within a rectangle of the door peephole as an extreme close-up, only including her nose and eyes (Figure 13). Again, it seems that Alexandra returns the gaze to us, but this time via Mali as a proxy.



Figure 13. Milena Dravić in *Morning* (Puriša Đorđević, 1967).

The music starts – *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. It builds a sound bridge between the shot of Alexandra through the peephole, with a following scene in which a German POW meticulously and thoroughly, as shown in many details, puts on his German military uniform. The music continues onto the next scene in which Alexandra is shown in a prison hallway, about to be taken for the execution. Thus, the two sound bridges between images – one at the beginning and one at the end of the scene with the German POW's preparations – both associate Alexandra and the German POW, as a hint, a premonition that he will be the one who will execute her.

Boglič criticises that because Đorđević's heroine is convicted and executed, she pays a debt to her female nature, which in director's view is not intended for war after all (1980, 123). Similarly, Krelja lambastes Đorđević's portrayal of Alexandra, where it could be inferred that the contact of horrible war mechanism with allegedly fragile female body and soul faces woman with numerous temptations (1979, 409). In all three case-study films the female gaze temporarily

empowers captive women, but eventually becomes expression of powerlessness, due to their untimely deaths.

### **Motifs of Love and Death<sup>58</sup>**

In *Three*, a peasant woman, in whose home Miloš is temporarily hosted, tries to influence him to save the captive girl, especially by saying: “She is young, she will change”. Also, she requests his permission to take some melon to the girl, stressing that “Melon is a mild fruit”, which thus becomes a symbol of clemency, humanity and a (false) hope for the captive girl’s pardon. The melon in this scene could be interpreted as a feminine force, often juxtaposed here within shots to a typewriter, a symbol of masculine bureaucracy and rigid discipline. When earlier the peasant woman brought the melon to Miloš’s room, on the way in she accidentally bumped with it into a typewriter, carried by a partisan on the way out to conduct an inquest of the captives from the yard, decisive for their fates. In his second volume of memoirs, director Petrović underlined that in his films metaphorical meaning can sometimes be conveyed even better with some object than with the words or face of the actor (1988, 21). When the Partisan, after finishing the inquest, returns the typewriter he borrowed for the hearing, he uses it to push the melon on the table, signifying that bureaucracy has no mercy.

Miloš questions the Partisan about the captive girl, who responds that he overheard the guards saying: “She is a female, she will get away with it”. The Partisan states that leniency for those reasons is the worst. The captive girl’s life, therefore, cannot be spared because he wants to set an example, since female body, as Iveković notes, which figuratively stands for borders and territories, is policed (2000, 13). Although struck with the girl’s impending death, Miloš does not try to reason with his comrade, nor says anything at all on her behalf. It is ambiguous whether he fails to advocate for her due to becoming hardened over the years and getting accustomed to the role of bystander, so even when being in the position of power to actually change the course of events and help the girl, Miloš does not act upon it. Or he did not want to compromise his ideological standpoint for a fallen girl regarded as a traitor and an enemy “whore”. Regardless of the motives that hindered him from intervening, it appears that the above-mentioned peasant woman had more enthusiasm to save the girl than Miloš.

After the conversation between Miloš and the Partisan is finished, the Partisan exits the room and Miloš goes to the window. An instant before the girl is taken away, she is shown in a

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<sup>58</sup> See Bogdanović (as cited in Petrović 1988, 21).

medium close-up, pleadingly looking at Miloš, as seen by him from the window. When it becomes clear to her that she will be executed with other prisoners, because a guard grabs her by the shoulder, she tries to escape, upsetting a flock of domestic birds. The trepidation of the victim is paralleled to the fluttering of the birds' wings. There is a low angle shot of geese in the sky flying above, underscored with their flapping and honking, intensifying the disquietude and imminence of the girl's apprehension. Eventually, she is cornered by the guards next to a wall in a medium long shot, which is then cut to a close-up where she is captured by them. These are all Miloš's point-of-view shots, merged in fast editing. Afterwards Miloš is shown in a close-up, gazing with lament. In an extreme long shot, as seen by him, the captives, including the girl, are escorted by the guards out of the courtyard. Amplifying the sadness of their imminent execution, a non-diegetic song with mournful female voice starts, also previously featured in the opening credits sequence of the film. That long take lingers empty after the prisoners are gone. However, then Miloš unexpectedly appears in the same shot, which transforms his subjective point-of-view shot into objective, possibly suggesting the ancient belief in fate, decided by a higherpower, implying that destiny is out of Miloš's hands. The captives' execution is implicit and not shown, nor heard.

In the yard, Miloš passes by melons, reminiscent of the girl who was given some to eat by the peasant woman. Moments after in the street, he encounters a wedding procession consisted of horse-drawn wagons. The bride and the groom are riding on one of them, pulled by adorned horses. The lamenting non-diegetic tune is replaced with a diegetic cheerful melody. The juxtaposition of life and death – birth of one love shown with the wedding, and demise of another with the implicit girl's execution – accentuates the sensation of irreversible loss, serving rather as a grievance over dead than a celebration of the living. This counterpoint turns full circle with the beginning of this segment (the third omnibus story in the film), when in the house where Miloš was hosted he was observing family portraits of a peasant woman and a man photographed together, possibly at different ages and various phases of their marriage. The director hints at Miloš's desire for finding a significant other, emphasized by his reflection on the glass surface of a framed photograph, superimposed in-between the couple. Further, it is underlined with the camera zoom onto his reflection in a close-up, combined with rack focus that blurs the couple, whilst sharpening Miloš, as if it was an act of his own introspective yearning for a partner.

The impression lingers that by failing to act upon the occasion with the captive girl and save her from execution, Miloš lost his only opportunity to connect with any woman. As if he acquiesced to the role of an eternal passive observer, reminiscent of a woman on a window

whom recurs during the first omnibus story, signifying a silent witness of another unjust execution. Ultimately, the third story is not about the girl; it is about the male hero. She is a nameless secondary character completely deprived of speech, in the service of director Petrović, used as one of three reference points of Miloš's tribulation, impotence and temptation.

Unlike the captive girl's execution that is implicit, Alexandra's in *Morning* is explicit and carried out by the German POW. During Mali's previously mentioned visit to her in jail, Alexandra confides to him about feeling ashamed to be killed by her own people. She laments that death at the hands of the Germans would be wonderful instead, not knowing that Mali will find a compromise solution between love and duty via proxy of the German POW. Mali intended to at least make her death easier, since as a mere lieutenant and with no intention of disobeying orders, he could not spare her life.

Moments before death, Alexandra is shown on a misty countryside road, as a lonely figure running towards the camera, underscored with instrumental music that amplifies the gravity and desolation of the situation. The German POW suddenly appears as well, fully dressed-up in military uniform and filmed from the back as he goes towards her. In a long shot, Alexandra walks towards him, who is off-screen, while the rays of morning light illuminate her in an angelic fashion, especially when she puts her hands together as if in a prayer and utters twice: "It is good". The German POW cocks and aims the rifle. As Alexandra continues forward enveloped in morning mist, from medium long shot until medium close-up, once more she puts her hands as if in prayer, again repeating twice: "It is good". Underscoring religious motif by reiterating it, director Đorđević subverts the expected image of an atheistic, communist Partisan. The rifle shot is heard and Alexandra falls downwards, out of the frame, which lingers empty, lit with angelic ray of light. The German POW shoots once more in a close-up. Afterwards in a long shot he signals with his hand to somebody off-screen, signifying that the execution is finished. Subsequently, an extreme long shot of a Partisan girl (Neda Arnerić) and Mali is given, in which the German also enters with his back to the camera and soon falls down, shot by Mali. Next, an extreme long shot of Alexandra's prostrated dead body in a bucolic landscape is shown. After that, a Partisan girl and Mali are depicted in a two-shot close-up. The Partisan girl is there to make sure on behalf of the general, with whom Alexandra had an affair in the past, that the execution is followed through.

This is cut to an extreme long shot, in which the girl and Mali are shown from back standing in the foreground, whilst in the background a woman accompanied with a child walks in the direction of the camera, carrying a huge framed picture of her family members, killed in war. She recurs in few places in the film and possibly carries the picture in order to find out how



her loved ones met their grim end by the enemy and where their remains are. The woman and the child pass by the bodies of Alexandra and German POW. In this shot there is also a nearly morning sun, rendering the title of the film *Morning* very acerbic because it signifies the beginning of the first day of peace, which starts on a tragic note. Furthermore, the film ends with an extreme long shot of the woman and child, with their back to the camera, walking away in an unilluminated background, whilst the foreground is aglow with a morning ray of light. Although there are definitely Partisan films with optimistic horizon finales, as Jovanović contends, there are also some that stand for “the extended sequence soaked in pain and loss” (2015, 300). Contrapuntal to endings where characters go optimistically towards the horizon in spite the predicaments they had encountered, the conclusion of *Morning* leaves a very bitter feeling about the revolution and People’s Liberation Struggle.

In the execution scene of *Tough Guys*, director Popović, who was a painter, not only applied the rules of painting but sometimes also subverted them. In an extreme long shot of a quite unusual composition, because the horizon line is placed at the very bottom of the frame, the Partisan brothers and the female prisoner are shown in the exterior. Landscape and the figures take approximately one fifth of the shot down, whilst the upper part of the shot is occupied by the vast sky. Thus, Popović amended the rule of thirds, in Krages’ view a compositional guideline stating that main elements of the composition should be situated where the imaginary lines, which separate a picture into thirds, both horizontally and vertically, intersect (2005, 9). Therefore, the skies appear dominant and oppressive, taking approximately four fifths in the upper part of the frame. Also, the human figures seem miniscule and insect-like at the very bottom, which suggests their insignificance. They are advancing on a slope slightly tilted downwards, with a vanishing point outside of the frame, hinting the young female prisoner’s descent into an abyss of demise (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Insect-like figures in *Tough Guys* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968).

In the next shot, also compositionally unbalanced, the camera tracks the girl as she walks with her back turned, positioned rightwards in the medium close-up, as seen from Isidor's and Gvozden's point-of-view. Then, the brothers are shown together in a medium shot, both holding machine guns and facing the camera. As the click of the machine gun being cocked is heard, the camera tracks forward, until it stops with the brothers in close-up. The back of the girl is shown again, underscored with the sound of rifle-firing as she falls downwards, out of the frame. The audible rifle-firing continues onto the next scene even after visual cut, thus creating a sound bridge with the en face medium-long shot of an older woman Lepša<sup>59</sup> (Mira Stupica), holding her hands on the chest, as if she is having a heartache. The sound bridge and the cut from the shot of the executed girl onto Lepša suggest a connection between the two females. Is Lepša the executed girl's mother?

In the following scene, taking place on a train bridge, Lepša pleads Isidor and Gvozden in order to find out anything about her imprisoned daughter Milica, but to no avail as they ignore her. Throughout the film it remains ambiguous whether there are two different imprisoned girls or they are the same girl, because the executed girl's name is never mentioned, whilst Lepša's

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<sup>59</sup> "More beautiful".

daughter Milica is never shown in the film and the reasons why she was arrested are not clear. Regardless of their identity, presumably the director implies that the arrests of young girls were not an isolated case in the wake of Second World War. Motifs of death substitute love, amplifying the precariousness of human existence in wartimes.

### **Treachery**

Nevertheless, not all women in *Tough Guys* are penalized for the same transgression. Just like the above-mentioned girls, a middle-aged drunken woman also had an affair with a German soldier but does not face repercussions for it. Her character is featured only in a sequence where she is juxtaposed to the female Partisan who is suffering a PTSD attack, thus subverting the stereotype of an indomitable Partisan female fighter, often depicted in the mainstream Partisan cinema. During her seizure, she shouts while prostrated on the pavement on the street, encircled by a group of people whom are trying to help her.

The drunken woman separates from the group and seizes Isidor and Gvozden to have a drink together, whilst they pass by their screaming female Partisan comrade, pretending they do not know her. Isidor even afterwards chauvinistically comments about the woman's PTSD attack: "As if it is not known where the female nerves are", which could be regarded as unfair because later in the film it is shown in her flashback how she selflessly helped wounded Isidor during a battle and possibly saved his life. The female Partisan's off-screen screams interrupt a casual beer garden conversation, in which the drunken woman hints to the brothers that she was with a German soldier and that she wonders where he is.

Similarly, another juxtaposition of two women – the one who fought with the Germans and the one who fraternized with them – occurs in a previously mentioned scene in the prison cell, when the female Partisan suffering from PTSD beats the imprisoned girl. She slaps her and pulls her hair, accompanied with a shower of insults: "German whore", "fascist whore" and "enemy whore", under the gaze of a prison guard. Isidor and Gvozden manage to separate the women, but the female Partisan in a fit of rage continues unabated. She screams at the imprisoned girl: "Let me shoot her in the chest! If she knew how the bullets were flying over our heads, while we were running at bunkers and wire!"

Thus, on two occasions the PTSD suffering female Partisan is contrasted to women who were not in combat, but instead were having relations with the enemy. However, one of them – the imprisoned girl – is sentenced to death, while the other one – the drunken woman, who has

committed the same “crime”, is not castigated at all. The inconsistency underlines the unfairness and arbitrariness of the self-righteous punishment in the new, post-war Yugoslavia.

In a similar vein, the captive girl from the film *Three* had a love affair with Gestapo Mayor Stern, a man of German origin (Volksdeutsche), who fought for German side in the Second World War. She was with him when captured by the Partisans. Consequentially, it was sufficient proof for the Partisans to try her for treason and execute her, foregrounding, as Ranković would have it, “a gap between love and moral cruelty of revolutionary period” (1982: 257). Revolutionary asceticism, imposed as war necessity, often identified sexuality with immorality (Ranković 1982, 254). The execution in the film *Three* is a severe castigation of a woman, whose transgression was an untimely decision to be involved with a man fighting for the wrong side, which resulted in the perception of her as a traitor of the nation and German whore.

Contrary to the previous examples from Yugoslav New Film, in the Partisan mainstream cinema, in a more frequent and ideologically acceptable pattern, Yugoslav women would often not be with a foreign enemy or domestic collaborationist out of their own volition. On the contrary, female characters were either wrongly suspected to be associated with the occupier, or sexually assaulted by the enemy. Although mostly faultless, they would still end up dead in the narrative. Demise served for erasure of shame, or as preventive measure for any unthinkable possible pregnancy with the enemy soldier, for the reason that women “who have children with members of other nations become potential enemies of the nation, traitors to it, collaborators in its death” (Mostov 1999, 91). The narratives like this operate as cautionary tales for women never to side with any enemy that might threaten the Yugoslav nation in the future. They convey the message that the national wellbeing is above that of the individual.

Female characters are not only perceived as traitors of the Yugoslav nation when they mingle with the enemy, but also when they show signs of weaknesses as Partisan soldiers. In *Morning*, when Mali goes for a walk with Alexandra in the prison yard, she opens up to him how soldiers raped her in a German concentration camp after being captured as a Partisan courier, how they set dogs on her and beat her. Consequentially, under duress she betrayed the names of her Partisan comrades, but only the ones that were killed before, thinking it could not harm them anymore since they were already deceased, whereas she could save herself. Alas, the Germans burned their homes and put the families in concentration camps.

If director Đorđević’s intent was to offer another view on the liberation struggle, I question his choice to subvert the official representation of resolute courage with an image of female Partisan’s cowardice. In real life, on the contrary, Partisan women fought “as bravely as

men” (Jancar-Webster 1999, 67). They were sometimes even faced with discrimination by their male comrades for being allowed to be in a masculine domain – the military – so they had to fight not only enemy but those prejudices as well by showing indomitable bravery (Sklevicky 1996, 40). Gender discrimination during the war is seldom mentioned in Partisan women’s testimonies. Even if they did experience bias, women nonetheless testified that the camaraderie they experienced during their participation in the Second World War was empowering, and gave them a sense of higher purpose (Batinić 2015: 144). Why did not Đorđević at least give Alexandra her male counterpart – male Partisan traitor, such as, for instance, in *Izdajnik/The Traitor* (Vojislav “Kokan” Rakonjac, 1964) where a resistance member breaks under torture and becomes an enemy informer?

### **Disarmament**

Besides treachery, there was another simultaneous process that affected the portrayal and memory of female Partisan – disarmament, by stripping the Partisan woman of her warrior status. The contradictions in relation to the image of the female Partisan indicate not only ambivalences towards armed female participation in the liberation struggle, which enabled amendments of gender order in post-war socialist Yugoslavia, but also the limitations of those amendments (Vittorelli 2015, 132).

The gender order in power appeared intimidated “by images of armed, fighting, firing and (potentially) killing women” (Vittorelli 2015, 118), which can be inferred due to the change of attitude in two of Josip Broz Tito’s public addresses that took place seventeen years apart. The first public address in question took place in 1942 at the First Conference of the Antifascist Front of Women (AFW) during all-out war, where Tito described women as equal to men in fighting with guns for the liberation (Vittorelli 2015, 118). AFW was a communist women’s organization created by the leadership of Communist Party of Yugoslavia in order to mobilize Yugoslav women into an organized resistance network of rear support and supply for the Partisans (Jancar-Webster 1999, 75). In addition, it aimed to emancipate women into political subjects, integrate them as equals into the People’s Liberation Struggle against the occupier and prepare them for the future socialist society that they were building (Sklevicky 1996, 26). Also, one of AFW’s tasks was to reform treacherous civilian women, who had “strayed” as mistresses of the enemy, by giving them an opportunity of redemption through hard work and even accepting the most dedicated ones as AFW members (Sklevicky 1996, 44). Although AFW was

conceived as an instrument of the Party during the war, afterwards it gradually became autonomous and dedicated to women's issues. Ultimately, it was condemned by its creator, accused of western influenced bourgeois "feminism", reorganized, stripped of independence and eventually disbanded, after twelve years of existence (Batinić 2015, 15; emphasis original). AFW was dismantled in 1953 with only slight opposition from women (Jambrešić Kirin 2004, 130).

Tito's second statement was his interview in 1959 for *Žena danas (Woman Today)* magazine, where compared to the above-mentioned address, he substituted "weapons" utilized by Partisan women during the war with their "humanity" towards the injured, and the female warrior with the female nurse (Vittorelli 2015, 118–19). Correspondingly, cinematic representation of the female Partisan during combat oscillates between simultaneously performing both tasks, of the fighter and medic, apparently nullifying the gap between the woman warrior ready to take life for her ideals and the traditionally acceptable woman who nurtures, saves or extends lives instead of taking them (Vittorelli 2015, 131). However, the solo duty of nurse is the more conventional and prevalent representation in Yugoslav Partisan film because it is tamer than female fighter (Wurm 2015, 190).

In addition, often "the women fighters are being equipped with a weapon, but we don't see them use it" (Wurm 2015, 190). This corresponds to the general postwar trend of disarmament of women, since female Partisans were demobilized shortly after the war ended, and women were not included in draft for the Yugoslav army (Batinić 2015, 69). By disarmament, the female Partisan was rendered harmless because, as Vittorelli contends, for both enemies and comrades, a woman carrying weapons "embodies self-determined and offensive female sexuality" (2015, 126). This is in line with, as Jovanović notes, "re-patriarchalization or re-masculinization" of the Yugoslav society, starting from the 1950s, permeated with dominance of masculine figures (2014, 10). In addition, in Tito's 1959 interview, he noted that the responsibility for many women being relegated back to the domesticity (and thus double-burdened besides employment) also lies in husbands whom tell their spouses: "You gave enough during the war, and now, after the war, you should assume the place that belongs to women" (as cited in Jovanović 2014, 8). Correspondingly, cinematic representations of female characters transformed from Partisans as revolutionary subjects into women-objects in more traditional female roles, which could be linked to the changes under way in Yugoslavian society (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 99).

Real-life female Partisans were made vulnerable by being relegated back to the place of ordinary women, dispossessed of armaments and their soldier role (Slapšak 2001, 209), which

is exemplified in *Tough Guys* with the discharge of the female Partisan character from the Partisan army. It underlines the disposability of veteran Partisan soldiers, on whom the war left grave consequences and who cannot find their place in the society. When Gvozden, who was also demobilized, sees the female Partisan at the train station in civilian clothing, with a peasant scarf around her hair, eating a piece of dry meat with a knife in an unladylike manner, he laughs. She tries to hug him while calling him “brother and comrade”, but he pushes her away and goes to find Isidor. After he leaves, she is shown crying in an extreme close-up, which is cut to an enormous banner on a building with a slogan that reads “Socialism is the youth of the world”. The juxtaposition of those two shots could be interpreted as director’s ironic comment on female Partisan’s youth spent in battle and her behavioural “masculinization”, with the result that in the aftermath of the war she is completely disregarded as feminine by her comrades. Moments after, she will stop crying and join in a traditional “snake dance” with other people from the station. Despite the fact that tears are usually linked with weakness in representations of stereotypical femininity, they can also be read as “overcoming the traditional hierarchical male/female and strength/weakness dichotomy” (Stojčić and Duhaček 2016, 81), if followed with some empowering action, such as dance.

Contrary to the female Partisan in *Tough Guys*, who experiences the transformation from pants to skirt, from partisan uniform to peasant civilian clothing and from gun to small pocket eating knife, Alexandra in *Morning* is shown in the status quo – as a feminine, fragile blonde. Being imprisoned, it is understood that she is not armed. As a Partisan courier, it is questionable if she ever was. Her appearance is quite womanly because she wears a dress, and thus, according to Krijnen and Van Bauwel, “also simultaneously articulates a certain type of femininity” (2015, 41). This feminization corresponds to the change of content in initially emancipatory magazines for Partisan women *Žena u borbi* (*Woman in Struggle*) and previously mentioned *Woman Today*, where traditionally female topics on beauty and fashion, rejected after the war, were progressively reintroduced again (Lóránd 2015, 124–25). Similarly, Jovanović identifies, grounded in Jambrešić-Kirin and Blagaić, how the emphasized femininity that was suppressed during the revolution reappeared when the society switched from production towards consumption mentality, so women’s appearance was brought to the fore (2014, 10–11). The practice of veteran Partisan women to wear side caps and military insignia to their work vanished, yielding to stylishly dressed and sexually alluring female representations in popular culture, starting from mid 1950s (Jambrešić Kirin and Blagaić 2013, 60).

The contradictory legacy of socialist emancipation consisted in significant legal and economic empowerment of women, in contrast to the political passivation and the

commodification of their portrayal in the media (Jambrešić Kirin and Blagaić 2013, 40). Sexualization, demilitarization and depictions of female Partisans as traitors during the war were forms of representational disarmament.

### **Sexualization and Punishment of Sexuality**

The employment rate of women in post-war socialist Yugoslavia rose steadily (Ramet 1999, 96), signifying their financial independence and, consequentially, freer sexuality. When a society undergoes transformations in the distribution of power between males and females, the fears of treacherous, fatal women, who challenge traditional gender roles and sexual norms, is frequently expressed in art (Stables 2007, 166). Affected by Second World War-related shifts in American society, which caused a crisis in hegemonic masculinity, *film noir* featured portrayals of powerful women as treacherous beings, whose dangerous sexuality is repressed and put under control by their ultimate destruction (Place 2007, 47–48). Similarly, French New Wave films reinforced patriarchal myths, such as of a female character as treacherous temptress (Vincendeau 1990, 293). Furthermore, in the Mexican cinema female sexuality is linked to treachery (Berg 1992, 24).

Throughout the 1960s the representations of female Partisans were progressively degrading from heroic towards more conventional, traditional, increasingly marginalized, trivialized and sexualized women's roles (Batinić 2015, 17). Yugoslav New Films introduced depictions of female (and male) Partisans as sexual beings and prone to error, which were at the time provocative and intended to challenge the dominant portrayals (Batinić 2015, 241). Similarly to the Yugoslav New Film, although it occurred a bit later in its contemporary mainstream cinema, representations of the female Partisan were also transforming from rather chaste, emancipated and empowered heroine, who was a main protagonist, into objectified and sexualized love interest, who played a supporting role (Batinić 2015, 244). In previous decades in Yugoslav cinema, unbound eroticism was exclusively linked with the bad women who fraternized with the occupying forces, whilst the good civilian and Partisan women were embodiments of demure, whom instead focused their efforts on liberation struggle (Jovanović 2014, 101). The increasing sexualization of the image of the female Partisan corresponded to a universal trend in portrayals of women in both Yugoslav and Western culture, and thus possibly did not appear surprising to the viewers at that time, although there was at least an implied, if not overt, political undertone in the case of Partisan woman (Batinić 2015, 247).



Amongst real-life Partisans during wartime private interests of leisure and pleasure “were, without exception, condemned and punished by the partisan collective” (Kolanović 2015, 103). The Communist Party of Yugoslavia implemented a rigorous code of sexual conduct where all Partisans were expected to refrain from carnal desires (Batinić 2015, 177).

The repression of sexuality amongst Partisans during the liberation struggle has been suggested in *Tough Guys* in a scene where the female Partisan with PTSD brings fumigated uniforms to the exterior side of a closed window, for the purpose of giving them to Gvozden and Isidor, whom are taking a shower inside. Although trying to peek through closed opaque window panes blurred with steam, she could probably see the brothers merely as silhouettes from behind the foggy window. Also, the shots of them are not shown from her point-of-view, but as objective shots, often encompassing her as well behind the window. Gvozden becomes very uncomfortable with the female presence, orders her to go away and at the first hint that she might open the window hides behind a shower curtain. Contrary to his brother, Isidor approaches her naked (which is implied because he is shown bare-chested, above the waist), reacts with laughter and utters to Gvozden: “Let her watch, the war is over, who cares.”

When the female Partisan opens the window, she is shown in a close-up, followed by an extremely quick, big close-up of Gvozden, then suddenly cut back to the same close-up of her, in which she gazes lustfully and scans them with her eyes (Figure 15). This shot might be ascribed to the female gaze, although even if this were the intention its brevity would still marginalize the female subject it would temporarily embody. The next shot is not depicted as a point-of-view shot from her perspective, as would be usual in the film grammar, but instead from an objective perspective. It is a two-shot that encircles Isidor, who is laughing, and Gvozden, hiding behind the curtain. They are framed in a medium shot, which zooms into an individual close-up of frightened Gvozden, verbally expressing his disapproval to the female Partisan located off-screen. Again, the libidinous close-up of the female Partisan is shown, in which she states that Gvozden is angry although the war is over and that they, the comrades, should rejoice. Then, the camera zooms out and encompasses Isidor in the frame as well, filmed from the back, over the shoulder in a medium shot, taking the clothing from the female Partisan. After he exits the frame, the camera zooms in back to the close-up of the female Partisan and she eventually leaves.



Figure 15. Ljerka Draženović in *Tough Guys* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1968).

The female Partisan's gaze is present only in shots of her while she is looking, whilst this scene is deprived of her point-of-view shots of what she is looking at. The female Partisan, therefore, does not have a power to objectify male bodies through her female gaze as its male counterpart – male gaze, which according to Mulvey's theory, objectifies the woman's body by subjecting it to its scrutiny (2000), like Marko's gaze in *Three*.

Contrary to the above-mentioned sexual asceticism during the war, in *Morning Alexandra*, a traitor condemned to death, had two parallel love relations. One was with Mali, whom is ordered to execute her, but has mixed feelings about doing so because he still cares about her. The second affair was with the general. In spite of being in the position of power to save her, he refuses to intervene on Alexandra's behalf and instead makes a personal visit, demanding her execution in order to avoid any possible accusations of favoritism towards his former lover. Although Alexandra's affairs, which took place in the past, are only implicitly, verbally recounted, without sex or nudity being explicitly shown, this is still an uncommon representation of the female Partisan as a sexual being.

The polar opposite of Alexandra is the Partisan girl who witnesses Alexandra's execution. Being a virgin, she has abstained from sex during the war. On the brink of peace, the

Partisan girl flirts with Mali, to whom she admits she is untouched, but it stops after a brief kiss, because he confesses to her that he still loves Alexandra. As Jansen notes, although the psychoanalytical interpretation might be slightly exaggerated if interpreted literally, still there is an implied link between female sexual innocence and honourable service in war, as opposed to Alexandra's loss of innocence/virginity (due to her earlier affairs) and her dishonourable death by execution for treason (1968, 572). Another example where Đorđević links the betrayal of Partisan cause with sexual is Mali's imaginary, oneiric, tragicomical sequence, in which Alexandra, after an implicit love making, betrays him to the Germans. This pattern can also be detected in *Tough Guys*, where the Partisan suffering of PTSD was chaste during the war and survives it, whereas the imprisoned girl was sexually active with an enemy and is punished by death, similar to the captive girl from *Three*. In order not to be regarded as a traitor, a female character must distance herself from the realm of sensuality (Berg 1992, 24). All case study films feature a treacherous captive girl who is sexually alluring for a Partisan soldier, but in each case duty overcomes the soldier's personal affections.

### **Class Difference**

Besides a Partisan traitor, *Morning* also features an unpatriotically "fallen" civilian, an elderly woman, who allegedly fraternized with a German soldier. However, the arrested woman's destiny is only implicitly made known through the attempt of her daughter Ruža<sup>60</sup> (Jelena Jovanović) to save her life, whereas she is never shown herself. The film touches upon the issue of class, because from the interior of the house and the musical scores visible when Partisan Mali visits Ruža, it can be deduced that they were high class women, who belonged to bourgeois society before the war. As a stratum, the bourgeoisie disintegrated in the wake of the Second World War in the new communist society, where everyone was intended to be equal.

Although the viewer learns that the woman was in her fifties and possibly innocent on the charges of affair with the enemy, nonetheless her violent death is unavoidable. What is really disconcerting is the fact that Partisan Mali tries to use Ruža's misfortune to his own means. During an accidental encounter on the street, he approaches her by recounting his very fond, youthful memories as her neighbour: of her colourful bathrobe from Zagreb and snow-white pillows (probably when she would air them on the window), from which can be inferred

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<sup>60</sup> Rose.

that she was from a wealthy family. Also, he admits to be the boy who had been looking at her legs in the church. She remembers him and confides to him that her mother was arrested the previous night under charges of consorting with the German enemy. He lies that he will help her mother and come to Ruža's house that night with the news, which is actually just an excuse to try to seduce her. Director Đorđević ironically underscores the beginning and the end of this scene with the instrumental version of the popular Partisan song *Po šumama i gorama/Through valleys and over hills*, the Yugoslav version of Soviet Red Army song *По долинам и по взгорьям*, which was widely sung amongst the Partisans and also introduced in the school curricula after the war. The song was sufficiently well-known in 1960s Yugoslavia that many filmgoers in period would have known the lyrics by heart, although they are not heard in this film, such as: "Through the woods and hills of our proud country march the companies of Partisans, spreading the glory of struggle!" The decision to utilize this renowned Partisan tune is a clear indicator that director Đorđević is highly critical of Mali, whom he thus portrays as duplicitous and lecherous. When Mali eventually goes to Ruža's house in the evening and lies how he arranged everything for her mother's release tomorrow, she reveals his dishonesty by saying she was recently notified that her mother was executed in the morning by a fire squad. The film, therefore, exposes the hypocrisy of male Partisans, who imposed moral rules of chastity on women.

Gvozden in *Tough Guys* experiences similar desire for the bourgeois woman to Mali's desire in *Morning*. While indifferent to the advances of the female Partisan, he is susceptible to the charms of the imprisoned girl, even if he does not act upon his suppressed attraction, but on the contrary, carries out her death sentence. If Gvozden's preference is viewed through the prism of class difference, this could be interpreted as him having a soft spot for a female that belongs to bourgeoisie stratum, whereas he is uninterested in the Partisan female comrade, whom is of peasant origin. This is most visible in the scene when Isidor, Gvozden and the female Partisan with PTSD are all waiting at the same train station for the train to go back to their villages, after being demobilized. As previously mentioned, when the Partisan with PTSD tries to hug Gvozden, though her motives are ambiguous whether she is upset or amorous, he shoves her away. Before him, Isidor also rejected the Partisan with PTSD at the train station, which is shown later in his flashback. When she says to him "Kiss me on the mouth" with her eyes closed and lips ready to be kissed, he pushes her away and leaves. As with Gvozden, his preference is also not for a Partisan tomboy of peasant origin, but for a female that looks feminine and puts on make-up, even if it means that his choice will be a singer of dubious morals. After victory,

the real-life male Partisans tended to choose for relationships women other than female Partisans (Slapšak 2001, 209), who were hardened both physically and psychologically.

Similarly, Partisan Miloš in *Three* also shows signs of attraction towards a feminine, beautiful, captive girl, whom belonged to bourgeoisie stratum before the war, since her father had been an owner of an estate. Miloš's affection as well remains unfulfilled as Gvozden's, like a forbidden fruit – tempting but out of reach forever since the girls were executed in both cases for fraternizing with the enemy, which is regarded as unfair by the viewer. This is in line with Jovanović's research on Classical Yugoslav Cinema (preceding Yugoslav New Film), where he identifies the tendency of “de-stigmatization of the bad – i.e. the bourgeois, glamorous, collaborationist – woman” (2014, 129). Although the film *Three* takes place in the past, during the Second World War, director Petrović underlines that it simultaneously illuminates the era of the film's release, in 1965 (1988, 15). Considering that in some cases there was a curious occurrence of “actual marriages between the male communists and the daughters of the bourgeois pedigree” (Jovanović 2014, 12), I argue it is not coincidental that Petrović's film features an alluring bourgeois female character. Besides Yugoslav New Films, Yugoslav films in the 1980s also featured representations of crude male Partisans, often of peasant origin, with a penchant for sophisticated ladies from bourgeoisie (Bogojević 2013, 279). Partisan women from the 1980s are, when juxtaposed to upper-class woman, interpreted not only as embodiments of inferior peasant culture, but also as having lesser femininity (Batinić 2015, 251), which can easily be applied to my case study film *Tough Guys*.

## **Conclusion**

Women's strong participation in the liberation struggle was both a consequence of the communist gender equality agenda and a wartime necessity. Although post-war socialist Yugoslavia encouraged gender equality and ratified it by law, the remnants of patriarchal norms were not completely extinct, namely in terms of expected moral traits of a properly behaved woman and were often transposed to fictional cinematic representations of females. The films, therefore, either reinforced those gender norms, or criticized them, or sometimes both at the same time if the narrative and the cinematography contradicted. Even if the plots were placed in the Second World War revolutionary past, frequently the films subliminally embedded their contemporary concerns and values in them. Also, they even affected and created them.

Undertaken by the application of formal analysis from a critical film feminist perspective, this article has detailed a number of examples in which female characters are punished for active sexuality. It focused on Yugoslav New Film representations of Partisan and civilian women who transgressed socially acceptable norms of behaviour and displayed something perceived as treacherous femininity. Women are often regarded as embodiments of purity of the suffering nation in the times of distress, expected to replenish the numbers with children or fall to a martyr's death whilst defending the nation. In case of breach of those moral and ideological boundaries, female characters quickly become ostracized as traitors of the nation and punished accordingly, in a most severe way – by deprivation of life. Therefore, this research pays attention to portrayals of women who either fraternized with the enemy as civilians or betrayed information under torture as Partisans in films where the plot dealt with revolutionary liberation struggle.

Those case studies reveal contradictions in gender order towards the memory and representation of crucial role that women played in the Second World War. Their enormous efforts were gradually marginalized by representational sexualization of both Partisan and civilian women, disarmament of female Partisans, and nostalgia for the dissolved bourgeoisie, expressed through penchant for unattainable higher-class women, whom fraternized with enemies.

In mainstream Partisan film there were no depictions of treacherous femininity punished by execution by Partisans. Partisan and civilian women who betrayed the cause ideologically or morally would conveniently die during battles or disappear from the plot. They were vilified, whilst in Yugoslav New Film there was empathy towards both Partisan and civilian fallen women, whom paid with their lives for their transgressions.

Although all-male directors of the three selected Yugoslav New Films were critical of the grim fate that befell female characters if they transgressed socially acceptable boundaries, they also contributed to marginalization of female characters. Brave and sexually chaste representations from the previous decade were replaced with ones where sexuality came to the fore, disarming female Partisans and objectifying civilians. Also, whilst in earlier Partisan films of bodily asceticism and indomitable bravery, sexuality was portrayed as a negative trait and exclusively linked to the enemy, this delineation is blurred in Yugoslav New Film. However, when sexuality was foregrounded, it was unfortunately followed with imminent disempowerment of the female character.

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## Chapter 7. Cinematic Suicide: Representations of Working Women in Yugoslav New Film

### Contextualisation

This article, published in the journal *Apparatus: Film, Media and Digital Cultures in Central and Eastern Europe*, is a continuation of research on the violence towards female characters, by paying particular attention to acts of self-violence. The study highlights the discrepancy between the representations of female work as perilous – due to women being exposed to brutality by their male colleagues, or to professional disappointment – and between real-life empowerment of Yugoslav women by work. The selected case studies, *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961, Yugoslavia) and *Bube u glavi/Bats in the Belfry* a.k.a. *This Crazy World of Ours* a.k.a. *Bughouse* (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970, Yugoslavia) – one made at the beginning of the Yugoslav New Film movement, and the other made towards the end of the movement – both exhibit these traits, regardless of the fact that there is almost a decade between their years of production. The two films, therefore, construct an underlying message that employment brings only predicament to Yugoslav women. This relates back to the first research question which investigates the punishment of emancipated female characters. The piece also puts forth the inclination in films towards expectations of emphasised femininity, and youthful beauty, even in death, while ageing is regarded as something negative. Chronologically, this article is the third published empirical piece that I wrote during my PhD research.

### Reference

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## **Abstract**

In this article, I investigate representations of suicide committed by working women in Yugoslav New Film. My research question concerns the reasons why female protagonists, potentially empowered through their involvement in the labour force, are eventually disempowered through their suicide in the studied films. Why does the female professional sphere tend to be cinematically portrayed as either a source of peril due to sexual harassment, or a place of the most disappointing experiences? These narratives contradict the socialist discourse of gender equality that encouraged Yugoslav women to seek employment. I look at two case studies from a critical feminist perspective formally analysing them through close reading. *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961, Yugoslavia) and *Bube u glavi/Bats in the Belfry* a.k.a. *This Crazy World of Ours* a.k.a. *Bughouse* (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970, Yugoslavia) both belong to the Yugoslav New Film movement and share a theme of suicide committed by a progressive, working female character, which motivated my choice. The directors render their progressive working heroines vulnerable by transforming the strong women that they are into fragile ones, thus indirectly reflecting male masculinist hostility towards inclusion of women in the workforce. Ultimately, the portrayed suicides of progressive working heroines are a forewarning that a workplace is a dangerous milieu and consequently should be avoided.

## **Keywords**

suicide; Yugoslav New Film; Novi film; socialism; representation; gender; female characters; employment

## Introduction

This article focuses on representations of suicide committed by working female protagonists in Yugoslav New Film. The core question tackles the reasons why heroines, who are potentially empowered by labour, are eventually rendered vulnerable to suicide in the case study films. Why is female labour portrayed in films as a source of disappointment and danger which haunts women, especially considering the fact that in Yugoslav socialist society female employment was on the rise? Two Yugoslav New Films, which portray self-harm and violence directed towards emancipated working women are studied. These films are seen as cautionary tales whose moral lesson is that the workplace is a hostile environment and therefore should be avoided. I interpret the cinematic suicides of working women as indirectly reflecting real-life male animosity towards inclusion of women in the workforce.

In addition, I explore the fear of mortality expressed through *memento mori* symbols, the absence of ageing women's sexuality as if this were exclusively reserved to youth, and the aestheticisation of bodies marked by age. All of this I undertake from a critical feminist perspective, by formal analysis via close readings. This article tackles not only whether the norms of beauty are imposed on represented female characters during their life, but also if they are perpetuated after death.

The Yugoslav New Film movement appeared in 1961 and abruptly came to an end in 1972 (Sudar 2013, 24). Being a loose, modern movement without a manifesto, it is characterised by the auteurism of diverse directors, social critique, freer stance towards sex, and a pessimistic view of life (Petrović 1988, 329-49). Within Yugoslav film production, it coexisted with contemporary mainstream cinema, which retained traditional themes and outlook. Yugoslav New Film – a part of international zeitgeist in film – gathered “filmmakers who practiced the principles of freedom of expression in both form and content” (De Cuir 2016). Genderwise, what Yugoslav New Films have in common is a demeaning attitude towards woman and her body, suggesting that she is a carrier of the societal seed of evil, vice and treachery, and should be punished accordingly; she is a cause or catalyst of a man's downfall; or even when morally virtuous, she is a passive object exposed to violence (Krelja 1979, 409-414). In general, the representations of emancipated women in Yugoslav cinema are infrequent, whereas, on the other hand, the majority of depictions are of physically, psychologically and economically repressed femininity (Daković 1996, 40). There is a tendency to portray a woman either as a myth, or to degrade her, with more frequent inclination towards the latter in the modern Yugoslav New Film (Boglič 1980, 122). Furthermore, as Boglič asserts, “the reality of modern-

day Yugoslav working woman does not exist in our films" ["ta stvarnost suvremene jugoslavenske radne žene ne postoji u našim filmovima"] (1980, 125).

Socialist Yugoslavia ratified gender equality by law, which contributed to a significant steady increase in the number of women in the workforce (Ramet 1999, 94-96). In the pre-war Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1940, 17%<sup>61</sup> of women worked legally and contributed to social insurance (Božinović 1996, 230). In comparison, in socialist Yugoslavia in 1969 the employment rate among women had risen to 33.8%, that is, one third of the entire workforce consisted of women (Božinović 1996, 230). However, the remnants of patriarchy lingered and hindered full implementation of gender equality (Slapšak 2001, 231). For instance, in the private sphere women remained sole bearers of household chores and child rearing, thus becoming multiply burdened with employment, expectations of political engagement and the need to be "a desirable sexual object [poželjan seksualni objekt]" (Slapšak 2001, 231). Nevertheless, the ability to work empowered women in terms of financial independence.

As American film and gender scholar Dillman (2014, 14) argues, a source of income gives women agency, but at the expense of friction in the family, marriage and the traditional male gender order. Furthermore, she stresses that the prevalence of deceased women's bodies in the visual sphere symbolizes an embodiment of masculine rage and bitterness at the real-life economic, social and political advancements women have achieved (Dillman 2014, 2). The repercussions of a gender role reversal are best exemplified in *Christopher Strong* (Dorothy Arzner, 1933, USA) – where a strong and independent woman, who leads an active life and ambitiously pursues a career, is eventually "silenced as speaker of the feminine" through her suicide (Suter 1988, 100). As an argument that these international feminist film theories can be applied to Yugoslav cinema, I employ Johnston's approach, which states that "[s]exist ideology is no less present in the European art cinema because stereotyping appears less obvious" (2000, 24). In addition, as Daković notes on Yugoslavian cinema: "[T]he emergence of feminist and gender theories has provided an opportunity to apply these concepts to national examples" (1996, 41).

Drawing on the previously mentioned Yugoslav film thinkers and international film feminists, I interpret the suicide of working female characters in two case study films as a refraction of the contradiction in the Yugoslav socialist society, gender-equal by law, yet struggling to eradicate traditional mindset of men towards increasing number of employed women. Therefore, I closely analyse *Ples v dežju/Dance in the Rain* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961,

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<sup>61</sup> Although it is possible the number is higher because there were women who did unreported illegal employment, for instance mostly as maids.

Yugoslavia) and *Bube u glavi/ Bats in the Belfry* a.k.a. *This Crazy World of Ours* a.k.a. *Bughouse*<sup>62</sup> (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970, Yugoslavia), which can both be classified as Yugoslav New Films, selected due to the similarity in theme – a suicide of a progressive, working female protagonist.

### **Methods of Suicide**

It is less common to find depictions of a woman expressing violence towards a man, but instead, as Schneider points out, “the female protagonist’s violence is ultimately self-directed” (2006, 242). The victimised female character stands for the harm that patriarchal domination has brought upon women (Morrissey 2006, 95). Attempted suicide or suicide is represented as a measure to which female characters resort, predominantly either as a protest against unavoidable subordination to male control or as a response to unreciprocated heterosexual love (Schneider 2006, 243).

Although statistically in reality there are fewer homicides than suicides in the United States, in Hollywood films they are omnipresent, whereas suicides are not (Aaron 2014, 71-72). In real life, in nearly all the countries in the world, women are less prone to suicide than men (Stack and Bowman 2017, 17). Also, in reality females may tend to select suicide methods that will not inflict disfiguring wounds and mar their physical beauty because even in demise they wish to retain their appeal, since “women learn to value physical attractiveness more than men” (Stack and Bowman 2009, 57). Correspondingly, owing to cinema’s aestheticization of female self-killing, there is a tendency in film representations to “render suicide painless or invisible but similarly anti-bject” (Aaron 2014, 75).

Another reason why in real life women could be inclined to opt for less mutilating methods – which create an illusion of just sleeping and enable a “neat death” with intact body – would be in order to lessen the shock of the persons who may discover them after expiry (Denning et al. 2000, 286). In that regard, there is “gendering of suicide method in the United States” (Stack and Bowman 2017, 20). Men who kill themselves have a higher tendency to use more violent, immediately lethal methods, such as firearms, cutting, jumping and

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<sup>62</sup> Even though the title *Bats in the Belfry* appears in few rare mentions of the film by other authors, and on IMDb webpage the title of the film is translated as *This Crazy World of Ours*, the more appropriate translation of the title would be *Bughouse*. This is because the literal translation to English language of the original title ‘Bube u glavi’ – which is an idiom for silliness or madness in Serbo-Croatian – would be ‘Bugs in a head’. Also, throughout the film, there is a leitmotif of bugs, therefore the title *Bughouse* retains both the word ‘but’ and its implied meaning of lunacy, as opposed to the titles *Bats in the Belfry* and *This Crazy World of Ours* which lose this original dimension.

hanging/suffocation, as opposed to women, who usually choose less violent methods, such as pills overdose, drowning, or carbon monoxide poisoning, whereas their intent to die is similar (Denning et al. 2000, 282-284).

If Yugoslav Cinema of the researched period is examined for this theory, which argues that women use less immediately fatal methods of suicide, the investigated films do not reflect real life because the depicted female characters utilise both types of methods. Furthermore, I contend that regardless of which methods are depicted, whether they are perceived as 'feminine' or 'masculine', that is, if they are neater or more disfiguring, their representations in Yugoslav cinema are similarly aestheticized. From 1961 until 1972, 286 films were directed by domestic directors in Yugoslavia, including both Yugoslav New Films (formally and thematically modern) and their mainstream traditional counterparts. From my viewing of 269 films, out of which an estimated fifteen films feature implicit or explicit suicide or attempted suicide where the method is known, I found a variety of methods, most of which were potentially disfiguring. In one example a gun is used (*Dve noći u jednom danu/Two nights in One Day*, Radenko Ostojić, 1963, Yugoslavia). Moreover, in four cases suicide is undertaken by hanging: *Balada o svirepom/The Ballad of the Cruel One* (Radivoje 'Lola' Đukić, 1971, Yugoslavia), *Uloga moje porodice u svjetskoj revoluciji/The Role of my Family in World Revolution* (Bahrudin 'Bato' Čengić, 1971, Yugoslavia), *Deveto čudo na istoku/Ninth Wonder in the East* (Vlatko Filipović, 1972, Yugoslavia), and *Bube u glavi*. In five films women throw or intend to throw themselves: either off a cliff in *Peščeni grad/Sand Castle* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1962, Yugoslavia) and *Deca vojvode Šmita/Children of Duke Schmidt* (Vladimir Pavlović, 1967, Yugoslavia), or high building – *Gorke trave* a.k.a. *Die Zeugin aus der Hölle/Witness out of Hell* (Živorad 'Žika' Mitrović, 1966, Yugoslavia/Germany), or in front of a car – *Štićenik/The Protégé* a.k.a. *The Climber* (Vladan Slijepčević, 1966, Yugoslavia), or down stairs – *Putovanje na mjesto nesreće/The Scene of the Crash* (Zvonimir Berković, 1971, Yugoslavia). Besides, in two films self-killing is done by drowning: *Sirota Marija/Poor Maria* (Dragoslav Lazić, 1968, Yugoslavia) and *Moja strana svijeta/My Part of the World* (Vlatko Filipović, 1969, Yugoslavia), in one by setting a house on fire (*Pohod/The Trek* a.k.a. *Expedition*, Đorđe Kadijević, 1968, Yugoslavia) and in one a female character resorts to drinking poison – *Ples v dežju*. In one film – *Bablje ljeto/Indian Summer* (Nikola Tanhofer, 1970, Yugoslavia) suicide is attempted by slitting wrists. Therefore, the methods of cinematic suicides in Yugoslav film do not seem to correspond to the preferred less violent methods from real life female suicides in the United States. Hollywood films don't reflect the reality of suicide in the United States, and this unrealistic representation transfers over to Yugoslav film. Regardless of whether a method



was violent and would be expected to cause visible damage on human body, or if it was non-disfiguring, such as poisoning, in all the studied films no mutilation of a female figure was shown. Based on this, I argue that no matter which method of self-killing – violent or less violent – female characters utilised, their suicide was represented in rather sanitised manner during researched time span of Yugoslav film. Women are expected to look beautiful, both in life and death. This obsession with outer values as societal norm is visible in their non-decayed corpses, but also is highlighted in quotidian lives.

### **Suicide of Working Women**

What do *Ples v dežju* and *Bube u glavi* have in common – one being the harbinger<sup>63</sup> of the Yugoslav New Film movement and the other one made towards the end of the movement that abruptly finished in 1972 – besides having a non-linear structure and both being edited by Kleopatra Harisijadis? They both feature suicides of progressive working women. Positive images of working women became very rare during this period.

*Bube u glavi* foregrounds a gang rape of a working girl Vera (Milja Vujanović), who works as an apprentice. With promises of full-time employment after her forthcoming graduation from a university, she is lured by her superior into an event in the woods that is supposed to be a business gathering with her senior working colleagues. Vera and most likely her boyfriend Dragan (Dragan Nikolić) as well, who happened to encounter them by chance, are both raped. In the aftermath and as consequence of the rapes, they are both institutionalised in a psychiatric hospital, but their involuntary stay at the asylum is depicted in the opening of the film and then intertwined with retrospective scenes.

Horeck points out “how cultural ideas about rape and sexualized violence are used to voice public fantasies about masculinity and femininity and the positions that men and women should take in regard to the body politic” (2004, 13). Having this in mind, it is perplexing whether *Bube u glavi*’s message is intended to discourage women from working by placing them in a position of victim or to warn them about the potential dangers an employed woman might encounter. “The closer women come to claiming their rights and achieving independence in real life, the more loudly and stridently films tell us it’s a man’s world” (Haskell 1987, 363).

Similarly, in *Ples v dežju* the main heroine Maruša (Duša Počkaj) experiences professional disappointment. Being an ageing actress in early mid-life crisis, she commits

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<sup>63</sup> Together with film *Dvoje/The Couple* a.k.a. *Two* a.k.a. *And Love Has Vanished* (Aleksandar Petrović, 1961, Yugoslavia).

suicide after experiencing blows in both personal and professional spheres. Unfortunate events start unfolding when, on her way to a rehearsal, she finds out from a theatre guard that the director of the play wants to talk to her. She meets the director on stage. Their encounter is framed in an extreme long shot, from an overhead perspective. He chastises her for coming too late for the rehearsal, which is already finished. Maruša apologizes, trying to excuse herself in an unconvincing manner. Then they are shown in a two-shot, full shot where he replies that he does not care about her reasons and fires her with the words that they do not need her in the theatre anymore, which he insistently repeats. Suddenly, there is a cut onto an extreme long shot from high angle, perhaps filmed from the theatre balcony and encompassing some spectators. Unexpectedly, Maruša's behaviour changes from defence to offence as she yells at the director that he is a third-rate former actor, an upstart, a hypocritical brownnoser to whom nothing is sacred, while she sacrificed everything for this theatre. Subsequently, he and Maruša are captured from normal perspective in an extreme long shot in the background, whereas a female spectator is in the blurry foreground, filmed over the shoulder. Maruša continues to verbally confront the director, illuminated with a stage reflector. It is not clear whether this is a figment of her imagination, or if she really has stood up to him. As the insensitive director leaves, Maruša throws at him the words that he could live a thousand years and still be unable to give to this theatre a third of what a lowest actor can give to it, or the last extra. All of a sudden, applause is heard. Broken down and with her feistiness gone, she sits on a piece of scenery, while the camera dollies in from medium long shot to medium close up.

An extreme high angle shot from an aerial perspective concludes the scene as she leaves despondently. Based on Maruša's tone of voice that abruptly changes in this scene from insecure to assertive, the framing which also alters, unexpectedly including the theatre audience, and their applause (the biggest reward for every theatre actor), this is perhaps her imagination instead of actual confrontation with the director. In reality, Maruša probably does not reply in such a manner when fired, but rather stays quiet, while this scene of the film represents what she would have wanted to say to him.

Having in mind Chivers' argument that women face ageist bias at a younger age than men, since they stop being cast for romantic roles with men of their generation by the time they reach forty at the latest and are less likely to get hired past a certain age (Chivers 2017, 68-71), the firing of Maruša could also be interpreted as showing the expendability of an ageing female actress. Director Hladnik placed the empathy of the viewers, (both within the film and the real-life ones) with Maruša as opposed to the insensitive theatre director. However, it remains ambiguous whether Hladnik was critical about her firing in order to underscore a plot point as

one of the motives for suicide, or he indeed wanted to imply that not just Maruša's absence from the rehearsals but also aging was a factor in her dismissal.

As noted by Jovanović (2015, 43), during Yugoslav Classical Cinema (1947–1962) a trend started where romance replaced labour in representations of women and in my view continued into the next phase – Yugoslav New Film and its contemporary mainstream cinema. On those occasions when women are represented as working, their professional interests are secondary to the narrative. Employment is sometimes depicted as a factor that destabilizes marriage or relationships, such as in *Sudar na paralelama/Collision on the Parallels* (Jože Babič, 1961, Yugoslavia), where a husband is jealous over his spouse's business trip with her male boss, so he follows them, or in *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT/Love Affair or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (Dušan Makavejev, 1967, Yugoslavia), where a heroine cheats on her partner at her workplace during her shift. Furthermore, the competence of a female architect is unjustly put under question by the locals of a town in *Prvi građanin male varoši/The First Citizen of a Small Town* (Mladimir 'Puriša' Đorđević, 1961, Yugoslavia), due to rumours of her romantic involvement with the chairman of that municipality, who approves her project. Depictions of the workplace as an ominous environment, where many dangers lurk, appear in several films. For instance, in *Krst Rakoc* (Živko 'Žika' Ristić, 1962, Yugoslavia) a worker tries to rape a woman who is employed as a cook on secluded work site where they are stationed. Likewise, in *Zgodba ki je ni/A Non-Existent Story* a.k.a. *On the Run* (Matjaž Klopčič, 1967, Yugoslavia), a nurse who pays a professional visit to an ill patient in his home is raped by his friend. Similarly, in the film *Povratak/The Return* (Živojin 'Žika' Pavlović, 1966, Yugoslavia) a waitress is gang raped after work by one of her customers and his friends, whereas in *Horoskop/Horoscope* (Boro Drašković, 1969, Yugoslavia) a woman is raped by indolent young customers of the newspaper kiosk where she works. Moreover, in *Čovek nije tica/Man is Not a Bird* (Dušan Makavejev, 1965, Yugoslavia) a bar singer is stabbed during her performance in a kafana. When a heroine in *Rani radovi/Early Works* (Želimir Žilnik, 1969, Yugoslavia) briefly undertakes strenuous work in a factory, she faints as a result, and labour is thus rendered hazardous. In *Doručak sa đavolom/Breakfast With the Devil* (Miroslav 'Mika' Antić, 1971, Yugoslavia) a woman who implements agrarian reforms in the countryside is accidentally blown up by a land mine together with her lover. Regardless of the actual function of symbolic or physical violence directed at working heroines in the narrative, in some Yugoslav films of the research period there is an underlying tendency to represent the workplace as something negative and woman's emancipation through work as something that ends fatally or brings misfortune. In contrast, in Yugoslav society annual growth rates of female employment were on

the increase and especially high from 1952 until 1965 (Ramet 1999, 96). In 1969 at the Ninth Party Congress Tito also mentioned “the steadily increasing employment of women in the social and economic sectors” (Ramet 1999, 100). Thus, patriarchy strikes back in cinematic depictions, and the situation is similar to that which Dillman observed in American films: “It makes sense to see these images as an inverse index of women’s actual gains” (2014, 19).

As Đurović points out, a conservative discourse where female emancipation is subordinated to love in cinematic representation can be detected in *Čudna devojka/Strange Girl* (Jovan Živanović, 1962, Yugoslavia) (2018, 10), which belongs to my researched period. Indeed, portrayals of women’s competence and female employment as a positive matter, motivated by factors other than love, are sporadic during Yugoslav New Film and its mainstream counterpart. One of the rare exemplary films that value women’s work is the mainstream *Nizvodno od sunca/Downstream From the Sun* (Fedor Škubonja, 1969, Yugoslavia), about a female school teacher who goes to teach children in the countryside. The script was written by a woman, which was uncommon because only seven women were sole scriptwriters out of 286 films directed by domestic directors from 1961 until 1972 (in eight more films they were co-writers with men). The under-representation of women among screenwriters in the researched period no doubt explains the glaring absence of positive depictions of women at work. To further reinforce the point, it should be noted that, in all the films mentioned in this article the directors were male.

## **Memento Mori**

At beginning of Radivojević’s *Bube u glavi*, Vera (who was gang raped during a business excursion, as flashbacks will show later in the plot), a patient institutionalized in a mental asylum, is sexually abused by a person in position of power – a doctor psychologist. The doctor gropes her breast as he examines her chest with a stethoscope. The abuse of power on multiple levels – by work colleagues and a healthcare provider – indicates what Balsom labels as “pervasiveness of misogyny” (2017, 33). Exploitation of the patient continues, as seen on a monitor screen where the macabre X-rays are shown in motion – of the bones of doctor’s hand with wedding ring touching Vera’s facial bones, as well as his skull kissing her skull.

As the consequence of the second, implied rape by the doctor, the traumatized, incommunicable and despondent Vera, who was already in a fragile state of mind when admitted to the hospital after the first, gang rape, commits suicide. Vera’s self-killing is amongst macabre elements indicative of director Radivojević’s interest in the transience of life, such as moving

human X-rays, reminiscent of *memento mori*, and an excerpt of Tolstoy's book that deals with ephemerality, which in one scene Dragan reads to Vera aloud: "What is death and how to save oneself?" *Memento mori* is a Latin term meaning "remember you will die" (Duclow 2003, 568), inferring the acceptance of fleetingness of human existence. This reminder of our own mortality was depicted via certain symbols through history and art, for example the hourglass, skull and bones (Duclow 2003, 568). Besides the above-mentioned X-rays of skulls, Dragan finds a human skull on the ground during his stroll at the graveyard. He addresses it, whilst pushing it with his foot: "Yorick, I have nothing to say to you", alluding to Shakespeare's Hamlet. Moreover, there is a human skeleton model exhibited in Dragan's painting class. In my view, other *memento mori* symbols are: a dead white butterfly, carried away by ants, and a collection of pinned insects, examined by Dragan through a magnifying glass, which he then points at Vera, as if foreshadowing her destiny, not much different from the insects' (Figure 16). She is pinned down during the gang rape and during the implicit rape by the psychiatrist as well, consequentially followed by her suicide.

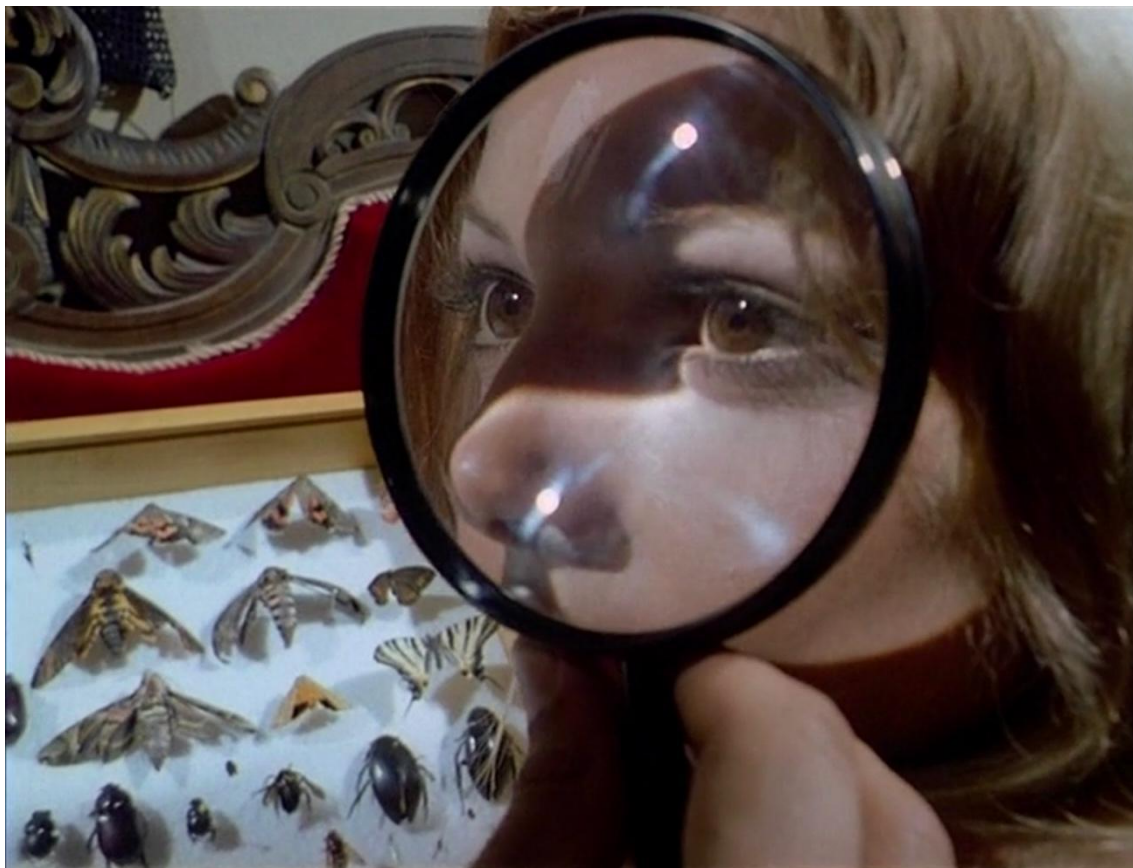


Figure 16. *Bube u glavi* (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970).

The film *Ples v dežju* also features several death motifs that are interwoven in the

narrative. When Maruša comes to her apartment moments before committing suicide, she reads a theatre play next to a doll, perhaps signifying her powerlessness as a puppet due to being fired. The doll motif recurs when Maruša's partner Peter (Miha Baloh) enters an abandoned, dilapidated apartment, where he finds a razor blade resting on top of a doll. A razor blade is a recurring motif in the film, signifying imminent peril, menace and death. It also features as a threat in a scene when Peter is getting shaved at the barber's. In addition, in a morning scene when Maruša is awakened in Peter's apartment by his landlord Anton, for an instant he appears to want to kill her with a razor blade. Furthermore, another *memento mori* symbol emerges during the painting class that Peter teaches. When the camera dollies forward over elementary school children to a medium close-up shot of a little girl who is posing for them, the word "death" from an alphabet jigsaw is visible in the blurry background. Besides, during a dream Peter has, he is surrounded by numerous funeral caskets. Also, in Anton's room is a clock with two skeletons on it hanging on a wall, suggesting the passage of time and the ephemerality of human beings. Similar to Dragan in the painting classroom, Maruša passes by two human skeleton props on the way to meet the theatre director on the stage, where she will get fired as expendable. Therefore, the objects such as the clock, skull and human skeleton are *memento mori* symbols of Vera's and Maruša's demises, but also death in general and corporeal evanescence. "The fear of old age is very present in our society" (Adelseck 2017, 43), which can be inferred by the presence of these items and themes that address ageing and mortality.

### **Standards of beauty in life**

The omnipresent societal fear of ageing is a cultural construction that goes hand in hand with "the commodification of women's bodies" (McGlynn, O'Neill, and Schrage-Früh 2017, 5). Whereas Vera is treated as an object due to her attractive young body and suffers rape on two occasions, the pressure on Maruša to look young and beautiful takes its toll in an early mid-life crisis, thus underscoring the problematic standards of beauty imposed on both youthful and ageing women.

Evidence of the frustrating expectations of beauty, imbued even into the subconscious, is Maruša's oneiric escapism to a place where she grew up in the picturesque countryside. In her dream sequence, a wagon drawn by a white horse approaches Maruša. She hops on it, next to the wagoner, and tells him her intention to return home, maybe for good, due to feeling tired and a bit ill. The wagoner recognizes her because in their village and all the villages in the valley there had been no redheads except for Maruša. He had seen her in the paper, in a full-page colour

photo, below which it read: “A great actress, young and beautiful.” The wagoner’s statement is an example of what Chivers described as “the gendered double standards that govern film representations of aging” (Chivers 2017, 70). Regardless of the fact that the focus is on the youth and physical appeal of the actress instead of the quality of performance, his words soothe Maruša’s ego. So, she utters in internal monologue about herself: “It must be true since the driver knows that I am an actress, do you hear this Peter? A successful actress with a great future.”<sup>64</sup>

Maruša gets off. It is revealed that there is a young romantic couple sitting on the very back of the horse drawn wagon, recurring as a leitmotif in eleven different situations throughout the narrative, as a counterpoint to Maruša’s and other characters’ disappointment in love. Perhaps they symbolise the innocent, pure and idealised love that all the characters strive for, and which evades all of them. Despite the fact that the dream sequence mostly concerns Maruša’s profession instead of love, it is not devoid of Peter’s presence since she mentioned him in her internal monologue. Hence, she is not represented as an independent career woman, who does her job in order to fulfil herself, but as somebody constantly seeking her partner's approval, even in the professional sphere. Maruša’s dream is a subliminal indicator of her fear of ageing, loss of youth and attractiveness.

Another situation when norms of youthful beauty torment Maruša are within her oneiric fantasy at the dressmaker's. After trying out a fancy dress there in front of multiple mirrors, she goes out on the street, elegantly dressed up and with a ladylike hairstyle. A girl from the dressmaker’s shop invites her colleagues to come and see the young and beautiful Maruša, so they lean out of the window in order to have a better view of her. A non- diegetic instrumental tune starts. Two elderly women on the street bow to her. Then, she passes by the young romantic couple, recurring the eighth time out of eleven, and looks at them while they are kissing. While Maruša walks in a circle, the camera tracks her movement. The oneiric sequence eventually finishes in a similar way to how it started. At its beginning, a little girl is shown turning around her axis, with her skirt fluttering around her, followed by a matching cut on a similar action of dressed-up Maruša in front of mirrors at the dressmakers. When, later, the little girl makes the same action, it signals the end of the daydream sequence. In addition, before the fantasy begins the light changes as sunshine suddenly illuminates Maruša – dressed in normal clothing and with common hairstyle – hinting that the imaginary, elegantly dressed version of her is soon to follow. Hladnik seamlessly performs transitions between real and oneiric, showing impressive

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<sup>64</sup> The translations of the dialogues are taken from the available film copy by an anonymous translator and used as such with some small amendments.

mastery. At the very end of the fantasy sequence in a close-up, the actual Maruša is shown again, snapped out of her dream-like state when sunshine suddenly disappears and the prompt's off-voice is heard. The prompt is Maruša's colleague from the theatre, whose job is to feed actors their lines if they forget them on stage. When off from work, he courts Maruša or follows her around due to being infatuated with her. The juxtaposition between Maruša's genuine self and her fictional self, created as a figment of imagination due to wanting to be pretty, highlights the discrepancy between them, caused by problematic aesthetic expectations.

Another example when unacceptable societal standards of beauty and youthfulness are imposed on a female character is the motif of ageing hands. After being fired at work, Maruša, who sits alone in the restaurant, puts unrealistic expectations on her fallible partner that he will comfort her. Via her internal monologue, the viewer hears that Peter will come, help her and resolve everything. When Peter eventually comes to the restaurant, he starts rudely and meanly, offending Maruša, whereas she doesn't even manage to tell him that she has lost her job at the theatre, nor speak at all, due to his lengthy insulting rant: "You keep brooding, you are like the Sleeping Beauty with her charmed face and waxen hands. Ugly hands, I hate them." Throughout his demeaning external monologue, which continues endlessly, Maruša's face is merely shown at its very beginning, for a brief instant when Peter arrives. The camera then tracks forward from two-shot onto Peter's medium close-up, after which point he is the focus of the scene. When he degradingly talks about her hands, the camera pans from his face onto them, illustrative of Krainitzki's observation how female hands connote 'stigmata' of growing old (2016, 169). In my view, they are a pair of normal female hands, which is in accordance with Bogojević's statement that "men project the most vivid experiences of ageing and decay onto the female body" (2013, 248). Peter himself is entering a midlife crisis, which can perhaps be inferred from his dream with numerous coffins that suggests thoughts about mortality, and also from his dissatisfaction with the work as a painting teacher, expressed to Maruša at the commencement of his monologue. However, his own physical ageing and decaying is never brought under question.

Besides, Peter asserts that there has never been a trace of love between them, but only loathing and pain from the very beginning. "You're getting wrinkled, old and repulsive, even as a mistress", he continues while touching a ripped and worn-out tablecloth, as if he wants to draw a parallel between Maruša's face, which is not shown, and the old tablecloth. He suggests that they put an end to their relationship. Although Maruša and Peter are probably of similar age, he is hypocritical about hers, which is in line with Bogojević's (2013, 246) statement that male ageing is never addressed as an issue, whereas women's early midlife is perceived as



something negative and equated with old age.

The motif of ageing hands appears for the second time in the film in the same restaurant, but after an ellipsis, undertaken by intercutting two scenes (the prompt's oneiric scene at Maruša's imaginary apartment and of his reality outdoors in the rain). An overhead shot encompasses Peter, who is sitting alone, next to an empty chair. Self-absorbed, he does not even notice that Maruša has left, under the pretext that he dares not to look at her out of shame. He tries to soften his previous insults about her, for instance by stating that although her skin isn't very nice, it is still soft and smooth, whilst touching the table cloth again, but this time on the spot which is not ripped. Eventually, after a lengthy rant Peter says that he loves her immensely. At that point, he finally realizes that Maruša is gone. Considering that his monologue was very long, during which he hasn't noticed her absence, this sequence is perhaps not convincingly directed. Peter abandons his dreams about a fantasy woman, whereas Maruša, contrary to him, escapes from the reality and embraces imagination through suicide.

The third time the motif of ageing hands appears in the film is when Maruša, after leaving the restaurant unbeknownst to Peter, is at home. She says in inner monologue that it is all over for her and crumples up the play script, realising that her career as an actress is finished. Then, Maruša lays it aside, distracted with her own hands. While looking at them, she recalls Peter's insults: that her face is too broad, eyes too large, skin neglected, and her hands ugly and plain as if they weren't a woman's hands. This is in line with Krainitzki's observation that "ageing hands are seen as abject in a youth-oriented society" (2016, 169). Maruša recounts the culmination of Peter's verbal abuse that she is "old, repulsive, even as a mistress", and wonders if all he said was true. Thus, on Maruša's impending death can be applied what Kaplan asserted for a female character that allows "the patriarchal definition of herself as worthless to become her own definition of herself, not having any other discourse within which to evaluate herself differently" (1990, 47). By accepting imposed societal norms of youthfulness and beauty, Maruša succumbs to the consumerist image of herself, discrepant to her real self. Unable to meet those unrealistic expectations, she ends her life.

As opposed to *Ples v dežju*, *Bube u glavi* breaks a societal taboo on, as Liddy notes, "[t]he display of the ageing female body" (2017, 177). During Dragan's painting class at the art academy he attends, there is a posing group, consisted of four nude models. Director Radivojević depicts a nude young male model in a long shot in the background within the group composition, whereas his penis is hidden by a head of an older female model who is in the foreground. On the other hand, by tilting and panning in close-ups, the camera scrutinizes the details of the bodies of an androgynous person and two older female models. According to

Russo (1994, 56), the irregular body and the ageing body are amongst female bodies perceived as grotesque. In a similar vein, Liddy (2017, 172) stresses that the sight of the menopausal ageing female body often provokes an impression of decline and disgust. Therefore, the insistence of the director on the unembellished close-up details of ageing women, such as sagging breasts, renders their old bodies abject, whereas the male model is not old nor subjected to such visual dissection in close-up details. Nevertheless, we may note that Dragan is seen kissing the hand of one of the old ladies. Perhaps director Radivojević's intention was not to debase ageing female characters, but to underscore the message of the transience of life. Signs of ageing are a reminder of mortality (Adelseck 2017, 44). Notwithstanding, the represented women do not have their male ageing counterpart, who would be put under the spotlight and scrutinized like them, so the director used their bodies for his own means.

Regardless of whether concerning ageing yet still attractive bodies, such as Maruša's, young bodies as Vera's, or old bodies as of the painting models, they are all examples of "social standards and expectations of beauty and sexuality in a culture of anti-ageing" (McGlynn, O'Neill, and Schrage-Früh 2017, 12). The norms of appealing youthful physical appearance provoke immense pressure in women, face them with unrealistic aesthetical expectations, commodify and objectify them.

The culturally constructed "unwatchability" of old bodies is diametrically opposite to the voyeuristic gaze directed at youth, such as in mass media, grounded in the problematic social norm that corporeal beauty is exclusively related to youth and therefore dissociated from the aged population (Coupland 2013, 5). In contrast to the ageing female breasts shown during the painting class, in the course of the film Radivojević interweaves a visual motif of Vera's youthful nude breasts in several situations: during an examination in the mental asylum that transforms into rape by the psychiatrist, through a few intimate moments between Dragan and Vera (Figure 17), and in the gang rape scene. The insistent voyeuristic gaze directed at Vera's breasts could be explained by Coupland's (2013, 7) theory on the 'look of youth', which is related to the ability of young bodies to magnetically captivate admiring gaze, whereas the 'look of ageing' is linked with a propensity of old physiques to repulse it.



Figure 17. *Bube u glavi* (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970).

Similarly, in *Ples v dežju*, a young girl, Magda, is constantly subjected to the Mulveyan “male gaze” (1989: 19) and thus objectified. She goes to the apartment of the male main character Peter and undresses in a manner reminiscent of strip-tease, underscored with non-diegetic modern jazz music, thus appearing only in one sequence as an unimportant, episodic character in the service of visual pleasure. Also, Magda’s personhood is dehumanised because her face is shown only briefly before she takes off her shirt, and even then she is beyond recognition, concealed with a shadow. In addition, in spite of being mostly shot from the back, her body is highly eroticised while she slowly unbuttons her black bra, and its voluptuousness is emphasised during the approach to the bed in which Peter lies. Hence, Magda is represented as a sexualised figure, not as a person. The sex between her and Peter is implied. After the sexual exploit, he verbally humiliates her to get her things and leave. With this behaviour, Peter expresses signs of misogyny. Magda states she will never come again, calls him an animal and departs. Although her face is finally fully shown for the first time while she is getting dressed to go in the aftermath of the intercourse, his denigrating treatment and insulting tone further depersonalise her. Thereafter, she disappears from the plot without a proper closure.

Whereas Peter has sex with Magda, who is his junior, later in the film he sexually neglects his girlfriend Maruša, who is in early midlife. Such behaviour is in line with Liddy's observation that "[w]ithin the same film, the sexuality of younger and older female characters can be portrayed quite differently" (2017, 169). Emotional and sexual alienation between Peter and Maruša is clearly visible in a scene at his place, when they are shown in bed, turned away from each other. It is intensified with audible, off-screen barking of dogs, underscoring loneliness. Maruša, Peter's coeval, is awake in a big close-up, as a tear rolls out of her eye down the cheek (Figure 18), whereas he is sound asleep and has his back turned to her. The eradication of all sexual activity from portrayals of older women naturalizes the invisibility of their sexuality that, as a consequence, becomes abject (Liddy 2017, 170). Maruša, therefore, fits into hegemonic representation of female ageing in film, described by Krainitzki as "the image of the asexual older woman" (2016, 162). The absence of sexual intercourse between the couple is diametrically opposite to the animalistic and carnal implicit fornication of Peter with Magda, who is younger than him.



Figure 18. *Ples v dežju* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961).

Although both scenes with women take place in the same room, the atmosphere is completely different, not only because of the visual presence of passion in one scene and lack of it in the other one, but also due to auditive cues. Sonic sexual stimulus is expressed through

non-diegetic jazz music, which accompanies Magda's sensual removal of her black lace bra, remaining only in panties while shot from the back, whereas unstimulating howling of dogs underscores Maruša's mechanical disrobing into her virginally chaste white slip that covers more than it reveals. Contrary to Maruša's decorum, Magda's fleshliness is not surprising because, according to Liddy's observation, "younger female characters routinely appear in various stages of undress" (2017, 169).

Similarly, in *Bube u glavi* there are no depictions of ageing people's sexual acts, which corresponds to Liddy's findings that "[s]exually active older female characters have traditionally been absent from cinema" (2017, 167). Needless to say, sex is only represented between young people, whereas old people are asexual. However, youthful carefree sex is overshadowed by the sexual violence that Vera and her boyfriend Dragan are exposed to by witnessing each other's rapes.

When Vera is raped by one of her co-workers, while the other one restrains her, there is a medium shot in slow-motion, where she is shown laid horizontally on the ground burdened by the body of the rapist, with a stereotypically barren breast and an agonizing expression on her face. Later in the plot although earlier in the fabula, in a similarly framed shot with correspondingly positioned bodies (heads on the right side of the frame, waists cut with the left edge of the frame), but with the difference that it is tinted red, Vera and Dragan are depicted while having passionate sex. The fact that the composition of shot of the lovemaking reminisces the composition of shot in the above-mentioned instance during rape, also in slow motion, enhances the contrast between love and sexual violence.

Portrayals of youthful active sexuality testify how depictions of love, such as when Vera makes love with Dragan, are eclipsed with the sexual violence of rapes in Vera's case, and in that of Magda's dehumanizing sexual act with Peter. Furthermore, Maruša's absence of sexual life, which extends to Yugoslav New Film in general in regard to older female characters, corresponds to Liddy's reflection that in US, British and Irish fiction films depictions of mature female sexuality are very rare (2017, 169). Often there isn't any sex for older women in Yugoslav New Film, whereas young girls are denigrated in sexual experiences or subjected to sexual violence such as rape.

## **Expectations of beauty in death and fantasy**

Ironically, Maruša's body is the most revered, plus has more physical contact in fantasy and death than in real life. During Peter's previously mentioned long misogynistic rant in the restaurant, only he was in the spotlight. When Maruša is finally shown in a medium close-up shot, her clothing and hairstyle are altered as compared to the very beginning of the restaurant sequence. The camera dollies back and pans on the prompt, revealing that Maruša is with him in a completely different space instead of with Peter in the restaurant. The room in question is big and opulent. The prompt looks at a huge portrait painting on which Maruša is depicted, wearing the dress she had worn in her imaginary sequence at the dressmaker's. Then, he sits on some pillows on the floor, next to her, leaning on her leg, while she lies prostrate on a sofa. Maruša pats him on the head like a child. He declares love to her in a close-up, while baring her thigh, kissing it salaciously and caressing it with his hand. Subsequently, the prompt touches her hair, stating he has always liked it. He stresses his desire to always be with Maruša. She responds in an extreme close-up that perhaps he is the only man who really loves her. There is a cut to the close-up of him in the rain in exterior, which clarifies that this was his fantasy. There is a discrepancy between the prompt's expectations depicted in this imaginary scene and the actual visit to Maruša's place in his reality, shown later in the film.

During the prompt's actual visit, Maruša's apartment looks completely different, especially in that it is shabbier and smaller. The prompt pleads with off-screen Maruša to stay where she is, not to look at him nor say anything. Throughout this scene, Maruša's face is not shown until the very end. The prompt has come to say goodbye to her before going to hospital due to his poor health. Like in his oneiric scene, he stands next to Maruša's huge portrait on the wall, but this time it is a less glamorous photograph as opposed to the painting from his fantasy. Then, whilst she is seated in an armchair, he touches her hair, lies on the floor and leans his head onto her feet in high heeled shoes. While at her feet, the prompt declares love to the immobile Maruša. He sucks her motionless right-hand fingers, which will invoke a fetishist connotation once it is revealed at the end of the scene that he was, at this point, unknowingly caressing someone who is already dead. Then, the prompt promises to come back and stands up. When he goes out and closes the door, the camera tracks rightwards on Maruša's close-up, where she is shown with eyes wide open, staring without blinking. There is a lighting change, and everything becomes dark except for one part of her hair which is lit. Some knocking is heard, which serves as a cue for camera to track leftwards, focusing on the door. Peter enters, turns on the light and goes off-screen next to her. He screams her name in off-voice, realising that Maruša

is dead.

In line with “dominant narratives that represent ageing purely as decline” (Jennings and Grist 2017, 204), Maruša takes her own life at home, as shown in a retrospective scene, after admitting to herself that she cannot pretend misfortunate incidents with Peter and the theatre director didn’t happen, when they did. Since reality is her enemy, she expresses the need for another reality, her own reality. She takes a small bottle out of a cupboard and declares in internal monologue that she will not allow anyone to steal her world. The camera tracks to the right, leaving her off-screen, when Maruša is shown about to take a sip from the small bottle. During the camera movement, her internal monologue is heard once again, declaring that she will ride across her meadow again. However, when the camera stops, Maruša surprisingly appears in the right-hand part of the room, whereas it is not clear how she traversed it, which suggests that oneiric and real are merging towards her imminent death.

Maruša takes her suitcase out of the closet and sits on it, whereupon stating that she is ready. Then, shown in an overhead shot, she stands up and goes to a mirror. The moment when female characters appropriate “the process of looking is signalled by a frequent recourse to concrete externalizations of the gaze such as the window or the mirror” (Doane 1987, 37). Accordingly, Maruša looks at herself in the mirror, which is, as Berger would have it, often the symbol of female vanity (1977, 51). The camera simultaneously frames Maruša over the shoulder and her reflection in the mirror as well, during a reminiscence in internal monologue how she, Maruša nicknamed ‘the redhead’, was admired. Her big photograph portrait is also visible in the reflection, suggesting obsession with looks and prettiness (Figure 19). She lets her hair down, brushes it and remembers the words of the kind wagoner from her fantasy. The redness of her hair that her character is lauded for is unfortunately not visible since the film is black and white.



Figure 19. *Ples v dežju* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961).

Maruša steps back until her full figure is visible in the mirror and touches her own body, sliding both hands downwards over her breasts. “It’s not true that I am old and ugly, that’s what only evil people say”, she says as the camera pans leftwards from Maruša in the mirror to the real one, again juxtaposed to her big photograph portrait. “Ageing is tolerated in men, but not in women” (Bogojević 2013, 248), as Maruša’s case clearly exemplifies. In confronting her with her own image in the mirror and in the portrait photograph of her younger self, director Hladnik reinforces this trope, since he does not subject the male lead, Peter, to a similar confrontation.

Maruša touches her breast again, but this time only with one hand, whilst looking into the mirror, which is now off- screen. When a person is faced by her own ageing, “all mirrors are potentially threatening” (Woodward 1991, 67). The heroine moves a bit forward and camera also dollies briefly from her medium long shot, until medium close- up, in which she is positioned exactly in front of her portrait photograph, completely obscuring it. This superimposition of middle-aged Maruša onto her own, presumably younger double, further amplifies the representation of the pressure on women created by socially imposed standards of fresh and youthful femininity. Her expression changes whilst saying that Peter is not evil at all, whereupon, after turning her back to the camera and facing the portrait, she completes the sentence by uttering that he doesn’t love her nonetheless. Then, Maruša curls on the couch, raving that next time Peter will come and together they will ride far away on the cart, where it



isn't dangerous to be a person. In the times of distress Maruša wants to regress into childhood and return to the place in the countryside, where she was happy. In my view, the underlying message of the film is that employment, which is usually sought in bigger cities, is perilous for a woman.

Next, Maruša pulls down a tablecloth, so little toys that were on it fall off a table. Afterwards, she drags herself into an armchair and, in external monologue expresses her desire for Peter to come although she is "old and plain". Thus, Maruša's character clearly reveals the anguish of females caused by aging, impacted by the norms of womanliness, such as beauty and eternal youth, in the early phase of consumerism in Yugoslav society (Jovanović 2014, 31). Also, in my view, at that point Maruša completely abandons her ambitions and perhaps serves as a mouthpiece for the director's vision of woman, instead of being a fully fleshed out character, when she says her last words: "You'll love me and stay with me, that is all I desire. All the rest is meaningless. All the rest is nothing."

Maruša's suicide could fit easily into a pattern that Aaron described as "necromantization", meaning how a woman personifies a romance with death, which has been "haunting the Western imagination in its depiction of self-sacrificial femininity" (2014: 76). Aaron (2014, 76) draws a link between the representational rationale behind visual pleasure, as inspired by Laura Mulvey, and the pervasiveness of a cultural "necromantization" of femininity. Apparently, the male fantasy is voiceless Maruša. As previously mentioned, the prompt fetishistically venerates her already lifeless fingers and feet in high heels, without being aware of Maruša's demise, which is on the verge of inadvertent necrophilia. Also, Peter posthumously asks her for forgiveness and kisses her on dead lips. Ironically, it is the first kiss he gives her in the film. After it, suddenly three uniformed undertakers appear, clad in black and possibly symbolizing death (Figure 20), and take Maruša away, which is visible in the reflection of the mirror while they pass next to her big photograph in portrait. Then, they carry downstairs the limp body, resembling images of martyrs. The film ends with a corresponding dose of pathos. Peter walks away into the dark night in the street, while the recurring couple, shown in the eleventh and last situation, dances in the rain underscored with its audible pounding and a non-diegetic instrumental lamenting guitar melody, highlighting the romance he will never have, or any of the film's characters, except the romance with death.



Figure 20. *Ples v dežju* (Boštjan Hladnik, 1961).

*Ples v dežju* and *Bube u glavi* differ because Maruša, whose suicide is explicit, is represented as deprived of sex, whereas Vera is an open-minded, sexually liberated woman, who did not refrain from carnal pleasures with her boyfriend Dragan. As opposed to Maruša's midlife crisis manifested through a deteriorating relationship and loss of job, which triggered the self-killing, Vera is an example of rape-suicide in Yugoslav New Film. Sexual assault is a known potential cause of real-life suicide in both female and male victims (Stack and Bowman 2009, 63). In painting, the most frequently depicted rape-related female suicide was of Lucretia, which historically took place in 509 B.C. (Stack and Bowman 2009, 63). Whereas Lucretia's act would be regarded as "heroic suicide" (Stack and Bowman 2009, 65), in *Bube u glavi* there are no heroics. On the contrary, director Radivojević renders the tragic situation somewhat comical. Vera's hanging body, shown only from the waist down, is found in the toilet by another patient – an elderly woman. In her own madness, she does not grasp the severity of the situation, but instead ties the shoelaces on Vera's shoes, without even getting startled by the hung deceased body that sways (Figure 21).



Figure 21. *Bube u glavi* (Miloš 'Miša' Radivojević, 1970).

Therefore, Vera's suicide is implicit since the actual action of self-killing is not shown. However, the aftermath of the suicide is portrayed, whereas there is no noticeable disfiguration of the female corpse, regardless of the fact that the method of self-inflicted death is extremely violent and in real life would deface the body. Such representation is anti-object because there is no depiction of the very moment of demise, not of entire corpse, nor of "decadent display of death for our contemplation, erotic or otherwise" (Aaron 2014, 80). Vera's head, which might show the wounds caused by hanging, is not shown. It confirms what Kryszewska notes regarding aestheticized ancient representations of Lucrecia's suicide, conducted by plunging a dagger into her own chest, in the sense that they "hardly ever realistically show the inevitable wounds or blood" (2009, 26). In a similar vein, Maruša looks as if she has just fallen asleep. In fact, in my view, in all the female suicide films of the researched period, regardless as to whether they are classified as mainstream or Yugoslav New Film, no traces of injuries, marring or mutilation are shown on female bodies. Apparently, there are standards of beauty not only in life, but in representations of death as well.

As Jovanović would have it, Maruša is a "woman-object", who kills herself in order to

salvage “her own image of her younger, prettier, and more desirable self” (2014, 30). His interpretation differs from Boglić’s, who perceives Maruša as a redeemer of her own liberation by suicide, determined to die in order to “set free the heroine of the Yugoslav Cinema from all subordination” (1980, 124, as cited in Jovanović 2014: 30). In my view, she is a contradiction because of simultaneously being a subject and object. Films can be misogynistic and feministic at the same time (Dillman 2014, 2-3). Arguments for concurring with Jovanović’s opinion I find in the scene when Maruša is in front of the mirror just before her demise, checking out whether she is still beautiful, and her personal and professional debasement throughout the film, with its underlying message discouraging women in general from work. I do not perceive Maruša, as Boglić characterized her, as an uncompromising “contemporary Joan of Arc” (1980, 124, as cited in Jovanović 2014, 30), but similar to Bogojević, as a desperate woman, “whose physical ageing equals her emotional, mental and spiritual decay” (2013, 246). However, in my opinion, although Boglić did not expound it as such, perhaps she interpreted Maruša as a ‘positive’ image because director Hladnik does not condone Peter’s and the theatre director’s behaviour that contributed to her death. Furthermore, Hladnik offers Maruša’s perspective via internal or external monologue, regardless of how outdated they may appear nowadays. In Yugoslav film, female perspective is seldom shown and he should be commended for providing it. However, Maruša’s empowerment by occasionally being enunciator of the narrative is annulled by the suicide.

## **Conclusion**

In films from the researched period (1961-1972) that depict female suicides, their bodies do not show signs of disfigurement. This is seen in films that could be classified as mainstream as well in those of the Yugoslav New Film, and regardless of how violent the method of self-killing is, ranging from gunshot to poison. The societal norms of appealing female appearance affect not only how their lives are represented, but their deaths as well. Perhaps women were expected to be beautiful in life and death. In *Bughouse*, youthful Vera’s character was portrayed by a woman who was in real life selected as Miss Serbia – the most beautiful woman in one of the Yugoslav republics. Although Vera uses a violent method of suicide – hanging – her body is only shown from the waist down, so no death grimace on the face with cyanosis or protruding tongue, which would be expected to appear after such a brutal demise in real life, is shown. Although Maruša belongs to an earlier generation than Vera – early mid-life, her ageing is addressed as a negative

factor, which illustrates the pressure on women to always be good-looking. It also underscores how often the female gender is scrutinized based on outer appearance. In the films from the researched period, portrayals of heroines of old age are not very common, unless the focus is on their motherhood.

Both analysed case study films have in common the classification as Yugoslav New Films. Also, they feature modern, working heroines who commit suicide. In these two cases, problems related to women's professional sphere – in Maruša's case being fired and in Vera's being gang raped by colleagues from work – undoubtedly trigger their suicides. These films contradict the Yugoslav socialist discourse of gender equality that encouraged women towards employment and resulted in a steady rise in the number of working women. On the contrary, the films portray the work sphere as either a dangerous place, in which sexual harassment lurks, or as a place that brings grim disappointment.

The films have an underlying message of work as perilous, almost as if it safer for women to stay at home. Was this the intention of the two directors? I highly doubt that, but most definitely they were influenced to some extent by an ongoing conflict in Yugoslavian society at that time, during which two diametrically opposite currents were clashing: the socialist tendency to free women from their domestic chains by employment, and the inclination of the remnants of patriarchy, whom the state could not easily repress, to maintain female subordination. So, if women worked, in most cases they had the double burden of household chores as well.

However, the more women started working, the more of them became financially independent, which increased their chances of having some decision making within the family. On the other hand, it seems that the films from the researched period seldom portray women as satisfied working entities. For example, when Maruša is in a bar with the prompt, she is the one who pays the bill for their drinks, which is one of the indicators of her financial independence due to her job in the theatre. Nevertheless, all the positive aspects of her employment are obliterated with the loss of her job, and subsequent suicide. Similarly, Vera is an apprentice in a company, with prospects of being hired full time and a bright future, until a small work-related picnic results in sexual abuse. In their private spheres as well, both heroines are subjected to some form of cruelty by their boyfriends: Vera's slaps her for no obvious reasons, after what she strikes him back, whereas Maruša's expresses extreme verbal cruelty.

Considering that Yugoslav New Film directors were auteurs, bearing the responsibility for their artistic choices, it was Hladnik's directorial intent not to sexually objectify Maruša, contrary to as he did with Magda in the disrobing scene, resembling strip-tease, whose character disappears after serving the purpose of inflaming the (male) viewer's imagination. Still, Hladnik

portrays Maruša as (self-) objectified preceding the suicide, when she scrutinises herself in the mirror, while sliding with hands over her own curves. Keeping in mind that acting is not a conventional profession, because an actor's only tool is his or her own body, there is a form of reflexivity at work here, transforming Maruša the actress into the symbol of the societal pressures on a woman's self-image.<sup>65</sup> Thus, Hladnik demonstrates a potential to criticise the deterministic norms of female appearance that the film brings to light and, seemingly, reinforces.

Radivojević as well objectifies Vera by showing her naked bust obsessively multiple times. However, when shown within a playful context where Vera and her boyfriend are depicted as two consensual people who love each other, due to the framing where they are encompassed together, the impression is of equality and not of exploitation. Diametrically opposite is the carnal context and a fetishist manner in which Magda's nude back is isolated as a detail in a close-up and underscored with music as if it were strip-tease number. Ironically, Magda's back feels more nude than Vera's explicitly shown bust during lovemaking. Nevertheless, Vera's denuded breasts in the rape scenes are clearly a flagrant exploitation that obliterates any positive effect of the above-mentioned liberated sexuality. Also, Vera is more a function in the service of director Radivojević, than a full-fledged character like Maruša.

It is important to note that Hladnik and Radivojević are equally critical towards the unjust and deplorable deaths of their heroines. They both offer their perspectives, especially Hladnik. For example, Hladnik gives Maruša's point of view throughout the whole film by making her inner monologue audible, whereas Radivojević portrays Vera's post-rape trauma by showing her as she throws oranges at two nurses in the mental asylum. Unfortunately, the directors ultimately disempower their progressive working heroines by transforming them from strong women into vulnerable, echoing societal masculinist animosity towards women's employment.

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<sup>65</sup> As kindly pointed out to me by Dr Alex Forbes.

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## **Chapter 8. Of bees, birds, trees, and women: iconography, superstition and victimization of female characters in Yugoslav New Film**

### **Contextualization**

This article, published in the journal *Images: The International Journal of European Film, Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication*, looks into a particular form of violence towards female characters, their victimization. It examines how the directors of two analysed films have different approaches towards victimization of female characters. While in *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967, Yugoslavia) a heroine withers away, in *Roj/The Beehive aka The Swarm* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966, Yugoslavia), a heroine rises up in the face of diversity, although her fate remains uncertain due to the open-endedness of the film. These films have prominent female characters, which is surprising and quite rare in the Yugoslav Film movement, since female characters are in most cases episodic or marginalized. Furthermore, the films are set in the distant past. This relates back to the fourth research question, which investigates whether the films, set in pre-socialist past, and featuring lead female protagonists, by criticizing patriarchy in past, in fact, indirectly hint at the vestiges of patriarchy in the socialist present of the 1960s. In addition, the piece scrutinizes the relationships amongst two or more women, featured in the two analysed films, which are seldomly shown in the Yugoslav New Film movement. Chronologically, this is the fourth empirical article that I published.

### **Reference**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigates how the directors of two selected case study films criticise the real-life remnants of patriarchy in the family sphere, in nominally gender-equal Yugoslavia. I argue that they do this by transposing their stories from socialist Yugoslavia to the pre-socialist times: during Ottoman rule and monarchist Yugoslavia. The selected period films *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967, Yugoslavia) and *Roj/The Beehive* aka *The Swarm* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966, Yugoslavia), both belonging to the Yugoslav *novi film* (New Film) movement (1961-1972), refract the workings of the vestiges of patriarchy in a family domain of Yugoslav socialist society. In these two costume dramas, patriarchy is portrayed to its fullest extent, due to their stories being set in the past, ostensibly unrelated to contemporary Yugoslav society and thus uninhibited by the drive to cater to the official discourse of female emancipation.

Applying a critical film feminist perspective, by formal analysis via close readings of these two selected films, this article examines the iconography linked to fictional depictions of heroines and delves into the representation of victimisation of women. I investigate whether the depiction of the female sorceress(es) embody the primitiveness, ignorance, and/or poverty of economically disadvantaged and historically oppressed pre-socialist village. In order to peruse not only the individual portrayal of female protagonists but the dynamics of their interaction, the Bechdel test is applied and complemented with concepts such as the 'reversed masquerade' and 'cryptomatriarchy', which sheds light on the relationship between women and the presence or absence of female solidarity.

## **Keywords**

iconography, Yugoslav New Film, female characters, Bechdel test, 'reversed masquerade', 'cryptomatriarchy'

## Introduction

The main aim of this study is to investigate why the directors of two selected Yugoslav New Films depict the patriarchal reign of a pre-socialist past, instead of their socialist present. Why did they choose to feature women as the main characters, which was less common in the Yugoslav *novi film* (New Film) Movement? I propose the argument that this was a choice to criticise the real-life remnants of patriarchy in the family sphere of a nominally gender-equal Yugoslavia, by cinematically regressing into the past, into the pre-socialist times before the Second World War, instead of showing the socialist present of the 1960s. In the two studied costume dramas, patriarchy is portrayed in its fullest extent, due to the stories being set in the past during Ottoman rule and monarchist Yugoslavia. The films are ostensibly unrelated to their contemporary Yugoslav society and are thus uninhibited by the inclination to cater to the official discourse of female emancipation. The Yugoslav socialist state took all the necessary legislative measures for guaranteeing and promoting gender equality. What it could not fully eradicate were the patriarchal mindsets of people in the domain of the family, dating back and persisting from pre-socialist times. By having a critical attitude towards myths of the past, films are critically relating to their contemporary myths (Novaković 1970, 152). Therefore, I contend that the selected period films, *Breza/The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967, Yugoslavia) and *Roj/The Beehive*<sup>66</sup> aka *The Swarm* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966, Yugoslavia), both belonging to the Yugoslav New Film movement, refract the workings of the vestiges of patriarchy in a family domain of Yugoslav socialist society. I observe the films from a critical film feminist perspective, by formal analysis via close readings.

In addition, my study scrutinises the represented victimisation of women, and the meanings behind iconography (of the birch tree, the white dove and the queen bee) linked to fictional depictions of heroines. In order to observe and analyse, both the individual portrayal of female protagonists and the dynamics of their interaction, the Bechdel test is performed. Although initially originating as a witty insight from a comic writer and not meant to be employed as a method to investigate the silencing of female characters in films, in recent years the test has often been applied to cinema for evaluating gender representation (O'Meara 2016, 1120). The shortcomings of the somewhat over-simplified Bechdel test are complemented with concepts such as the 'reversed masquerade' (Bogojević 2011), and 'cryptomatriarchy' (Simić

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<sup>66</sup> Although the more accurate literal translation of the film title would be *The Swarm*, which appears in few rare mentions of the film by other authors, I decided to translate it as *The Beehive*, because it better captures the essence of the film in terms of the iconography of the bees.

1999), which shed light on the relations between women and the presence or absence of female solidarity. The former theoretical concept refers to the celluloid effaced femininity of elderly women, often clad in black, who appropriate patriarchal attitudes from their male family members and use manly behaviour as a mask (Bogojević 2011, 259). The latter concept implies the hidden, obscured power of elderly women within a real-life household of a patriarchal family, specifically regarding younger women (Simić 1999, 67-77). Lastly, I foreground how, in the selected films, a female sorceress embodies the primitiveness, ignorance, and poverty associated with the economically disadvantaged and historically oppressed pre-socialist village.

The reason for selecting and analysing *The Birch Tree* and *The Beehive* is due to both being period films set during pre-socialist times. *The Birch Tree* takes place in the era between the two World Wars, during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, thus regressing into the times of tradition when patriarchy reigned. Similarly, *The Beehive* evokes bygone times in the more distant past of the First Serbian uprising against the Ottomans in 1804. Moreover, these two case study films were chosen due to both being shot in the times of socialism, when gender equality was proclaimed. The thematic distancing from current events in the socialist present by placing the story in the past, accentuated by the usage of costumes and settings, renders any ideological obligation towards the socialist state unnecessary (Slapšak 2000, 128). Consequently, it enables a subtlety in audio-visual or narrative character development (Slapšak 2000, 128). In contrast, gender representations as stereotypes are more frequent in Yugoslav films which deal with contemporary themes (Slapšak 2000, 128). This is the case in many Yugoslav New Films, which makes the two analysed films belonging to this movement rather exceptional, since they feature fleshed out female characters and stories set in the pre-socialist past.

Jovanović (2014, 182) notes that some films classified as the Classical Yugoslav Cinema (generally speaking, films with classical narrative preceding the Yugoslav New Film movement) were critical of the rural patriarchal tradition as a part of earlier times, while simultaneously implying that it might still be present in Yugoslav socialist society. Focusing on gender whilst peasant-themed, they initiated a debate on the patriarchal legacy of traditional rural life, stretching from the pre-socialist era into socialism, to some extent (Jovanović 2014, 225). My argument is in line with Jovanović's, since *The Birch Tree* and *The Beehive* elicit this kind of debate. Thus, there is a continuity of the Classical Yugoslav Cinema with Yugoslav New Film, which 'constantly destroys all existing societal myths and questions traditional

values of one patriarchal moral'<sup>67</sup> (Novaković 1970, 76). Therefore, drawing on Slapšak's, Jovanović's and Novaković's views, I contend that in the case study films, directors Babaja and Popović criticised the real-life gender imbalance in the family domain of socialist Yugoslavia by portraying the workings of patriarchy, as set in the past.

### **Yugoslav New Film and Gender**

Both analysed films belong to Yugoslav New Film, a loose auteurist movement without a manifesto, which Dušan Stojanović bookends between 1961 and 1972 (in Petrović 1988, 355). Yugoslav New Film tackles themes in an innovative manner, exhibits modern aesthetic tendencies in its form and is often in opposition to Yugoslavian traditional narrative film (Stojanović 1969, 158), a formally and thematically mainstream cinema that coexisted alongside it. Divergent in their styles, Yugoslav New Film directors sought an authentic connection not only to the topic they explored, but to the viewers as well (Makavejev in Novaković and Tirnanić 1967, 6). The unifying threads of the movement include social criticism, a more open attitude towards sexuality, and a pessimistic outlook on life (Petrović 1988, 329-49). In addition, the depiction of generational conflict is one of the traits of Yugoslav New Film, which, generally speaking, is shared with the other initial 'new waves' that developed in several countries, such as French Nouvelle Vague, Japanese Nūberu bāgu and Czechoslovakian Nová Vlna.

Aside from the presence of generational conflict, the two selected films also qualify as Yugoslav New Films for being innovative and prone to experimentation in terms of content, and style. They are both rather formally stylised, with non-linear narrative structures. Subsequently, their editing is complex and interspersed with retrospective scenes, which could be another argument (but not exclusive) for categorizing them as Yugoslav New Films, as opposed to the mainstream films with mostly invisible, linear editing and classical narrative dramatic structure. The formal characteristics of Yugoslav New Film are suffused with absolute stylistic freedom, where every auteur freely chooses means of expression that suit him<sup>68</sup> best (Makavejev in Novaković and Tirnanić 1967, 6). The somewhat theatrical *The Beehive* has powerful black and white photography by Milorad Marković, whilst *The Birch Tree*—perhaps visually one of the most highly regarded Yugoslav films—is shot in colour by director of

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<sup>67</sup> Own translation.

<sup>68</sup> Yugoslav New Film directors were mostly men.

photography Tomislav Pinter. Babaja seeks a classical beauty within his images, while simultaneously being entirely modern thematically, with the fact that he touches upon unexplored spheres of social politics and bodily transience (Makavejev in Novaković and Tirnanić 1967, 6). His first feature length fictional film *Carevo novo ruho/The Emperor's New Clothes* (1961), based on the tale by Hans Christian Andersen and set in an undefined past, is a critique of any rule, possibly even including that of Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito. Keeping that in mind, it is not surprising that Babaja's next film *The Birch Tree*—which, as Gilić notes, was inspired by two novels written by Slavko Kolar in the interwar period (Gilić 2010, 6)—is set into the past in order to comment on the contemporary issues of that socialist present. This aspect is common in both of the aforementioned films.

Namely, Babaja addresses the precarious position of a woman in a rural environment, specifically as she differs from the collective as an individual, whether with her fragile body or otherwise. Popović, a painter by vocation, also has a streak of social criticism in his artistic opus, both in his paintings and films. Pursuing social equality, 'his films would confront the past and the present of Yugoslavia' (Miller 2007, 152). Popović's and Babaja's work are in line with the definition of Yugoslav New Film as a movement tackling 'socio-national themes in a highly gendered mode, contrary to earlier propagandist films which systematically effaced gender for the sake of class (communist, patriarchal) struggle' (Bogojević 2011, 257).

However, as Yugoslav film critic Boglić (1980, 124) notes, in modern Yugoslav New Film, a woman takes secondary place since the films of the directors who inaugurated this new wave, such as those of Aleksandar Petrović, Vatroslav Mimica, Zvonimir Berković, Matjaž Klopčič, and Babaja, primarily gave agency to a male hero as the subject of the action. In their films, the female character is often a passive object, stripped of her independence and equality (Boglić 1980, 124). Nevertheless, there were also a few real heroines, for instance: the mother queen bee Stojanka (Mira Stupica) in *The Beehive* by Popović; the wife of Hasan bey in *Hasanaginica/Kameni despot ili jedna mogućnost narodne pesme Hasanaginica* (1967) by the same director; or the mother in *The Wild Growth/Samorastniki* (1963) by Igor Pretnar (Boglić 1980, 123). However, many more were women-objects, who only watched as their destiny unfolded, tragically constrained by the mores of their society (Boglić 1980, 123). A typical example of female characters from that era of Yugoslav film, due to 'her passivity, certain helplessness and utmost dependence on a man'<sup>69</sup> (Krelja 2010, 19), is the much-mistreated Janica (Manca Košir), from Babaja's *The Birch Tree*. Yet, in contrast to Boglić's

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<sup>69</sup> Own translation.

aforementioned critique of Babaja's woman-object, Krelja perceives it as a quality that regardless of whether Janica is dead or alive, the plot of the film revolves around her 'as opposed to the extreme marginalization of other heroines in so many fiction films from this region'<sup>70</sup> (2010, 19). Therefore, the focus on women as main characters makes *The Birch Tree* and *The Beehive* worthy of attention.

After viewing 269 films, out of 286 both mainstream and Yugoslav New Films, directed by Yugoslav directors from 1961 until 1972, I find that what many Yugoslav New Films share is a physical or symbolical harm, self-harm, neglect or control directed at female characters. Since Yugoslav New Film is frequently perceived as liberated, as De Cuir observes, it is ironic that female characters were usually portrayed as victims, who 'were often mistreated, abused, and even murdered' (De Cuir 2013, 3). Modern Yugoslav New Films, in Boglić's view, are mostly 'male' films, which show all that is conservative in female nature, and all the negative excesses of somewhat more nominal than effectuated Yugoslavian real-life gender equality (Boglić 1980, 125). Oscillating somewhere between myth and the degradation of a fetishized female character, with more frequent tendency towards the latter, these films are often one-sided (Boglić 1980, 125). This is because they show only extremes or societal blackness, without depicting nuances or the other side of a past contemporary Yugoslav society, with numerous possibilities offered to Yugoslav working woman. Consequently, her reality with its complexities of both advantages and shortcomings does not exist in those films (Boglić 1980, 125).

Krelja notes that a common denominator of Yugoslav New Film auteurs is a similar outlook on a woman and her body (Krelja 1979, 412). On the one hand, a female character is often represented as bearing a significant part of the guilt that the world is not a better place to live in, due to carrying a seed of evil, being infected with weaknesses of society, or having a tendency towards infidelity (Krelja 1979, 409-12). Thus, a woman is the cause of a man's doom, and in turn a man consequently rapes or murders her (Krelja 1979, 410-12). Yugoslav New Film auteurs frequently (and wrongfully) attributed significant vices of reality to a woman in their intent to approach film as a conscience of society, as if she herself was personification of reality and life (Krelja 1979, 413). On the other hand, in cases when a female character is portrayed as morally decent, she is perceived by a male character, or even the entire environment, as a passive object suitable for inhumane treatment, and is submitted to individual degradation (Krelja 1979, 412). Therefore, from Krelja's observations, it can be deduced that

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<sup>70</sup> Own translation.



in Yugoslav New Film, a woman and her body is, generally speaking, either a source of wickedness or a target for male vice, which results in her mistreatment.

Depictions of sexuality and gender in the context of Yugoslav New Film, and the attitudes of its directors towards gender norms, are yet to be acknowledged as one of its main traits ("Black Waves, Red Horizons - New Yugoslav Film," 2015). Considering that Yugoslav New Film is dominated by male directors and mostly features men as the lead characters, the mere shift of focus on women as the main protagonists in the two selected films is attention worthy. Moreover, they are fleshed-out characters, as opposed to many Yugoslav New Film depictions of women as stereotypes. Aside from the fact that Babaja and Popović criticise the patriarchal behaviour towards the depiction of female characters, they are also occasionally complicit in, or have ambivalent viewpoint on, the matter of gender asymmetry.

### **Gender equality in Yugoslavian Socialism and Representations of Gender**

In order to ascertain whether there is a correlation between the analysed films set in the past and a seeming misalignment with gender issues in the Yugoslav socialism of the 1960s, I look into Yugoslav legislation. In Yugoslav society, gender equality was first legally enforced by the constitution of 1946 (Zaharijević 2017, 266). All subsequent constitutions have continued to enforce it but, most importantly for this paper, the socialist state actively propagated it (Zaharijević 2017, 266). The Socialist State overtly and clearly let it be known that gender equality was a reward for active participation in the Second World War (as Partisan fighters, nurses, and civilians who supported the struggle by bringing supplies in the rear of battlefield) (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 34). Women were granted legal benefits, such as the political rights to vote and to be elected to political bodies (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 34). Furthermore, they gained rights to one year-long paid maternity leave, health insurance, access to education, freedom of choice, equal pay, marriage and divorce rights (Morokvašić 1986, 125),

The aforementioned aspects reveal, if the causes of gender-based discrimination towards women in the family domain were to be investigated, that the laws were not the source of it, on the contrary, they prevented it (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 45), thus being, at the time 'some of the most progressive legislation in the world on women' (Morokvašić 1986, 125). They gave Yugoslav women 'by far more rights than American and Western European women'<sup>71</sup> (Zaharijević 2011, 195). The so-called 'women's question' was considered as resolved because,

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<sup>71</sup> Own translation.

according to the state rhetoric, with the abolition of class that took place, and legal and political reforms, gender inequalities were expected to consequently disappear (Sklevicky 1996, 89). Socialism indeed triggered a substantial improvement in women's rights, but on the other hand, it failed to fully keep the promise of their liberation (Morokvašić 1986, 120). Despite being empowered by employment, Yugoslavian women performed a second, unpaid shift in their own homes after coming back from work, by doing child-rearing and household chores, in most cases unaided by their husbands (Morokvašić 1986, 127). Thus, 'in the private sphere, legislation was unable to resist the old values and replace them with something new' (Morokvašić 1986, 121).

Reproducing the remnants of patriarchal mentality and their stereotypes in regards to the position and the role of women, mass media reinforced the ideal of a capable, hardworking, family-oriented housewife who does not leave the domestic sphere (Papić 2012, 105). Both in everyday life and in the popular press, Yugoslav women gradually ceased to be represented as Partisan fighters and were 'left as happy housewives or worker women at the conveyor-belt' (Lóránd 2018, 124).

The words of Tito were also in line with this trend. At the Third Congress of the Antifascist Front of Women (AFW), a communist women's organisation, he spoke about 'the specific duties' of women, such as nurturing and caring, especially for children (Pantelić 2011, 91). Moreover, he mentioned how mothers dedicated to child-rearing should be perceived accordingly as the ones building socialism and performing socially-useful work, 'because proper raising of children is their first obligation' (Đorgović, Panić, and Popović 2010, 17). Furthermore, books also peddled disparate values for women and men. A study published by Rajka and Milan Polić in 1979 on the representation of female characters in schoolbooks for children, like corresponding studies made in France or Great Britain, concludes that 'there are fewer female characters in the books, women have the stereotyped roles of mother, housewife, nurse or teacher, and they are given more negative traits than boys' (Morokvašić 1986, 133).

Women were not only underrepresented numerically as the main characters in the schoolbooks (32 percent women, 68 percent men), but the roles they performed and the meanings ascribed to their portrayals also differed, thus socialising them to become maternal and indecisive, and to pay excessive attention to their own looks (Ramet 1999, 104). Consequently, the socialist state's implementations of gender equality and female empowerment were 'constantly being hindered by the values transmitted by the mass media and upheld by the old patriarchal system' (Morokvašić 1986, 136).

In his study of Yugoslav cinema in the 1960s, Davor Beganović (2012, 135) notes the role of images to represent, while simultaneously affecting the ideological and political situation in a particular society. The idea that films not only reflect, but actually create meanings at the societal level, can also be borrowed from Paolo Favero's observation on Italian cinema, which is that certain 'films share a capacity to promote an image' (Favero 2011, 61). Considering that not only in Yugoslav New Films, but even in mainstream films, depictions of gender equality were rare, especially in contemporary themed films, they concurrently refracted and promulgated an image of a subjugated woman. However, this is in contradiction to the official stance of the Yugoslav socialist state to endorse gender equality. Significant efforts were made to legally enforce emancipation of women, which resulted in the increase of worker-mothers. Unexpectedly, they are mostly absent from cinematic depictions of both work and the family sphere. An exceptional example of a film that promotes gender equality within a Yugoslav household, set in a past contemporary socialist Yugoslavia, is the formally and thematically mainstream *Muškarci/Men* (Milo Đukanović, 1963, Yugoslavia).

### **Celluloid Gender Asymmetry in the Family Sphere and Generational Conflict**

The contrast between gender equality promulgated in socialism and the gender asymmetry in the family sphere is present in both everyday life of Yugoslavia (as the double-burden), as well as in the two films I discuss. *The Beehive* tackles the relativity of guilt via the public trial of a wife named Stojanka, exposed to shaming by a mob of villagers during the process. She allegedly betrayed her husband Nikola (Danilo 'Bata' Stojković)—an outlaw opposed to Ottoman rule and wanted for the murder of Halil bey (Bekim Fehmiu)—by revealing his whereabouts to the Ottoman occupiers. That resulted in Nikola's death by stoning inside a well where he was hiding. Supposedly, Stojanka arrives at such a difficult decision in order to prevent vengeful Halil bey's brother (also Bekim Fehmiu) from burning down her house and the people in it, including her newlywedded son Stojan (Dušan Golumbovski) and his bride Ljubica (Olivera Vučo). *The Birch Tree* is about fragile Janica, who perishes due to post-birth complications, the harshness of peasant life, lack of access to any proper medical care, and neglect by her mother-in-law and husband Marko Labudan (Velimir 'Bata' Živojinović).

In both films, motherhood is suppressed. Janica loses a new-born baby girl, who dies sometime after birth. Stojanka's son Stojan is killed by the Ottomans, while her relationship with her young daughter deteriorates because Stojanka offers herself to be raped by Halil bey

in her place. She protects her from sexual assault with her own body but does not manage to spare the daughter from witnessing her own rape, which traumatises the girl. In *The Birch Tree*, the grim end of the main heroine is made known to the spectators early in the plot. Contrary to that, *The Beehive* is more open-ended, which leaves the spectators perplexed as to whether the heroine will be granted a pardon or severely punished for her purported transgression of social codes.

In order to establish a link between these cinematic depictions of the pre-socialist past in male-dominated societies and the seemingly unrelated real-life in the socialist present of the 1960s, I highlight that in both films, there is a generational conflict, manifest in the defiance of young girls towards their mothers regarding the choice of a romantic partner. In *The Beehive*, Ljubica's mother tries to convince her, immediately before and after her wedding, to leave the house she is marrying into, but in vain. Similarly, in *The Birch Tree*, both Janica's mother and brother chastise Janica for dancing three times with woodward Marko at a village festivity, despite the fact that he is a notorious womanizer, and that he had sued her father for cutting down an oak tree. It is important to note that in the reality of socialist Yugoslavia, the inviolable authority of parents over children started losing its grip due to the process of urbanisation (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 78). This was because the patriarchal subjugation of women via men started significantly weakening, especially in regard to the economic sphere, since more women were becoming employed and educated (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 78). This was also true in the legal sphere, where egalitarian inheritance, marriage and divorce rights were guaranteed to a married woman (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 78). Urban living, and the migration of the work force from villages to cities, created conditions for greater independence and more freedom for children in a family, including the right to freely choose ones' future marriage partner (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 78). This switch is indirectly reflected in the two analysed film representations.

However, the patriarchal way of thinking typical for agrarian environments, which lingered on from the pre-socialist era, was resistant to change (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 91). The high influx of rural populations into the cities had the consequence that the traditional outlook on gender roles in the family also persisted in the urban environments to some extent (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 91). While simultaneously being employed, women were also doing most of the household work, and often were solely responsible for the upbringing of their children (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 91). Consequently, they were overburdened by their multiple roles. According to data from 1965, a woman worked, on average, somewhere between 60 and 70 hours per week (at work and at home), out of which between 20 and 30 hours were unpaid work (in her own home) (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 92). The socialist state tried to alleviate any contradictions that the

societal role of the employed woman-mother brought, with increasing societal care for children, specifically by building public kindergartens, nurseries and day-care centres (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 96). It is important to keep in mind that in Yugoslav socialism, many laws were ratified which were integral to gender equality, such as: women's right to vote and to be voted for; the right for equal pay for equal work; the right to keep one's maiden last name when marrying; the right to have full custody over children after divorce; the right to paid maternity leave before and after childbirth; the freedom of reproductive choice; the right to schooling and education; the free choice of profession and employment; the right to social services and health insurance (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 34-43). Still, the enormous improvements that Yugoslav socialism brought, including economic independence and legal equality, were not enough to completely change the patriarchal mindsets of people and the image of women in the domain of family relations (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 91).

### **The Bechdel test, 'reversed masquerade' and 'cryptomatriarchy'**

In order to fully comprehend how women are represented in the two studied films, it is important to explore the interpersonal relationships amongst themselves. *The Beehive* is one of the rare movies from Yugoslavian New Wave which, in my opinion, passes the Bechdel test (which investigates the presence of female characters in media). The Bechdel test originates from Alison Bechdel's comic *Dykes to Watch Out For*, where one of the characters declares that she only watches films if they meet three prerequisites (Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015, 19-20). Thus, it is undertaken by an examination as to whether: (1) there are at least two important female characters in a fiction film, (2) who talk to each other, (3) about something besides men (Hole et al. 2017, 5). In academic literature, it is also sometimes referred to as the Bechdel-Wallace test (Chivers 2017, 74), but nonetheless, its definition is the same. In addition, in some sources, a requirement for the test is that both women should be named (Racic 2018).

In *The Beehive* both names of the two most prominent female protagonists are known: Stojanka and Ljubica. The two women make a covenant between them, in the scene preceding the modest wedding ceremony of Ljubica and Stojanka's son Stojan, held in secrecy in Stojanka's house. Even though men are mentioned during this scene, it is done sporadically. Therefore, the main focus of their conversation is not on men, but on the mutual agreement between the two women on how to run and preserve the family, so the film passes the Bechdel

test. Ljubica, being the reproductive female member in the family unit, takes Stojanka's place of the dominant matriarch. The shift in hierarchy is consensual. Stojanka utters and Ljubica repeats after her: 'God, give me happiness and longevity. And may I become by right and on time the queen bee in this beehive. May I live in prosperity. And may my strength calm



Figure 22. *The Beehive* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966).

down with one husband. Amen.' The covenant is sealed when Stojanka touches Ljubica's chin (Figure 22), after which Ljubica exclaims to Stojanka the word 'mother' with a lachrymose, trembling voice and hugs her. This signals not only Ljubica's acceptance of succeeding Stojanka as the queen bee of the family she is about to marry into, but an act of female bonding as well. However, there is an enmity between Stojanka and Ljubica's mother, though it does not affect Stojanka's relationship with Ljubica. On the contrary, Ljubica twice ignores her mother's urging to leave Stojanka's house and return home with her: the first time just before the modest wedding ceremony held in secrecy in the house, the second time when the Ottomans arrive in front of the house at the end of the wedding, in pursuit of Stojanka's outlaw husband. Ljubica's mother's opposition towards her daughter's marriage and her hostility to Stojanka only seem to fortify the embattled solidarity between Ljubica and Stojanka.

In *The Birch Tree*, female solidarity towards Janica is only expressed by Jaga (Hermina Pipinić), her in-law, who shows empathy for her when Janica is on her deathbed. The film passes the Bechdel test, for instance, because of a conversation between the duo, during which feverish Janica loses track of time due to the illness and asks Jaga how many days have passed since her new-born baby daughter Ljubica, who died ten days after birth, was buried.

Jaga stands out from other peasant woman not only because of her compassion for Janica, but with her orange pullover as well. Its warm colour correlates to her warm personality. In contrast, other peasant women are clad in dark clothing, ominous and malicious. The group gossips about Janica, in her presence, while she is on the sickbed, as if she were already dead. They say how she was always thin and weak, and express surprise while recounting how her husband Marko left a girl, who was fat, strong, and rich, for Janica. From this, it can be implied that in the countryside, where women were expected to do hard physical labour, slenderness was associated with sickness and corpulence with health. Although both films pass the Bechdel test, it does not necessarily mean that they depict women being kind to each other or expressing solidarity. Namely, there is a friction between Stojanka and Ljubica's mother. The most harrowing lack of solidarity that Janica experiences is from her mother-in-law.

Building on Riviere's concept of 'womanliness as a masquerade' (2018, 127), and in my view further influenced by Doane's 'theorization of femininity as masquerade' (1988-89, 47), Bogojević employs, within Yugoslav cinema, her own concept of the 'reversed masquerade', where female characters, such as grandmothers and mothers, emphasise their masculine attributes and utilise them 'as a mask disguising and effacing their femininity' (2011, 259). With the sense of womanliness obliterated, the androgynous older women, frequently clad in black, are far crueller than the male characters, as they fix both men and women with a sadistic voyeuristic gaze (Bogojević 2011, 259). They reinforce patriarchal attitudes, initially adopted from their fathers and then spouses (Bogojević 2011, 259).

Although intended for a different example and time period of Yugoslav cinema, Bogojević's theory is applicable to my case study film *The Birch Tree*, because the aforementioned elderly women, grim and deprived of womanliness, show no empathy for beautiful and fragile Janica. Nevertheless, ageing is approached differently in *The Beehive* because mature and dignified Stojanka retains her femininity. She expresses no enmity towards her young and pretty daughter-in-law, but solidarity with her. While elderly women from *The Birch Tree* perpetuate patriarchy, Stojanka undermines and confronts it. In contrast, the worst mistreatment Janica encountered is from her insensitive mother-in-law, who pressures her—on a day she is so feverish that she could not even go to the graveyard, with her husband Marko to

bury their new-born daughter—to take a cow to graze in the pouring rain. This contributes to Janica's premature death.

A family constellation in socialist Yugoslav society was labelled by Simić as 'cryptomatriarchy' (1999, 28), in some of its traditional incarnations. However, references to matriarchy should not create a misleading impression of 'a denial of women's subordination by implying that it is women who are in power in fact' (Lóránd 2018, 115). Actually, there is a discrepancy between the coexistent unexpected power of elderly women and the machismo of a patriarchy marked with patrilineality (Simić 1999, 25). The power of women was obfuscated, due to the seemingly male dominance over the household members and society in general, which was 'more a public than a private fact' (Simić 1999, 14). Women attained 'this power not by virtue of being wives, but as the result of becoming mothers, and, eventually, grandmothers' (Simić 1999, 14). Not only in rural, but even in urban environments where they predominantly worked, women ran the family domain, while simultaneously 'exerting a certain influence on their sons even outside the context of family life' (Simić 1999, 27). The revered and authoritative position of mothers increased gradually with time through their sons as proxies (Simić 1999, 24).

In contrast to the influential position of mothers and grandmothers, daughters-in-law were regarded as outsiders upon entering the husband's extensive family and were utterly powerless until the birth of their own male children, who would perpetuate the family name (Simić 1999, 18). Due to an initially subordinated position, a daughter-in-law's prospect of marital union was reliant on a good relationship with her dominant mother-in-law, because of the 'powerful influence of mothers in the marital affairs of their sons' (Simić 1999, 23).

In line with Simić's thoughts on 'cryptomatriarchy' in real life, in *The Birch Tree*, 'the real threat to a woman's position in the family stems, not so much from her husband as from her mother-in-law, against whom a daughter-in-law's principal weapon is the status and pride that results from grandparenthood' (1999, 22). By failing to provide a healthy male heir, Janica's already inferior status as a newcomer worsens further, whereas Ljubica's implicit pregnancy in *The Beehive* contributes to elevating her status as a matriarch, as a queen-bee. The role reversal between Stojanka and Ljubica is obvious in the denouement of the film when Stojanka, the former symbolical queen-bee, is shown leaning her head on Ljubica's shoulder, as if passing on to her the legacy of the role of the new queen-bee. Both Popović and Babaja are critical of the patriarchy, while Babaja places the forces of patriarchy not only in male characters, but in female as well; for instance, Janica's mother-in-law and other elderly women. This relates back to the point that women's relations, in the studied films as well as in life, are



not uniquely ones of solidarity and resistance. Nevertheless, this might be problematic if understood without taking into consideration the context that women, socialised as such, perpetuate the patriarchal stances accrued from their fathers and spouses.

### **Victimization**

According to Kaplan, among the patriarchal mechanisms to control female discourse and desire in Hollywood cinema are victimization, self-righteous murder, rape, and fetishizing (2000, 7). In the victim pattern, the female protagonist suffers and often perishes through illness or impoverishment (Kaplan 2000, 6). '[T]he figures women are asked to identify with are usually victims' (Kaplan 2000, 49). Those victimized and powerless female characters reinforce the sense of worthlessness among female spectators (Kaplan 2000, 104).

Similarly, Haskell (1987, 160-161) points out that in Hollywood women's films, ordinary heroines were portrayed as victims through the myths of self-effacement and martyrdom, which were also buttressed by the mass media. The underlying motive of those representations is to maintain patriarchy by influencing women to come to terms with the position they are stuck in, and hence to discourage them from questioning it (Haskell 1987, 160-161).

Examples of the victimhood pattern can be found also outside the Hollywood cinema. The case study film *The Birch Tree* illustrates how director Babaja reinforced gender norms permeated with the patriarchal subjection of women by following the victimisation pattern, if Kaplan's (2000), and Haskell's (1987) theories are applied to Yugoslav New Film. The film is reminiscent of melodramas, which were, according to Fischer (2017, 36), in the most cases directed by men, and foregrounded a female heroine who faces a predicament in her domestic life revolving around the motherhood and marriage. Doane notes that in that genre, heroines have been disconnected from desire (Fischer 2017, 36). 'The dominance of the bed in the *mise-en-scène* of these films is the explicit mark of the displacement/replacement of sexuality by illness' (Doane 1984, 79). Likewise, *The Birch Tree*'s main heroine Janica does not have an active sexuality. On the contrary, Janica's love for her husband Marko seems almost platonic and not corporeal. Regardless, Janica's choice of a life partner of a man whom she was warned about, a womanizer, leads her to a grim destiny, as if she takes his sins upon her. After the newborn baby she gave birth to died, Janica also falls ill and perishes, probably as a consequence

of an unsanitary countryside childbirth without medical assistance. As Chakravarty notes, women appear inseparable from their bodies (2017, 58).

Following the Second World War, in Yugoslavian villages, births continued to take place under inadequate conditions, since customs and beliefs were given preference by the countryside folks to proper medical assistance (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 108). After liberation, and in the decades that followed, many institutions focused on the protection of women, pregnant women and mothers (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 124). Despite all the efforts of the socialist state and the women's organisation AFW (Antifašistički front žena/Antifascist Front of Women) to provide healthcare and enlighten the people health-wise, for the majority of women, in many rural parts of the country, bad hygienic habits and superstitions persisted for a long time (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 106). In Yugoslavia, of all the babies born in 1961, 46,7% were delivered without professional help (Gudac-Dodić 2006, 108). The reluctance of individuals in more rural villages to seek proper medical aid, not only during childbirth but also in regard to any type of illness, is echoed in the film *The Birch Tree*.

When Janica is on her deathbed, Jaga goes out of the house and calls Marko to come inside because Janica wants to see him for the last time, but he is busy preparing the decoration of the flagpole. He has been asked to be a flag-bearer at a wedding, which is a traditional custom. For him, this element of tradition is apparently more important than saying goodbye to his dying wife. His response to Jaga is that he will go see Janica when he finishes adorning the flagpole. It is difficult to comprehend why he even accepted the joyful role in the oncoming wedding festivity in the first place, especially knowing he might be in mourning at any moment. He also prioritizes insignificant preparations instead of Janica, so she passes away without her dying wish being fulfilled: to see the man she loves. Therefore, Janica's fate fits the above-mentioned victimization pattern (Kaplan 2000). After she is buried, Marko indulges in hedonism at the wedding celebration, but eventually goes through the moment of catharsis where he repents and humbles himself in front of the white birch tree, which symbolizes Janica.

Thus, the woman is victimized with pathos. In this film, the underlying androcentric ideology of the patriarchal society is that women should tolerate husbands who neglect them, because if they do so, their soul will go to heaven. They will be rewarded in the afterlife for the hardships they have suffered. Despite the fact that Babaja's film is critical of patriarchy by the very selection of theme and giving prominence to a woman, it still reinforces gender inequality by the usage of stereotyped representation of a saint-like, passive and neglected female character who acquiesces to her suffering. To borrow Kaplan's thoughts on American melodrama, a film can simultaneously have elements resisting dominant patriarchal gender

ideology and closure that buttresses it (1992, 172-173). Consequentially, it appears that the narrative normalizes female suffering, reinforces the male-dominated order and controls women by implanting the idea of posthumous reward or sanctified remembrance after underappreciated existence.

In contrast, *The Beehive* portrays a woman who refuses to be victimised. When Stojanka is raped, she is not overtaken by the rapist Halil bey, but instead she deliberately offers herself in order to protect her daughter from impending rape. However, her sacrifice is not appreciated by her husband Nikola, nor by her daughter. In fact, she is exposed to victim-blaming, because Nikola calls Stojanka a 'Turkish whore', as if it was her fault for being sexually assaulted. Although Nikola kills the rapist, he does not arrive in time to prevent the rape, but only interrupts it. Building on Žižek's theory of the impotence of the gaze when a male figure of authority forcibly witnesses the rape of a family member, which activates 'the vicious cycle of guilt' (Žižek 1994, 74), Brinkema (2010, 33) points out the utter powerlessness of a samurai husband, eye-witness to the rape of his wife in *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1950). Correspondingly, Nikola projects his own humiliation onto Stojanka due to witnessing her rape (implied, not shown), because the harsh words he utters are most likely his own sense of guilt reshaped into blame. Not only does Stojanka's relationship with her husband deteriorate due to her rape, but that with her traumatized daughter does as well. They both ironically ask Stojanka on separate occasions if it is possible to breathe under the hay, alluding to her rape, when she pulled a stick that was holding some hay above her and the rapist to make it fall on them, in order to prevent her shocked daughter from watching. The patriarchy not only blames Stojanka for being raped, but later for Nikola's death when she finds herself exposed to shaming at the public trial. Ultimately, Stojanka is, in Haskell's words on Hollywood cinema, 'the woman who begins as a victim of discriminatory circumstances and rises, through pain, obsession, or defiance, to become mistress of her fate' (Haskell 1987, 161). Even when the odds are against Stojanka, she is not a passive object, but an active, defiant subject who stands behind her decisions.

A certain empathy may be discerned in Popović's stance towards women through some details of the plot. During the incident when the Ottomans trap the subjugated village people in the courtyard of the caravansary and beat them in order to give away the outlaws' hiding place, they also suspend an orthodox priest by his neck with a noose, and leave him in a position where he barely touches the ground with his feet. When Stojanka's young daughter is dragged by the Ottomans to be raped, Kahrیمان (Rade Marković), as the mouthpiece for the director, says to the hung priest: 'Oh my priest, after all it is more difficult for a woman in a white gown than

for you in a black one'. However, any exposure of female characters to sexual violence, even if the director has a critical stance towards it and it is implied instead of shown like in *The Beehive*, might be still interpreted as problematic because it increases the amount of represented violence towards women in public discourse. Thus, both Babaja and Popović victimised their characters.

### **The Iconography of Women and the Feminine**

Another approach to investigating the representation of female characters is looking into their iconography, which can be used to diverse effects, such as to stereotype, disempower or empower. For example, patriarchy can be expressed through stereotypical visual iconography of female protagonists, such as mother, child, grandmother and good wife (Lesage 1978, 517). A good wife is blonde (Lesage 1978, 517), as Janica from *The Birch Tree* is, whereas Stojanka from *The Beehive* follows the pattern of a self-sacrificing mother to some extent. During the time of silent cinema, because the spectators struggled to grasp the plot from the speechless images, the producers simplified matters by introducing fixed character iconography (Panofsky 1992, 240). Thus, audiences were promptly provided with information about characters of both genders, because their looks, conduct and traits were standardized, which resulted in stereotyping (Panofsky 1992, 240). Johnston (2000, 23) points out that cinema quickly found a diversity of expression for portrayal of male characters, whilst the representation of female characters remained limited and stereotypical, undergoing only slight modifications, in comparison with the images of women from the silent cinema Panofsky described. Woman is portrayed as unchanging and infinite; thus, she is inhibited as a social and sexual being (Johnston 2000, 25).

In both films, an important female protagonist is, at a certain point, iconographically associated with an animal, insect or a plant. Iconography as a concept detects and categorizes the significant patterns, which can be conducted by numerous ways of analysis, such as a holistic perspective in terms of the general visual style of the film, or a specific one, in regards to particular symbols that are embedded in the film (Ryland 1990, 212), the latter being the focus of interest in this article. While in *The Beehive*, Stojanka and Ljubica personify a queen bee, the heroine from *The Birch Tree*, Janica, is iconographically linked to a slender birch tree, and also, at the moment of her demise, with a white dove. In Christian iconography, the white dove symbolizes a soul or the life spirit of the faithful aspiring towards heaven (Heckscher 1994,

146). Also, some female Christian saints, for instance, Saint Eulalia of Mérida, are portrayed at the moment of their demise with a white dove, signifying the soul, flying out of their body to heaven (Vaquero 2010, 318). The very moment when Janica dies, a white dove flies out of the house towards the sky, which an odd, religious, male villager Joža (Fabijan Šovagović), nicknamed ‘the Holy’, sees, but the husband Marko does not. The white colour of the bird in Christian art implies that the spirit is good (Didron 1851, 466). When the Catholic priest arrives too late to administer the last rites, because Janica has already died, a tearful Joža humbly declares, on his knees, that the white dove he saw flying out of the roof of Marko’s house at the moment of Janica’s demise was her soul, as pure as the white dove, but the priest dismisses the idea.

Furthermore, trees are used twice as an iconographic analogy for Janica’s dissimilarity to other country girls. It is said that she resembles a slim birch tree, whereas they are equated to sturdy beech trees. Birch has white bark and is thin and tall, just like the slender Janica, who is always dressed in light colours—mostly white or light beige—both in life and death. She wears a light-toned, beige sweater with a white apron, over a pale-coloured skirt when she does daily chores, such as attending grazing cows; she stands out in white during a village dance festivity while the other girls wear colourful orange embroideries; her head is also seen festooned with a plain white scarf (Figure 23) that underlines her exquisite beauty and virtue due to its resemblance to a nun<sup>72</sup> (in a scene after the festivity, when her mother and brother scolded her for dancing with Marko); she was adorned in white when she was getting married; and she was also in white when her deceased body was exposed in an open coffin. In the Western Christian Church, white is a symbol of purity and innocence (Gage 1999, 70).

The film makes a full circle. It begins with a scene where the ailing Janica appears in light coloured, whitish clothing, with a single white-barked birch tree; thus the director draws a parallel between the two by underlining their symbolic relation in as many as eight shots in this scene. When a feverish Janica collapses, while cows are grazing in the pouring rain, pious Joža, who was nearby, carries her in his arms to her husband’s house. Throughout the film, characterised by complex plotting, the scenes of Janica’s illness, looming death and funeral, are

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<sup>72</sup> As kindly pointed to me by Dr Alex Forbes.

interspersed with retrospective scenes of Janica's life. In one retrospective scene, Janica, still



Figure 23. *The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967).

unmarried, speaks to Joža, while sitting next to the birch tree to which she is iconographically linked (Figure 24). Platonically in love with her, Joža is carving an angel out of a piece of wood with, as he states, resemblance to Janica in order to capture and preserve the great, fleeting beauty given to her by God. He advises her never to marry anyone, but instead become a nun. Janica responds that she would go for Marko right away if he wanted her, in a display of utmost female submissiveness. Consequently, the choice of earthly over heavenly seals Janica's fate. After her death, Joža places the angel he carved on her grave, which echoes Grant's assertion that 'religious icons are always already infused with symbolic meaning' (2007, 12). Thus, director Babaja elevated Janica to the status of a symbol—an Angel—just like the pious Joža symbolises the Apocalypse, a recurring old woman perpetually spinning wool represents Death and Janica's husband Marko stands in for a Demon (Krelja 2010, 15).



Figure 24. *The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967).

The film ends with a scene in which the newly-widowed Marko, after a night of brawling, excessive drinking and womanising, at first in a fit of rage, wants to tear down the very same above-mentioned birch tree with an axe. He then does completely the opposite. Ashamed and humbled, he kneels down next to the birch tree, and while hugging it, shrieks 'Janica' in remembrance of his departed wife, whom he could have treated better while she was alive. In addition, the title of the film *The Birch Tree* emphasises this relation between Janica and the birch tree, illustrating to the spectators that the birch tree stands for Janica. She, therefore, is seen to have fulfilled the path of victimization, from neglected and self-effacing wife during life, to posthumously appreciated and sanctified, as if the moral of the story was that women should endure the hardships of life because there is a reward in the afterlife.

As in *The Birch Tree*, in *The Beehive* there is also an iconographic motif that recurs throughout, but in this case, it is the bee. Its iconography is revealed in the opening shot of the film, which shows a swarm of bees on a honeycomb (Figure 25). The shot is underscored with



Figure 25. *The Beehive* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966).

humming music composed by Zoran Hristić, which sometimes evokes the buzzing sounds produced by a swarm of bees. The opening credits roll over the image of bees. Eventually, once the credits are finished, the shot dissolves into a medium close-up of Stojanka, which then dollies in to her close-up (Figure 26). She appears as if she is looking at the camera, thereby breaking the fourth wall. The brazen gaze that Stojanka returns to the camera-cum-spectators, her proud posture underlined by the slight low angle framing and the above-mentioned editing technique of the dissolve, which juxtaposed Stojanka with the shot of bees, all imply she is the queen of the beehive, the matriarch.





Figure 26. *The Beehive* (Miodrag 'Mića' Popović, 1966).

The iconographic leitmotif, bees, appear again in a line from the film, spoken by Kahriman, nicknamed Turk: 'A woman is, in any case, a man's doom, like a bee for a drone: first she overwhelms him, then crushes him and at length stays to live with the posterity'. This zoomorphism (that is, the inclination to perceive the human behaviour through the lens of the behaviour of animals (Woodside 2017, 144)), originates from Kahriman, who is the voice of the reason in the film. In my opinion, he is the voice of director Popović. Given that Kahriman has beehives, much of his wisdom springs from observations of the life of bees.

A judge orders Kahriman to testify at Stojanka's trial, held in the caravansary's courtyard after the defeat of the Ottomans, and resembling *Rashomon*, due to the multiple perspectives shown in retrospective sequences (for example, of Ljubica's mother, a priest and Kahriman). Kahriman's testimony is not only aimed at his diegetic audience of villagers, present at the public hearing and resembling the chorus in a Greek drama, but also at the film viewer, because he occasionally looks directly at the camera. At first, it appears as if Kahriman-cum-director is judgmental of Stojanka's potential responsibility in the death of her husband. However, Kahriman eventually takes Stojanka's side, as if assuming the role of her spokesperson in light of her almost impenetrable silence. To borrow Blackwell's words on a silent woman from *The Seventh Seal/Det Sjunde inseglet* (Ingmar Bergman, 1956) '[t]he silence

that defines her character lends her authority, for silence articulates disillusionment with the patriarchy and insight into the corruption of language inherent in it' (2005, 543). Owing to Kahrman, in the course of the trial, although mostly stubbornly silent but powerful regardless, Stojanka is gradually given an opportunity to be understood, instead of condemned for her decisions.

In one of Kahrman's testimonial declamations, occasionally directed at the camera, director Popović modernistically intertwines past and present. Kahrman is visually placed in the past, witnessing an incident at the very same location—the caravansary's courtyard—where the present-day hearing takes place. Once he remains alone, his oration starts, as if on cue. However, he is sonically situated in the present time of the film, addressing his—in this instance—invisible but implied audience, from Stojanka's trial in the present. Kahrman iconographically links men and drones, by verbally collocating them: 'Warriors, heroes, outlaws, men, drones, the top brass, you know nothing except to fight and protect your honour, and that is worth nothing'. Thus, he implicitly criticises patriarchy. Further on in his lengthy speech, while directly looking at the camera he addresses Stojanka and her daughter-in-law, Ljubica, whom he iconographically relates to a queen-bee:

When the time comes that the young queen bee replaces the old one, the two of them agree on something important. What is the message that the old queen bee passes on the young one and pledges her to do? What is it that the young queen bee learns and that is the most important until eternity? Stojanka? Ljubica?<sup>73</sup>

In the following retrospective sequence, it is implied that Stojanka tried to avert the Ottomans from setting her house on fire with household members inside, in order buy time for the newlyweds to extend the lineage of the family by procreation, in an ultimately futile attempt to save her son. The mission to perpetuate the symbolical beehive is what she taught Ljubica, upon passing on to her the legacy of the role of the queen-bee. Theory on *The Seventh Seal* is applicable in this instance, stating that 'the film affirms Western culture's very problematic equation between the female and emotion, nature, and family' (Blackwell 2005, 540).

In another scene earlier in the film, Kahrman says 'fertile as Ljubica' and points a finger at her, whereupon she faints, as if taking a cue from him. This implies that she is pregnant.

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<sup>73</sup> All the translations from Serbo-Croatian are mine.

While one man pours water over her and helps her, together with her mother, to stand up, Kahriman states:

When a young queen bee grows strong and flies upwards, befuddled drones follow her. The queen bee flies higher and higher. The weaker drones fall behind, one by one. At length, the strongest drone catches up with the queen bee. She gives herself to him. They both have a nice time. Afterwards he falls dead, and she returns to command in the beehive. By right and on time.

During this speech, Ljubica is present in the most of the shots: either in the foreground or background of the compositions that include Kahriman, or in a shot excluding him, but underscored with Kahriman's voice-over. Thus, the directorial intent was to iconographically link Ljubica with the young queen-bee. Although director Popović reinforces the essentialist stereotype of women as related to nature and reproduction, he posits the family hierarchy as matriarchal, empowering female characters through the iconography of bees.

### **Superstition**

In contrast to the empowerment of two female characters by associating them with queen bees, a male character in *The Beehive* is disempowered by being linked with a lifeless drone, through the interplay between iconography and supernatural beliefs. Actually, in both films, there are supporting female characters who resort to magic in order to heal or to harness power; thus, to borrow Jovanović's words on sorceresses in the Yugoslav Classical cinema, '[e]mbodying the pre-modern ignorance' (2014, 149). In a scene taking place on the wedding night, Ljubica's mother gives bride-to-be Ljubica a small, lucky charm bundle, made of cloth with a honeycomb and a dead drone inside. The magic superstition is supposed to ensure Ljubica a special place in her new home. If she throws the witchcraft bundle in the well, all of the household members will obey her when they drink the enchanted water.

The bundle is found by Stojanka's husband Nikola inside the well, his hiding place, a few moments before he will be stoned to death by his enemies, the Ottomans. The charm brings him bad luck and becomes a sinister omen of his demise. This retrospective sequence toward the beginning of the film stages Kahriman's recounting of the events from a third-person omniscient perspective, since it would have been impossible for Kahriman to see what is

happening with Nikola and the dead drone deep inside the well. In the preceding scene, before Nikola discovers the charm, his wife Stojanka makes a step forward towards the well. Her motives for doing so remain ambiguous, but in the context of the sequence, her actions appear to indicate that she is presented with the dilemma of whether or not to divulge Nikola's hiding place to the Ottomans.

In the scene that follows Nikola's bundle discovery, when according to Kahrیمان's version of the event, Stojanka reveals that Nikola is in the well, the camera zooms into her face from medium close-up towards full close-up, emphasizing the gravity of her position. However, Ljubica's testimony in the denouement of the film, shown in retrospective from the neutral, third-person perspective, eventually sheds new light on the event and to some extent contradicts Kahrیمان's recollection. It is, therefore, reminiscent of *Rashomon*'s multiple perspectives during a trial. Ljubica—who was inside of the house with some wedding guests and her newlywed husband, Stojanka's son—gives an account of the incident, stating that she asked Stojanka to stall the Ottomans. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that Stojanka did not tell the Ottomans where Nikola was hiding, but on the contrary, Nikola fired a gunshot at her when she leaned above the well, thinking wrongly that she had betrayed him. Thus, he reveals his hiding place himself. Nevertheless, it remains ambiguous as to why Stojanka went to the well in the first place. Was it just to buy time from the Ottomans or contemplate whether she must commit treachery for the purpose of trying to futilely save her foolhardy son, by enabling him and her daughter-in-law Ljubica to consummate their marriage in order to protect the family line from perishing? Furthermore, it is unclear whether Stojanka knew where Nikola was hiding at all, because she was inside the house when he hid. Once he gives away his hiding place to the Ottomans by shooting at Stojanka, they start throwing rocks at him. Director Popović underscores Nikola's demise by creating an audio-visual connection between him and Stojanka. Back in the house, every time Stojanka hears the sound of a rock landing inside of the well, and potentially killing Nikola, she hits her head on a wall, corporeally expressing her grief.

The deeper meaning of Nikola's death is grasped through iconography. Stoned to death by Ottomans in the well, iconographically speaking, Nikola becomes the dead drone. The link between the two is visually amplified in Kahrیمان's aforementioned recollection, with a tilt up from a detail of a dead drone on top of a honeycomb, held by Nikola's hand, onto a big close-up of Nikola's face. Sorcery with the dead drone, therefore, does not cause his demise, but foreshadows it.

Similarly, in *The Birch Tree*, female characters resort to the supernatural. When Janica's father-in-law Tomo (Stjepan Lektorić) suggests his wife call a doctor in order to examine the

gravely-ill Janica, she rejects the idea. Instead, she decides to invite an old woman, called Ježovička, who performs magic healing rituals by removing curses, hexes and spells. Janica's mother-in-law further states that if Ježovička cannot help Janica, not even God can. This reflects a rural way of thinking imbued with superstition, prejudices, and, as Rožić would have it, 'a blend of Christianity with almost magical concept of life'<sup>74</sup> (Rožić 2010, 22). The conversation takes place while tending two cows. It ends with a conciliatory statement by Tomo: 'Do as you wish, those are your female matters'. In line with Simić's view on phenomenon of 'cryptomatriarchy' in Yugoslav society, 'the authoritative and influential positions occupied by older women appear anomalous in light of a social character stressing patrilineality, patrilocality, and male dominance' (1999, 13-14).

The arrival of the village sorceress Ježovička across a meadow is observed and announced by a little boy. Also, it is underscored with the music of composer Anđelko Klobučar, which introduces the notion that something peculiar is about to take place. '[T]he scene of "curing" ill Janica with paganist ritual may be understood as direct announcement of death'<sup>75</sup> (Krelja 2010, 13). Once inside the house, Ježovička concludes that someone cast a spell on Janica. Ježovička's and faces of other women present in this scene, with the exception of Janica, are enveloped in dark scarves, which gives the impression of a funeral wake (Krelja 2010, 15). Also, the female characters are clad in black, murky blue and dark green, cold-coloured clothing, except for the positive female character Jaga, who wears a warm-coloured terracotta orange waistcoat pullover, and Janica, who is covered with an orange blanket and wearing a white shirt. Orange, red and yellow are regarded as warm colours, because an image abundant with them will provoke an optimistic feeling in the viewer, whilst green, blue, and violet are perceived as cold colours and will invoke an opposite, pessimistic emotion (Cox 2003, 43). Predominantly cold colours are in accordance with the sad plot points—Janica's illness and forthcoming death—eliciting a sombre mood in the viewer. The colour concept employed in sad scenes is that cold colours are in the majority, whilst warm terracotta appears in traces, often as their striking visual counterpoint.

Commencing the supernatural ritual, Ježovička deposits hot coals into a clay bowl with water and hovers with a knife above it, making the sign of a cross. This is underscored with Ježovička's ominous chanting and music by Klobučar. In the following magic ritual, she places on Janica's belly what appear to be two trimmed horns with clipped tips and blows into them. Then, she puts squirming leeches on Janica. The menacing atmosphere is also amplified

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<sup>74</sup> Own translation.

<sup>75</sup> Own translation.

throughout the scene with the usage of expressive close-ups. For instance, the cold-hearted mother-in-law is opposed to a dead chicken hanging upside down on a rope, foreshadowing the outcome of her cruel treatment of Janica. In addition, an old woman who recurs through the film spinning wool, reminiscent of one of the Greek Moirai (the Fates), is shown engulfed in gloomy fumes of burning coal. Beside the old face of Ježovička, portrayed in close-up in the foreground, is juxtaposed a crucifix, the symbol of Christian iconography that hangs on the wall in the background, thus signifying a mixture of Christianity with superstition. The supernatural curing session ends on a sour note with Janica fainting.

In a further sequence of a supernatural ritual, also set during Janica's life, the ordinary peasant women try to heal her by making her look at her reflection in a mirror (Figure 27).



Figure 27. *The Birch Tree* (Ante Babaja, 1967).

Superstition looms after Janica's death as well, when one of the peasant women covers the mirror with a black headscarf. As Perić notes, it was believed that the deceased would come back home if they saw their own reflection in the mirror (2016, 58). Also, one female hand shown in a detail shot stops the pendulum of the clock. Subsequently, the peasant women throw

water out of the old wooden trough bowls behind the departing funeral procession. The custom is also intended to prevent the deceased person from returning (Rajković 1974, 193).

In both of the films studied, female characters who perform sorcery personify the poverty, ignorance, lack of education and backwardness of the pre-socialist countryside. These are portrayed in *The Birch Tree* in monarchist Yugoslavia and in *The Beehive* under oppression by the Ottoman occupiers. Witchcraft is exclusively associated with the feminine. In *The Beehive*, it serves as a bad, foreboding omen, foreshadowing Marko's death, whereas in *The Birch Tree*, it contributes to the demise of the heroine, because she is placed in the hands of an incompetent, superannuated local female folk healer, instead of a competent doctor.

The films criticise patriarchy, while at the same time, by inclusion of the witchcraft performed by female characters, implicitly blame women for predicaments that occur and their place in patriarchy, especially in *The Birch Tree*. The portrayal of Janica's mother-in-law suggests that she bears the responsibility for bringing the village sorceress instead of taking Janica to a doctor, which ends fatally, whereas Marko as a husband should have been culpable. In *The Beehive*, the indictment of female guilt is proclaimed by a woman. Stojanka's young, traumatised daughter accuses Ljubica and Ljubica's mother of being indirectly accountable for her father's death, due to their charm with a dead drone, although the Ottomans are the ones who actually killed him by stoning him. Simultaneous oppression of female characters by the patriarchy, while some of them inadvertently act as its proponents, demonstrates the ambivalent stance of the directors on women. They are concurrently critical of women's treatment by patriarchy, while chiding them for how they mistreat each other, mainly as seen in *The Birch Tree*. On the other hand, the directors tackle female solidarity, of which *The Beehive* is a strong example.

## **Conclusion**

Yugoslav socialist society fostered female emancipation due to its progressive legislation from 1946 onwards. This gave women equal rights with regards to the workplace, education, marriage, divorce, inheritance, one-year fully paid maternity leave, and freedom of choice, while simultaneously the remnants of patriarchal mentality lingered within the family sphere. Although set in pre-socialist times, the analysed films implicitly criticise the vestiges of gender inequality in the family domain of their socialist present. Keeping in mind that Yugoslav New Film was auteur cinema, I argued that Babaja and Popović, by deliberately regressing into the

past instead of choosing contemporary themes, fully scrutinise patriarchy in the family domain, without catering to the official gender equality discourse. Although the two analysed films are far from feminist films, due to using regressive stances towards the women depicted, still, they not only address gender troubles in bygone pre-war times, but also point to their present-day, post-war social problems. However, besides criticising the patriarchy, Babaja, and to a smaller extent, Popović, also put the blame on women as executors of the patriarchy, due to expressing enmity towards other women. While Popović stresses camaraderie amongst women more than friction, Babaja emphasises rivalry between women more than solidarity and also vindicates Marko by showing him repent for neglecting Janica, instead of condemning him for her death. Although hostility between women is unfortunately part of real-life societies, without setting it in the proper context that women are socialised to be enemies by their male family members, female family members who perpetuate patriarchy, and society in general, the directors take an ambiguous stance towards male-oriented ideology.

Furthermore, this research assessed the meanings behind the iconography of the heroines in *The Birch Tree* and *The Beehive*. The birch tree symbolises the ethereal, slender, elegant and fragile nature of Janica, while the white dove stands for Janica's pure soul aspiring towards heaven. The queen bee symbolises Stojanka's and later Ljubica's power and dominant position within the family. Nonetheless, Janica is a passive character and an object, whereas Stojanka is an active character who takes matters into her own hands and is thus a subject in her own right. Therefore, in the light of their characters' trajectories and the films' denouements, the iconography of *The Birch Tree* disempowers Janica due to her untimely death, while the iconography of *The Beehive* potentially empowers Stojanka due to an open ending that gives some hope that Stojanka may be pardoned. Nevertheless, it is not definite. The empowering effect is also diminished by the fact that Stojanka's story is mostly presented by a male narrator (whose voice initiates not only his retrospectives shown from objective perspective in third person, but sometimes of others, such as Ljubica's), instead of by Stojanka who is relegated to silence. In addition, Stojanka is exposed to domestic violence from her husband, whereas Janica is not, but is instead neglected. The characters of Janica and Stojanka, taken together, indicate the entire tone of how women stood *vis-à-vis* the patriarchy in contemporary Yugoslavia – to borrow Haskell's words, 'from reverence to rape' (1987), since Janica is revered by 'holy' Joža and Stojanka is raped by Halil bey. In both films, only female characters are engaged in magic and stand for the impoverishment, scarcity, ignorance and backwardness of pre-socialist society.

Regardless of the gender ideologies behind the representations, both films are extremely valuable, because in the Yugoslav New Film movement, female characters were seldom given



main roles. Most importantly, as I have argued, Babaja's and Popović's analysed films regress into the past and refract real-life gender inequalities of a family domain from a bygone socialist present, therefore criticizing them.

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## Conclusion

‘[W]e bring our entire histories when we watch a movie – our childhood reveries, our adolescent yearnings and adult reservations.’

(Manohla Dargis in Mulvey 2019, 249)

The research for my PhD in film studies and visual culture made me interpret films differently, by integrating feminist film theory and gender theories with the previous knowledge I acquired during BA studies in directing practice, and MA studies in Art with a focus on film practice. My thesis puts a spotlight on the Yugoslav New Film movement, through the lens of feminism via close reading. Whereas the politics and ideology of the movement have often been discussed, representation and gender have seldom been, especially not in a large volume. I believe my research contributes to filling this gap. Also, considering that there is no ready-made methodology in film studies, the guiding theories and methods I employed might be of use to future students of film and feminism, especially in a Yugoslav context. After reading feminist film theory, I understood it addresses the workings of patriarchy, but I was perplexed how often, at least at its inception, it inclined more towards textual than filmic aspects, in a sense that film was read as a text without paying particular attention to the audio-visual nature of the medium, such as framing, light, editing, and sound. However, it should be taken into account that some traditions of textual analysis do incorporate audio-visual as a layer of the filmic text. Therefore, my focus is not only on narrative and text but on audio-visual aspects of film as well, examined from a feminist perspective. This is something innovative, and not so common in research on cinema in general, and especially on Yugoslav cinema and gender. My research made me more susceptible to recognising gender imbalances in films produced in Yugoslavia, but it could be applied to researching the representation of female characters in cinemas of other countries. I believe that my study could be used as a helpful tool for how to implement film feminist and gender theories in film analysis, paying attention to both narrative and audio-visual aspects.

I selected and closely analysed films that feature various types of violence and self-violence. In these films, I investigated whether a director condoned or condemned the violence, or sometimes both because the narrative and images can contradict. For example, a director can sexually objectify a female character via framing in a rape scene, whereas he can be critical

towards sexual assault throughout the narrative. Also, I searched for sequences or scenes in which there is a male character who observes a woman. For instance, if there is a close-up shot of a male character, followed by his point of view shot of a female character. According to Mulvey (1989), and Kuhn (1992), if a female body is fragmented in terms of framing, consequently it is sexually objectified, dehumanised, and fetishized. As an exception amongst such fragmented, eroticised shots of a female body, Kuhn (1992), singles out the close-up of a face, which can be a substitute for a whole person without dehumanising it. Accordingly, in my case study films, I identified if there is a close-up shot that is a cut-out of a female body, which offers a male character's perspective in an eroticised manner. Moreover, if there is no close-up shot of a male character to which a detailed close-up shot of a fragmented female body is related, then I identified a close-up of a female body part as the male gaze of the director, grounded in Mulvey's (1989) film feminist theory. I investigated whether female characters are, on the one hand, deprived of corresponding subjective shots, or, on the other hand, granted point of view shots (POV). My analysis of the case study films shows that female POV shots are seldomly shown. On the very rare occasions when they are indeed shown, I looked into whether female POV objectify men, and my findings show that they don't, particularly not in the same way to how female bodies are denuded or fragmented. Namely, women's infrequent point of view shots of men are mainly of informative character, not erotic. When a female character is looking at a man with an erotic connotation, her point of view shot is either omitted, or a male character is shown in a wider shot. In contrast, men's point of view shots of female characters are given in closer shots, in which camera glides over women's fragmented body parts. Similarly, male nudity is depicted less frequently and differently than female nudity in Yugoslav New Film. When a male character's nudity is depicted, it is visible only briefly and in wider shots. When a female character's nudity is shown, it is given in close ups and lingered on. Point of view shots imply a certain character's perspective and since women are almost never given these types of shots, their perspective is not shown. Moreover, Smelik (1998) writes about a possibility of female perspective in terms of, for instance, narration or inner monologue. It has been noted in film studies that a narrator is often male, implying that the voice and perspective are male. This corresponds to investigated Yugoslav cinema because the examples when female characters are given a voice in such a manner are extremely rare.

In addition, one of the guidelines that I used is what Berger (1977) points out about the difference between being naked and nude in European Classical Painting. According to him, in regard to representations of female acts, to be naked is to be oneself, and to be nude is to be displayed for the pleasure of men. I also tried to take this in to account when analysing scenes

that depicted nude or naked female bodies. In addition, Berger (1977) notes how women are represented as vain in front of a mirror, whereas their supposed vanity is an excuse for them becoming represented as a spectacle. I have been able to identify some examples where female characters are portrayed as vain in front of a mirror, namely in the case study film *Dance in the Rain*. Male characters are not represented in such a manner. So, I tried to use these theories as audio-visual guidelines on how to analyse films from a gender, feminist perspective on film studies.

Based on my viewing, in terms of narrative, women are more often supporting characters than main characters. Male characters are more prominent. Needless to say, there are seldomly two women in the narrative, who are named and who talk about something other than men, meaning that most Yugoslav New Films fail the Bechdel test. I have not implemented the Bechdel test to all 269 films I watched, nor can I make general claims, but from the ones I analysed closely as case studies, only three could perhaps pass it (*The Beehive*, *The Birch Tree*, *Breakfast with the Devil*). I implemented the Bechdel test as a tool for examining two of these films: *The Beehive*, and *The Birch Tree*. Therefore, I took into consideration the Bechdel test in the selected films that I analysed, which have two women, but I did not choose films based on that.

Furthermore, I examined whether violence directed towards women is a political allegory, misogyny, or critique, but with a note that even in the cases when I found that the real motives of Yugoslav New Film directors were to make a political statement, it was still an exploitation and objectification of images of women. The semiotics of rape should be kept in mind, as Bal stresses, including its status, as ‘an attempt at destroying the victim’s subjectivity, which equates rape with murder’ (Bal 2006, 61). Scholarly literature concerning a depicted rape puts forward the idea that there are different motives for representation of a sexual assault, such as: (1) a raped woman as an allegory of raped nation or stratum of the nation, (2) rape as a plot point, (3) rape as a critique of real-life violence and (4) rape as a punishment of emancipated women. In my empirical research, I applied two approaches to the issue of rape: reading of a raped woman as an embodiment of a raped nation or its stratum (1) and reading of rape as a punishment for progressive women (4).

In order to scrutinize the representation of rape, I investigated theories of other cinemas, such as Polish, Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, and French, where practices can be found of representing raped women as allegories, and thus, parallels can be drawn with Yugoslav cinema. Also, I researched literature on gender and nation in the context of Yugoslavia, namely Mostov (1999) and Iveković (1995), and implemented it on film. In addition, I examined whether



female characters have closure, or they just disappear from the narrative after they served a purpose to a director. For example, in films featuring rape, I investigated whether a female post-rape perspective is offered. Also, where possible, I try to pay attention to sound, if it is used, for example, to subvert the meaning of a scene, adding a political dimension, and so on.

Besides literature that addresses violence (e.g., rape) towards female characters as a political allegory related to nation, amongst other literature that I used is the one interpreting violence (e.g., execution, murder) or self-violence (e.g., suicide) of female characters – emancipated in terms of work, education or sexuality – as an underlying patriarchal punishment for their progressiveness. Pertaining to the punishment of liberated women, many guiding theories originate from international authors and cinemas, from the US. Such theories, for instance by Haskell (1987), find that the more women emancipated, the more backlash can be found in their cinematic representations, as a response to the Second Feminist Movement. Similarly, Dillman (2014) contends, in regard to murder in American cinema and television, that the prevalence of female corpses in the representational realm is a reverse indicator of actual female gains in real life. Given that in socialist Yugoslavia employment of women was on the rise, whereas in representations of women their profession was either not known, or perilous for them, and portrayed as less important than their love affairs, I drew a parallel between Dillman's (2014) theory and Yugoslav cinema.

Furthermore, I found Kaplan's (1990) theory useful from *film noir* about the usage of weapons, for example, firearms, which signify phallus and are often used as a punishment of 'transgressive' women that incite desire. Along the same lines, in her investigation of horror films, Clover (1992) mentions how castration fear in men is averted by thrusting a phallic weapon into a woman's body. I believe that those theories are applicable when analysing Yugoslav New Films in the examples where women were killed by a firearm, such as in the case studies *Handcuffs* and *Early Works*.

Also, with regard to represented gender-based violence, Mulvey (1989) argues that castration anxiety, triggered by women's sexuality, which can even lead to murderous impulses towards women, can be averted by two means: fetishistic scopophilia and sadistic voyeurism. In fetishist manner, female body is fragmented and lusted from a distance. In sadistic manner, the guilt of a female character is investigated (related to castration complex), so she is either put on the right path or killed. Along the same lines Johnston (2000, 27) argues that traumatic presence of an independent woman who defies a man must be neutralised by him by either transforming her into woman-as-phallus or repressing her in the process of confrontation. Threatening female characters are frequently brought into submission through marriage, or by

being murdered (Kaplan 1990; Smelik 1998). Grounded in these theories, I looked into murders and executions of transgressive women. However, I did not investigate films where women were reformed through marriage, but only killed, although from my viewing of Yugoslav films produced from 1961 until 1972, those films in which women were tamed by domesticity are rare.

Furthermore, I researched books on the lives of women in socialist Yugoslavia, such as Ramet (1999). In general, not much is written about them. There is no statistical data on violence towards women during this period. Consequently, it is not feasible to compare Yugoslav reality and representations and know for sure if and to which extent films reflected reality. However, it is indeed possible that there were cases of domestic violence, based on the writings of Yugoslav feminists such as Ugrešić (1994), and that occasionally they were not properly addressed, because there was a delineation between public and private in socialism (Kralj and Rener 2015). However, this is not a focus of my study but a suggestion for further research. I depart from a stance that films not merely reflect but indirectly reflect, produce, and construct reality.

What I draw on from historical and sociological data is that Yugoslav women gained the right to vote and legal equality by fighting as Partisans for the liberation of the country during the Second World War. The lives of Yugoslav Partisans were observed by authors such as Batinić (2015), and Sklevicky (1996). After the war, there was a gradual increase in female employment. The downside of otherwise emancipatory socialism in Yugoslavia was that many women had a double burden of both employment, and household chores (including children rearing), mostly unaided by their male partners. This was due to the remnants of a patriarchal mentality, which was hard to eradicate, despite progressive Yugoslav laws that promulgated gender equality.

Also, women were clustered in 'female jobs', which meant that they were paid less, while, generally speaking, they did not often have high leading positions. Such a pattern is also reflected in the film industry, where in all film professions that could affect the outlook of film during production, women were represented in big numbers only as editors. This is perhaps because editing was also regarded as a 'female job', since women have nimble, smaller female fingers, more dexterous to physically cut and glue film tape. Or it is perhaps because women editors mastered this technical skill, as well as gave their creative input. Furthermore, in politics women held far fewer positions than men. However, the positive sides of Yugoslav socialism far outweigh the negative ones in regard to gender politics, because the law guaranteed female equality in many segments, including the right of inheritance, marriage, and divorce, long and

paid maternity leave, freedom of choice in terms of reproduction (Ramet 1999), and equal rights to education, work and equal pay (Morokvašić 1986).

### **Research questions**

In order to design a conceptual framework pertinent to the main problem of the study, I coupled: feminist film theory approaches, such as (a) identifying the fragmentation of women's bodies (Kuhn 1992, Mulvey 1989[1975]), (b) reading against the grain (Bobo 2004, Doane, Mellencamp, and Williams 1984, Kotsopoulos 2001), and (c) Bechdel test (Hole et al. 2017, Krijnen and Van Bauwel 2015), with a close reading: via (a) textual analysis (Bateman and Wildfeuer 2017, Chapman 2011, Lincoln 2004, McKee 2003), via (b1) formal analysis (Gocsik, Barsam, and Monahan 2013, Thompson 1988, 1981, Yale 2002), and (b2) via audio-visual style analysis (see Bordwell and Thompson 2008, Geiger and Rutsky 2005, Gibbs and Pye 2005a). Therefore, akin to conducting research in cultural studies, there was a 'bricolage' of approaches and methods (Nelson, Treichler, and Grossberg 1992, 2, Dhaenens 2011-2012, 141), which I grappled with during the investigation.

This framework prompted me to phrase the overarching issue of how women are represented (such as, formally, visually, and narratively) in certain incarnations of Yugoslav New film (including its subdivision Black Wave) into four research questions. The answer to the first research question was that if heroines have jobs, are self-sufficient, liberal, or sexually emancipated, they are indeed ultimately penalised cinematically. The punishment comes exactly for those alleged infringements, by the vestiges of the patriarchy, within the course of the narration: by suicide, violent death, sexual violence, beating, or victimization (such as, by illness). It constructs a rather warning message and a cautionary tale to modern Yugoslav women – who were entering the labour market on large scale and becoming independent – by patriarchal unconscious via all-male Yugoslav New Film directors. The workplace is depicted as something very perilous for female characters, and their portrayed active sexuality is as if by rule smothered. This was evident even in the films that supposedly opened to the themes of women's emancipation and sexual liberation. Here Jameson's theory of the 'political unconscious' comes to aid – which could be dubbed as the 'cinematic unconscious' of Yugoslav New Film male directors – stating that:

certain moments of cultural history are determined, at least in part, by a whole male backlash and instinctive defense of privilege, that is, by a fear of feminism and the production of various new kinds of ideological defenses against that social threat (including of course new and more attractive images of what “women’s place” should be and why they should be happy to stay put in it).

(in Jameson et al., 1982, 91)

Yugoslav New Film directors are, simultaneously, often complicit and critical of mistreatment of female characters, which is not a surprise in light of real-life contradictions between progressive Yugoslav gender policies and their actual implementation in the domestic sphere.

The answer to the second research question elucidates that a sexually assaulted or/and killed female character in the analysed films can stand for a violated nation, or stratum of a nation, to a certain extent. On the one hand, in the Yugoslav mainstream films, the sexual predator is often the foreign occupier or collaborator with the enemy, that is, the Other, embodying the unjust occupation of the nation, such as by the Ottomans or the Germans, in the pre-socialist times. On the other hand, in Yugoslav New Films, sexual violence more frequently (but not exclusively) takes place in the peacetime in socialist Yugoslavia, whereby a perpetrator is not the Other, not foreign, but domestic, signifying a power disbalance within Yugoslavia, such as political abuse of some social stratum by a social stratum in power. The former films suggest external rift, in foreign politics, whereas the latter films suggest the internal rift, in domestic politics. Some scholars (see Kirn and Madžar 2014, Kirn 2020) accurately observe that Yugoslav New Film directors wanted to demythologize socialist and Partisan periods, as well as the mainstream representations of these periods (which also relates to the third research question). However, that does not absolve Yugoslav New Film directors from the fact that they reproduced some of the most typical patriarchal ways of thinking and even, in certain cases, condoned represented violence towards women. The main argument made about these films finds problematic the way rape was represented, even when used as an allegory to question political power dynamics, due to dismissing the implications on the female characters who were raped.

The third research question tackled why depicted civilian or Partisan women, who willingly consort with the enemy soldiers or unwillingly divulge information under duress, are executed as traitors of the nation. Unlike being embodiments of the nation (as in the second research question), such treacherous women are punished by death for their active sexuality (which relates back to the first research question), or for the betrayal to the enemy (regardless

of whether it happened under torture), due to being deemed by self-righteous men as treacherous, cowardly, unpatriotic, and quisling. These female characters are constructed as beautiful, alluring, tempting, urban women, of most likely bourgeois origin, who are unable to resist sexual temptation themselves. Or they cannot endure torture by the enemy, so they cave into the enemy's demands, regardless of the fact that their cinematic cowardice does not correspond to the real-life bravery which Yugoslav Partisan women had demonstrated during their antifascist struggle in the Second World War, in the face of the occupier's brutality. The directors use the bodies of women to make political statements, at the cost of them, and their subjectivity, through formal decisions.

The answer to the fourth research question, is that the chosen films – which have leading heroines and whose plots are taking place during pre-socialist past, before the Second World War – by criticising the bygone era, in fact, are indirectly criticising the vestiges of patriarchy in the socialist present of the 1960s. To borrow from Kolarić's research on post-Yugoslav cinema, such films 'used historical stories from different time periods to comment on the present' (Kolarić 2018, 68). Similarly, as Pethő would have it on Romanian cinema, in such films the filmmakers strive:

to erase from the film[s] any direct links with the present (by setting the story into a known historic past) and at the same time, indirectly, through hints hidden in the dialogues, gestures, settings, costumes, and different visual motifs, to produce connotations that make this past [...] become a disguise of the present.

(Pethő 2011, 396-397)

The very fact that selected Yugoslav New Films, which are set in the distant past, have prominent, well-developed female characters – unlike many contemporary-themed films belonging to the Yugoslav New Film movement – is decisive for revealing their interpersonal relations within a rural household, with both men and women. Since remnants of patriarchy were not fully eradicated from family sphere in Yugoslav society, especially under rural influence, it is possible to draw a parallel between life and film, as indirect refraction. Patriarchy can take form of not only male characters, but of female characters as well, who express enmity to each other. In contrast, female solidarity, in the rare cases when it occurs in Yugoslav New Film, has the power to shake the foundations of patriarchy. While these films are commendable for giving ample screen time to female protagonists, and for confronting

patriarchy, they are still ambivalent due expressing almost nostalgic essentialist view on women as child bearers.

The research questions highlighted a central paradox, which reveals something about the contradiction of Yugoslav socialism – that such a strong patriarchal mindset was still strongly present, despite the successful liberation by the Partisans and the emancipation of women both during and after the war, which brought numerous political, social, and economic rights. In general, I pinpointed the ambiguities and contradictions that linger in the image and narrative, as well as their repercussions on the representation of female characters. Similarly to them, male characters in Yugoslav New Film are also frequently exposed to violence, and end up dead, or beaten up. They are marginalised, disillusioned, defeated youth, with broken promises and ideals, which is indicative of the bigger picture of social criticism (Willard Van Dyke in MoMA 1969, 1). However, male characters are seldom exposed to rape (both allegorical and realistic), even though in real-life rape affects both women and men. Also, in films in general, male deaths are ‘not depicted in as so much detail as the deaths of women’ (Creed 2007, 149). Moreover, in Yugoslav New Film in particular, in most of the cases men are lead characters, who are well-developed and given plenty of screen time. Furthermore, sometimes they could even be considered as an alter ego of the male auteur (see Bogojević 2013, 417), which is not the case with female characters. In contrast, often male filmmakers and selected films had a major blind spot in not showing more complex female characters, their human relationships (other than romantic), and women’s agency. They are ‘rightly criticised for downplaying the role of women’ (Kirn 2017 150). The thesis brought together narrative and formal analyses with social and historical interpretations, all from a feminist film perspective. Therefore, I have given the answers to my research questions. My answers relate to what I have done in empirical (published) chapters and are substantiated with analyses from selected case study films. My answers relate to my theoretical chapters, concerning Yugoslav New Film, gender, and methodology. Also, they pertain to the existing state of the art, both international and Yugoslav, by building up on it.

On the level of studies of Yugoslav cinema, I have contributed towards the promulgation of the all-Yugoslav term Yugoslav New Film, which was used by the filmmakers themselves at the time of its existence. This contribution relates to the state of the art by confirming some of the positions of other authors, such as Jovanović (2014), Kirn and Madžar (2014), Sudar (2013), Đurović (2020), Jelača (2015), Goulding (2002), and Levi (2007), while it nuances and engages in discussion with authors such as De Cuir (2010). Moreover, on the level of gender representation in cinema, I have closely analysed several Yugoslav New Films

from feminist perspective, in English language, which has not been done before. The only exception is the film *Early Works*, recently analysed from a feminist perspective by several authors, in the noteworthy book edited by Majača, Vesić, and O'Reilly (2021). From that volume, my study is especially aligned with the work of Pejić (2021). In general, my research is in line with findings of the authors such as Jovanović (2014), Krelja (1979), Boglić (1980), and Bogojević (2013), whereas it nuances authors such as De Cuir (2011), Kronja (2018), and Jelača (2013b, 2018). My own work situates itself within the scholarly field and is a step towards closing a gap on the representation of women in Yugoslav New Film, and Yugoslav cinema in general. I hope that my original contribution trumpets Yugoslav cinematography to international readers, and that it will, despite the lack of subtitled films, encourage scholars to venture on a quest of its research.

### **Shortcomings and Suggestions for Future Research**

Besides the representations of women that I meticulously analysed, embodied by Yugoslav actresses in front of a camera, I only scratched the tip of the iceberg regarding the contributions of women behind a camera. However, this is not a gap in my research, but rather a gender gap in Yugoslav production at the time, in particular concerning female directors. The feature length, fictional Yugoslav New Films that formed the basis of my research were directed solely by men. Therefore, it can be said that there is a striking absence of films made by women directors. Even though I classify Sofija 'Soja' Jovanović's opus as mainstream cinema, which is outside the scope of my thesis on the Yugoslav New Film movement, it is significant to mention her as the first Yugoslav female director and the only woman who directed feature length films during the researched period from 1961 until 1972. Her exceptional oeuvre should be saved from oblivion and studied by future scholars. Yugoslav female directors had more chances to create short length amateur films (such as documentary and experimental) under the aegis of cine clubs. The compelling but neglected production of, for example, Vera Jocić, Tatjana Dunja Ivanišević, and Bojana Marijan, should be given the proper attention that they deserve. Moreover, women were the often-invisible female work-force in the Yugoslav film industry, such as editors, who outnumbered male editors. Even if they did not have the final word in the montage room over male auteurs' word, they must have creatively contributed towards the final outlook of the film to some extent. I invite and challenge future researchers to study this further.

Also, one of the limitations of my research is that I have not closely analysed films from all six Yugoslav republics, for example, (Yugoslav) Socialist Republic of Macedonia and (Yugoslav) Socialist Republic of Montenegro. Jelača (2015) argues that Macedonian branch of Yugoslav cinema was somewhat marginalized (in terms of Yugoslav film industry) and neglected (in terms of critical attention), with which I concur. In order to redress this disbalance, overlooked and less known, but remarkable films from SR Macedonia, such as *Žed/Thirst* (1971) and *Memento* (1967) by director Dimitrie Osmanli, and *Vreme bez vojna/Times without war* (1969) by Branko Gapo, need to be studied and included in the canon of Yugoslav New Film.

Another Yugoslav republic that I did not select films from to be closely examined was SR Montenegro. The reason being that during the researched period (from 1961 until 1972) the production in this republic was rare and rather mainstream, formally and thematically. Instead, I would recommend for future scholars to review the works by director Živko Nikolić who hails from SR Montenegro. As his fictional films were made after the studied Yugoslav New Film movement was already over, they do not fall within the scope of my research. Nevertheless, they tackle gender and patriarchy in a manner that deserves to be investigated.

Besides the omission of analysing films from SR Montenegro (a deliberate decision) and SR Macedonia (suggestion for further study) in-depth, another shortcoming of my research is that it is not exhaustive in the sense that it does not include and examine films of all Yugoslav New Film directors closely. Therefore, other film makers of feature length films, including Matjaž Klopčič, Živojin Pavlović, Vojislav 'Kokan' Rakonjac, Boro Drašković, Dušan Makavejev, Vladan Slijepčević, Ante Peterlić, Branko Gapo, Dimitrie Osmanli, Mirko Grobler, Jovan Živanović, Marko Babac, Zdravko Randić, Igor Pretnar, Jože Babič, Dragoslav Lazić, Zvonimir Berković, Đorđe Kadijević, Jože Pogačnik, Slobodan Kosovalić, Eduard Galić, Branko Ivanda, Krešimir Golik, Ljubiša Kozomara and Gordan Mihić, Vlatko Filipović, Lordan Zafranović, and Vatroslav Mimica should not be forgotten and should be given proper attention in future studies.

Furthermore, I chose not to include in the close reading analysis some of the most internationally famous Yugoslav New Film auteurs, such as Dušan Makavejev, who is, incidentally, one of my most favourite directors. His prizes include a Berlinale Silver Bear for *Nevinost bez zaštite/Innocence Unprotected* (1968), and FIPRESCI Special Mention. Moreover, he won Interfilm Award at the same festival in 1971 for *Misterije organizma/W.R.:Mysteries of the Organism* (1971). The latter also received Golden Hugo for Best Feature at Chicago International Film Festival in 1971. For the same reason as Makavejev,



I have not included internationally acclaimed Yugoslav director Živojin Pavlović, awarded with Silver Bear for best Director at Berlin International Film Festival for the film *Buđenje pacova/The Awakening of the Rats* (1969). In the case of Aleksandar Petrović, who is also renowned abroad, especially for his critically acclaimed film *Skupljači perja/I Even Met Happy Gypsies* a.k.a. *The Feather Collectors* (which won prizes such as the International Critic's Prize by the F.I.P.R.E.S.C.I. in 1967 at the Cannes Film Festival), I have opted for his internationally less known or now even forgotten anti-war film *Tri/Three* (1965) (that was at its time nominated at the Academy Awards (39<sup>th</sup> edition) for Best Foreign Language Film). Also, it is important to keep in mind that Yugoslav New Film is only one slice of Yugoslav cinematography. Any of the Yugoslav films, made during the existence of Yugoslavia, that is, within the timespan from the 1940s until the 1990s, are worthy of attention.

Another downside of my study is that it does not include the examination of audiences in Yugoslav cinema. I understand that the textually implied spectator mentioned in my study cannot replace real audiences in all their colourful diversities. In regard to the historical reception, Staiger (1992), Biltereyst and Meers highlight the struggle around social meaning(s) of a film, genre, or author, 'negotiated by the industry, the press, censorship, religious and other interest groups' (Biltereyst and Meers 2011, 427). Moreover, my contemporary film-feminist reading differs not only from how the analysed films would have been received by the audiences in the past, but also from how they would have been reminisced by them, since there is 'a degree of distinctiveness both in what people remember about their youthful cinema-going and in how they frame these memories' (Kuhn, Biltereyst, and Meers 2017, 11). Although my research does not focus on real audiences, as they are an important segment of film studies, a suggestion for further research would be to investigate the reception of Yugoslav New Films, especially by delving into the memories of ordinary people who watched them at the time when they were produced, in the 1960s and 1970s. Another suggestion is to investigate Yugoslav queer audiences as well as representations of queer characters in Yugoslav New Films and their reception.

Regardless of some minor shortcomings in my research, what I hope to have contributed to the field is a close analysis of several Yugoslav films from a feminist perspective, which have not yet been analysed in the English language (except for *Early Works*). In fact, most of them have not been analysed from a gender perspective even in Serbo-Croatian. I believe that my selection of films shines a spotlight on some of the overlooked directors, and/or less known films, and, thus, saves their work from oblivion. Also, the shift in research focus from male leads to female characters, regardless of how insignificant their roles might seem at

first sight, is a form of intervention into an archive, a reading against the grain. As indicated in the methodology section, there is no ready-made methodology in film studies, so I created a patchwork of methods, which could aid in analysing not only textual elements of the films from a feminist perspective, but medium-specific elements as well, such as camera, light, editing, and sound. Furthermore, I looked into a vast number of Yugoslav films, that was not easy to find for viewing, which makes the study more compelling and credible. I invite further researchers, both international and Yugoslav, to explore the gem of Yugoslav cinema. If the country has dissolved, it does not mean that its cinematography needs to be forgotten. The ball is in your court. It is your task, as researchers, to prevent this from happening.

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## **Abstract in Dutch**

### **Vrouwen in de golf: Representatie van vrouwelijke personages in de Joegoslavische Nieuwe Film en Black Wave Cinema**

Mijn proefschrift houdt niet enkel rekening met de numerieke (onder)vertegenwoordiging van vrouwelijke filmprofessionals, zoals regisseuses, cameravrouwen, componisten en scenarioschrijfsters in de Joegoslavische cinema. Zo ligt de focus vooral op hun audiovisuele representatie, gezien door de lens van een door mannen gedomineerde Joegoslavische cinema. Ik analyseer 11 films vanuit een filmfeministisch perspectief. De ‘close readings’ van de geselecteerde films omvatten bovendien niet enkel tekstuele analyse waarin de werking van ideologie en het patriarchaat onder de loep genomen wordt, maar ook audiovisuele en vormelijke analyses die zich richten op media-specifieke eigenschappen zoals beeld, belichting, montage, enz. Die analyses bestaan uit vijf empirische hoofdstukken die respectievelijk ingaan op: de allegorie van de verkrachte vrouw als een verkrachte natie (of stratum van een natie) (in Hoofdstuk 4 en Hoofdstuk 5), representaties van vrouwen als zijnde ‘verraderlijk’ in films in het thema van de Tweede Wereldoorlog (Hoofdstuk 6), zelfmoord bij werkende vrouwen en representaties van veroudering en jeugd (Hoofdstuk 7), en slachtofferschap van vrouwelijke personages en hun iconografische banden met fauna en flora (Hoofdstuk 8). Naast empirische hoofdstukken bestaat mijn proefschrift ook uit theoretische hoofdstukken: de Joegoslavische Nieuwe Filmbeweging (Hoofdstuk 1), Joegoslavische Nieuwe Film en Gender (Hoofdstuk 2), en Methodologie (Hoofdstuk 3). Representaties van gender in de Joegoslavische Nieuwe Film zijn tot dusver nauwelijks onderzocht geweest. Mijn onderzoek draagt bij tot het dichten van deze kloof binnen academisch onderzoek.