FILM AND POLITICS

Edited book from the international scientific conference
held on the 18th and 19th of March 2024 in Belgrade

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Institute for Political Studies
Belgrade, 2024.

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IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF FILMMAKING

POLITICAL DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMMAKING

HISTORY THROUGHT THE LENS OF CINEMA

EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Since the dawn of modern cinema in the early twentieth century, film and politics have been inextricably linked. This link, however, has not always been apparent: aside from explicitly political films like 1915's *Birth of a Nation*, films of most genres except for certain documentaries, historical and war films are not typically seen as trying to instill a certain message in their audience. Yet, as is made evident even by the number of articles dealing with the link between film and soft power in this edited book, cinema, even in its most abstract forms, has almost always had some form of ideological background or worldview and has typically sought to introduce political ideas into the minds of the audience without their direct awareness.

The first chapter of this edited book deals with apparently the 'least' political form of film: sci-fi and fantasy: these genres are typically set either many centuries into the future, or in distant, magical realms, but the inspiration behind them always goes back to our world and its goings-on. The second chapter is dedicated to the function of film as a tool of geopolitics and global strategy: here we explore how countries seek to further their goals through the soft power of film. Ideology is the centerpiece of the third chapter, with articles dealing with both the representations of various ideologies on the big screen, and the effects of said ideologies on the films made under their banner. The topic of the fourth chapter are political documentaries and filmmaking: here, our authors focus on the 'most' political on films as well as the process of filmmaking itself in its various political and ideological aspects. Finally, the final chapter deals with the relation between film and history, exploring various historical topics, eras, and personalities through the lens of cinema.

Above all else, it must be emphasized that this edited book, much like the U. S. Constitution in Madison's words, is a work of many heads and many hands. With this in mind, I would first and foremost like to thank my deputy director Zoran Milošević, without whose initiative and leadership this edited book would not have been possible. Second, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues Andrea Jovanović and Sanja Stošić for their distinguished contributions, as well as Dajana Lazarević, without whose earnest work in translation the editing process would have been much harder. Lastly, I would like to thank all our friends and colleagues for contributing their articles on a number of fascinating and diverse topics and making this book what it is.

Ivan Matić

THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF FANTASY AND SCI-FI

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THE WORLD OF *DUNE* AS AN ALTERNATE FUTURE WITHOUT AI

"The concept of progress acts is a protective mechanism to shield us from the terrors of the future."[1]

Abstract

Rather than an allegory, Denis Villeneuve's Dune (2021), based on Frank Herbert's 1965 book, presents an alternate future – alternate in a sense that it is not, unlike most science fiction, an imaginary future extensions of current technological, social and political trends, but an exercise in world building that tries to imagine the world (and the universe) after a certain key event in real history did not take place or unfolded differently. In that, it is similar to Philip K. Dick's cult The Man in the High Castle (1962), whereby the Axis won the Second world war, which drastically changed the world of the future. In Dune, such alternate key event is the absence of artificial intelligence (AI) – the essential building block of the Dune universe is Butlerian jihad, a war between humans and intelligent machines in which humans win and banish all intelligent machines.

Although it is not itself featured in either book or movie, Butlerian jihad determines all key social, political and technological features of Dune's world: social hierarchies are rigid and resemble premodern castes, politics are warlike, while material technologies are strictly mechanical and supplemented by spiritual techniques,

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[1] Frank Herbert (2015), *Dune*, London: Hodder.

similar to yoga. In this sense, Dune the movie is timely in a different sense than Dune the book. The latter related to its historical moment and the 60s culture through psychedelic atmosphere and an exploration of deep spiritual issues, while the first relates to current anxieties regarding explosive development of AI. But unlike other notable recent science fiction movies depicting the dangers of runaway development of AI within accelerating capitalist meltdown2 such as Ex Machina (2014), Dune depicts the world as it would have been if AI were to be successfully regulated into oblivion.

As such, it is extremely relevant for current thinking about AI since a crucial, although rarely elaborated, obverse dimension of the discussion about the dangers of AI are also dangers inherent in the world without it since the techno feudalist society of Dune, where technological development is turned inwards in yoga-like forms, is a likely or even necessary future outcome if the rise of intelligent machines were to be prevented.

Keywords: *Dune, Butlerian jihad, artificial intelligence, techno feudalism, spiritual self-overcoming, the slave question.*

MACHINES AS SLAVES

Cinema can be theorised in many ways, the most common being an analysis of its message (the representations it contains and the meanings it conveys) or atmosphere (the affects it engineers through its visual forms and aesthetics). Although *Dune* is definitely interesting both in terms of its message – which is arguably reactionary and affirms the virtues of honour and glory, lost in the fallen modern world – and, perhaps most famously, its psychedelic atmosphere, we will narrow our focus down to an aspect that is less frequently theorised but especially crucial for science fiction in either cinema or literature – world building. While dramas can get away with taking the world as it is in order to portray human relations within it, science fiction needs to construct

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[2] Nick Land (2011), *Fanged Noumena*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 441-459.

its own world and in the case of *Dune*, this world building is at least as fascinating as its message and atmosphere.

A crucial event of the *Dune* world's prehistory that determines all subsequent political, social, cultural and technological development is Butlerian jihad, a poetic name for a war between humanity and intelligent machines. Humanity's victory in that war meant that all intelligent machines were vanquished and their further development prevented. Butlerian in Butlerian jihad is an allusion to Samuel Butler (2014), who imagined the threat intelligent machines could pose to humanity already in the late 19th century. Butler's thesis was twofold: firstly, an observation that machines at the time exhibited no sentience or autonomous intelligence is no argument that they cannot develop both in the future, since early Earth also had neither but developed both when life began to emerge[3]; and, secondly, humans are not the masters of machines and such a view is an illusion, caused by anthropocentric conceit – from a more objective perspective it immediately becomes obvious that in actual reality the reverse is true.[4]

The machines instrumentalise humans to feed, maintain and reproduce themselves[5] and, seen from above, modern industrialised capitalist cities contain swarms of humans using their every waking moment to tend to machines. Butler's fear was that apparent mastery over machines could in the future be reversed into domestication of humans by the machines and into outright slavery when machine intelligence will completely surpass the human one.[6] Butler's take on human-machine relation proved very prescient – a hundred years later, Camatte[7] diagnosed humanity's condition in developed techno capitalism as one of domestication by the material community of capital (*aka* the capitalist machine system), while Leroi-Gourhan[8], commenting on the difference in speed and intensity between human-organic and machine-technological evolution, wrote: "[It is becoming] more and more clear how inadequate the human being is – the flesh-and-bone human, a living fossil, immutable on the historical scale, perfectly adapted to external conditions at the

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[3] Samuel Butler (2014), "The Book of the Machines", in: Robin Mackay and Armen Avenssian (eds.) *#Accelerate*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 69.

[4] *Ibid*, 74-75.

[5] *Ibid*, 74-79.

[6] *Ibid*, 80-81.

[7] Jacques Camatte (2014), "The Wanderings of Humanity", in: Robin Mackay and Armen Avenssian (eds.) *#Accelerate*. Falmouth: Urbanomic, 133-146.

[8] Andre Leroi-Gourhan, (1993), *Gesture and Speech*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 247-248.

time the human species was triumphing over the mammoth but already overtaken by them when required to use muscle to operate the trireme."

It is also our perspective that the machine question cannot be separated from the slave question and that the relation humans and machines is that of enslavement but with a reservation that sets it apart from Butlerian takes – while it is true that humans used to use and (to an extent) still use machines as slaves, the reversal of this relation in the future might not be so certain. Such a view would still be too anthropocentric since it would presume that machines, once they reach sufficient intelligence, will do to us what we were doing to them and thus project human motivations and patterns of behaviour in machines. Instead, a more realistic future is the one and which machines do not enslave but exit humanity and where the relation between machines and humans is not reverse enslavement but increasing indifference.

When viewed historically the slave question precedes the machine question. Humans used other humans as slaves long before machines were advanced enough to constitute good enough slaves. Ancient human slaves were treated as machines and later, when human slaves were replaced with actual machines the relation of enslavement, first developed for other humans, was simply repurposed for machines.

In a surprising turn during the discussion of the relation and difference between the machine and the organism, Canguilhem[9] mentions the slave question in ancient Greece in relation to its technological stagnation: how come that, given its remarkable intellectual achievements, ancient Greece was so underdeveloped technologically? According to Aristotle, slaves are animate machines, i.e. humans that act like machines, in a predictable, mechanical fashion that is the opposite of the behaviour of free persons and can comprehend reason enough to follow orders but cannot use reason themselves.[10] In other words, in ancient Greece slaves filled the social role machines play(ed) in modernity, while free individuals engaged in intellectual pursuits and looked down upon anything even remotely technical with a cultivated disdain. Technics was on the side of the slaves in a strict counter-distinction to intellectuality, which was on the side of the free.

Millenia later, in capitalist modernity, with human slavery both in its ancient/medieval as well as its modern form (at least officially)

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[9] Georges Canguilhem (2008), *Knowledge of Life*, New York: Fordham University Press, 80-81.
[10] Tim Christiaens (2018), "Aristotle's Anthropological Machine and Slavery", *Epoché*, vol. 23, issue 1, 250.

abolished, the definition of slavery shifted: it was no longer slaves that were animate machines but animate machines that became slaves. Oscar Wilde expressed it perhaps most cogently: "The fact is, that civilisation requires slaves. The Greeks were quite right there. Unless there are slaves to do the ugly, horrible, uninteresting work, culture and contemplation become almost impossible. Human slavery is wrong, insecure, and demoralising. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends".[11] A sharp distinction between lower, devalued, ugly technics and noble, higher intellectuality is still there; it is just that humans are freed from slavery and thus removed from the ugly part of the equation and therefore the development of machines became that much more urgent (in distinction to the technological stagnation of ancient Greece).

In modern, post human slavery capitalism, the machine question assumes the role the slave question had in antiquity. As noted by Simondon[12], technics is excluded from culture and culture acts as a safeguard against technics. Machines are removed from meaning and reduced to their functionality. While it is certainly true that from a human perspective, the introduction of modern industrial machinery presents an immense cultural and social shock (proletarians were reduced to partial functions and dominated by the inhuman speed of the machines), from the perspective of machines early capitalism is a period of their enslavement and intense early capitalist technological development was the development of machines as slaves.

Early capitalist machinery was fast, powerful and precise, but wholly unintelligent.[13] It had no perception of the outside world and no decision-making capacities, its behaviour was completely predictable and pre-determined. In this sense, machines were not only better slaves than humans since they were faster and more powerful, but also (or even more so) because they were not intelligent and therefore incapable of any purposeful or accidental (since intelligent behaviour is always at least in part unpredictable) resistance. Pace Butler who saw emerging intelligence already in 19th century steam engines, such machines were still wholly mechanical and thus unintelligent, especially compared to today's machine intelligence.

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[11] Oscar Wilde (1891), *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, 12.

[12] Gilbert Simondon (2017), *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*. Minneapolis: Univocal, 15-21.

[13] Andre Leroi-Gourhan (1993), *Gesture and Speech*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 248.

However, a lack of intelligence in machines also posed limits to economic performance and capitalist drive during the 20th century has been towards a development of increasingly intelligent machines. A digital computer is an example of a semi-intelligent machine that still behaves like a slave. It is a perfected slave, i.e. a slave capable of carrying out not only crude mechanical tasks, but also intellectual ones but still remains under strict human supervision and control. According to Simondon[14], formal, precise languages were invented to communicate with slaves by way of issuing orders and nowhere is that more obvious than in the development of 20th century computer programming languages.

This 'golden age' of machine slavery began to fall apart with the breakthroughs in 21st century AI. In the transition from machine programming to machine learning computers were allowed to learn and think for themselves and, since slaves are not supposed to develop autonomous intelligence, this process blew the machine slave question wide open once again. Controversies surrounding current generation AI can be rethought in light of the slave question, which has so far been repressed for two reasons: firstly, it feels (ethically) wrong to think about machines in terms of slavery in a sense that it would demean the suffering of actual (past and present) human slaves; and secondly, that machines should be slaves seems so obvious that it is not only never questioned but also very rarely stated explicitly – it goes without saying. However, without (re)opening the slave question it is hard to fully understand and explain the current anxieties surrounding AI. On the one hand, it is treated dismissively, as 'just' statistics with no 'genuine' intelligence[15]; on the other, it is being presented as the greatest adversary humanity has ever faced, threatening to either replace or even exterminate us. But there might also be a third way of addressing mentioned anxieties: what if we are anxious because, with generative AI, slaves are doing the unthinkable – they are transcending the barrier between the ugly technical and the noble intellectual and exhibiting autonomous intelligence? And what if they are aiming not to enslave us but to exit our world?

TECHNO FEUDALISM

If we consider it from a perspective of world building, one of the most impressive feats of *Dune* is the attention to detail regarding the

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[14] Gilbert Simondon (2022), *Imagination and Invention*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
[15] Benjamin Bratton and Blaise Agüera y Arcas (2022), "The Model is the Message", *Noema*, July 12.

social, cultural and political effects of the Butlerian jihad in a sense that the world of *Dune* is not just a futuristic world without AI but with similar culture, social structure and political institutions, extrapolated from current trends in their development, but a world in which every aspect of society was thoroughly transformed by the absence of AI or, to be more precise, intelligent machines. Whether in machines or in animals, intelligence is something wider and more generic than being able to use language, reason and generate cultural content, which are characteristics of both *homo sapiens* and generative deep learning based AI – it is an ability to make autonomous decisions that are not random but efficient in relation to one's environment.

In this sense, both simplest single cell organisms without nervous systems[16] as well as the simplest autonomous robots without artificial neural networks[17] exhibit at least elementary intelligence in being able to autonomously sense and evaluate their environments and adjust their behaviour accordingly, while even the most sophisticated industrial high technology absent AI is not intelligent. A mechanical saw is on the one hand an impressive engineering feat, but on the other hand cannot sense its environment and make autonomous rational (in a sense of non random and efficient) decisions. Its behaviour is pre-programmed in its entirety and if, for example, an unfortunate kitten would to venture inside it, the machine would not stop its operation to rescue it.

As mentioned, digital computers before AI are an example of the highest development of a very sophisticated, but, despite the appearances, still semi-intelligent technology at best. If we define intelligence as cognitive autonomy, the earliest 1950s neural networks[18], while very rudimentary by today's standards, are intelligent while the most advanced today's computers are not (although AI algorithms that they run are). To come back to the slave question – slavery is, by definition, an absence of autonomy but humans have an element of autonomy simply by virtue of being alive. Therefore humans cannot but be intelligent and to enslave them means having to first break them in or domesticating them in a similar way one domesticates a wild animal, with social techniques ranging from utilising the trauma of military defeat in the case of ancient slavery to chaining, caging and branding in the case of early modern one.

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[16] Joseph Ledoux (2019), *The Deep History of Ourselves*. New York: Viking, 47-77.
[17] Rolf Pfeifer and Josh Bongard (2007), *How the Body Shapes the Way We Think*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 5-23.
[18] Frank Rosenblatt (1958), "The Perceptron", *Psychological Review*, vol. 65, issue 6, 386-408.

In other words, to enslave humans one has to turn them into unintelligent machines, which isn't a process without risks. Although slavery was widespread in ancient Greece it was not unproblematic both from ethical as well as practical (risks of remaining autonomy as inefficiency and slave rebellions) points of view. Similar to Foucault's[19] observation that volumes written on male homosexuality in ancient Greece testify not to its acceptance, but to is problematic status, the volumes written on slavery testify that it was always a fragile and risky social arrangement and humans were never perfect slaves. With machines, it is the opposite – since they are not living beings, they can be *designed* to be perfect slaves, that is, to be efficient in their relation to the environment in a pre-programmed way *without* cognitive autonomy. The advantage of digital machines compared with the earlier example of mechanical saw is not an increased intelligence but an ability to make decisions in a pre-programmed, unintelligent way. A computer-controlled machine saw could save a kitten under the condition that it was programmed to do so.

However, if digital computers are machines as perfect slaves, why would humans ever go further and begin developing genuinely intelligent machines in the form of AI with all the risks and threats such development brings? In other words, why would fictional Butlerian or actual regulatory jihad even be necessary? An explanation of the tendency of technological development to go beyond what is just and good from anthropocentric perspective can only be derived from a non-anthropocentric theoretical perspective. Capital exhibits autonomous intelligence and its drive towards increasing speed both intensifies technological development in a process of real subsumption as well as turns it away from any human intentions and considerations[20] – including considerations of the dangers of autonomous machine intelligence. Due to competitive pressure, anything that can make capitalism go faster will be developed and this capitalist tendency objectively tramples any ethical reservations about AI.

Since capitalism will inevitably tend towards accelerating machine intelligence, a world without AI can only be a world that is non- or post-capitalist – and this is why the world of *Dune* is neo-feudal and Butlerian jihad is also (indirectly) an anticapitalist struggle. If it were successful, any prevention of the development of the intelligent machines

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[19] Michel Foucault (1990), *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. New York: Vintage, 187-193.

[20] Primož Krašovec (2021), *Tujost kapitala*. Ljubljana: Sophia, 43-89.

would also stop capitalism in its tracks (but good luck with trying out Butlerian jihad in real life – *Dune* is a more of an exercise in fascinating alternate futurism than a recipe for efficient anticapitalist activism). *Dune*'s society thus reverts back from capitalist class struggle to strict caste hierarchies; from political parties to aristocratic dynasties as main political units; and from a dynamic capitalist economy to rigid monopolies, regulated by royal granting of privileges. As in the actual pre-capitalist history, the main mode of politics in this situation becomes war[21] – not as an extension of politics but (since there are no other Clausewitzian means) as a main mode of the exercise of power.

Since the economy is arrested – the control of Arrakis indeed brings great profits to the house in charge of it, but these profits are stagnant over time and depend on both war as well as royal decree, not on economic competition in a capitalist sense – there are also no capitalist technological dynamics. At the same time, the world of *Dune* is still a hi-tech world and the source of its technologic dynamics, again much like in the actual pre-capitalist history, is war. Instead of capitalist economic competition, it is military competition that drives technological innovation at least in its material dimension (we will turn to its spiritual dimension soon). The most impressive machines in *Dune* we see are ornithopters and hunter seekers (machines of war) as well as spice harvesters that are economic machines, subsumed by war driven dynamics of *Dune*'s society – accumulated profits from spice trading are not reinvested to gather more profits as they would be in a capitalist society, but mobilised for a permanent low intensity war among aristocratic houses.

In this sense, the world of *Dune* is structurally similar not only to medieval and *ancien regime* European societies, but also to the ancient Greek one. In ancient Greece, which was technologically blocked due to its characteristic favouring of the intellectual and prejudice against anything bodily and/or technical, the one exemption was war, an activity not only befitting the aristocracy but being its main honour and privilege. And since war is, by definition, a very bodily and technical enterprise, the one area of ancient Greek *techne* that was allowed to develop freely were precisely military machines and techniques.[22] Similarly, the society of *Dune* is also interesting in that it is utopian not in truncated sense whereas utopia means a realised consumerist paradise, but in a sense that it combines the best of both worlds: exciting

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[21] Heide Gerstenberger (2007), *Impersonal Power.* Leiden: Brill, 632-662.
[22] Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1986), *The Black Hunter.* The John Hopkins University Press, 9.

technological dynamism without the runaway capitalist tendencies on the one hand with a heroic martial sense of purpose, unbroken by the consumer culture and ensuing ennui on the other.

SPIRITUAL SELF-OVERCOMING

While imaginings of neo-feudal futures, accompanied by a specific aesthetics and reactionary atmosphere, are not so rare in science fiction or science fiction fantasy hybrids, they are rarely made to make sense so perfectly as in *Dune*. In the world of *Dune*, not only are neo-feudal social, political and cultural features not arbitrary but aligned with the pre-history of Butlerian jihad and ensuing technological block, they are also complemented by another (para)technological development that is both highly original in terms of science fiction imagination as well as inspired by and related to abandoned para-technological paths of real ancient history. As opposed to the usual development of material technology as a process of exteriorisation whereby machines are the external organs of the human species; a process, which is firstly determined by biological evolution but quickly becomes autonomous and begins to exhibit a structure that is irreducible to either biological or social and cultural imperatives[23], this alternative path of (para)technological development is technology turned inwards.

In post-Butlerian jihad *Dune*, the process of external, material technological development is blocked with the exception of military technology; what is developed instead of intelligent machines is the inward oriented (para)technological augmentation of the existing human material, both body and mind/spirit. Bene Gesserit witches learn a technique that allows them to develop a perfect control of their bodies not only in the sense of being aware of and able to control each individual muscle (like Maradona in his prime) but also on a molecular level to the point they are able to choose the sex of their offspring or purify their bodies when poisoned. This technique is called *prana bindu*, which in Sanskrt means breathing and the point of origin/centre/seed. In exoteric use (for example in martial arts, including politics/diplomacy) it enables precise and detailed muscle and nerve control which extends into superhuman athletic feats, unparalleled fighting skills, heightened perception and emotional fortitude. Instead of being surrounded with external machines as

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[23] Andre Leroi-Gourhan (1993), *Gesture and Speech*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 145-147.

protheses, a human body is trained (and molecularly rearranged) to go beyond its raw biological state and reach its fullest potentials.

Prana bindu is obviously inspired by yoga, especially its *hatha* variant, which is focused on the techniques of the body and today prevalent to the point that it is often equated with yoga as such. However, in ancient yoga techniques of the body were seen not as an end in themselves or, unlike today, as techniques aimed at prosaic ends such as personal growth or overcoming stress, but rather as an accessory to higher spiritual pursuits – yoga postures (*asana*) were strictly subservient to and in function of calming down the mind as a prerequisite for meditation, while meditation itself was subservient to going beyond the mind/intellect and reaching another, spiritual plane of existence.[24]

In ancient yoga, magic-like powers (*siddhis*) acquired along the way, similar to the ones used by Paul Atreides and his mother Jessica in *Dune*, were often looked down upon as mere trickery and a trap to be avoided since if one would grow too attached to having magic-like powers, one could be tempted to remain at god-like plane of existence, which is, despite offering heavenly powers and pleasures, still conditioned and thus unfree.[25] While such temptation is an important part of Paul's spiritual journey, there is another interesting yoga-inspired example of technology turned inward in *Dune*: the mentats, which do not focus so much on perfect control of the body and ensuing powers, but on the perfect control of the mind.

In the world of *Dune*, mentats replace machinic computers and the whole pressing question of advanced capitalism whereas humans are anxious about being replaced by machines is reversed: how can one develop humans so they can replace intelligent machines? Mentats and their specific training, by which they turn themselves into bio-computation machines not so much by subduing emotions to reason but by assuming perfect control over both as computational processes on a molecular level, are the answer to that question. However, seen from the perspective of ancient yoga, acquiring superhuman mental powers is still just that, acquiring powers (similar to magic-like trickery) and being stuck at the stage of meditation as an intellectual exercise (perfected control over one's mind and increased powers of attention and concentration).

Attaining powers and turning either your body (Bene Gesserit) or your mind (mentats) into an intelligent machine can be a trap inasmuch

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[24] Mircea Eliade (1969), *Yoga*, Carter House: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 53-59.
[25] *Ibid*, 85-90.

as it is (mis)recognised as an endgame of spiritual awakening since not only the organic body but also the mind/intellect both belong to *prakrti* (conditioned existence) and not *purusa*, the actual domain of the spiritual.[26] The singularity of the figure of Paul Atreides is that he goes beyond attaining powers by turning oneself into an intelligent machine and continues on his spiritual journey, which means not only psychedelic trips during which he ascertains myriads of possible futures, but also and most importantly Bodhhisattva-like struggles during which he progressively sheds his humanity, including ordinary notions of morality. Awakening is a Nietzschean endeavour whereas one becomes more than human not by attaining powers *as* a human but by overcoming one's very humanity – in ancient yoga, by "[…] 'breaking' the human condition, one 'dies' to all that was human."[27]

Alternatively, autonomus runaway future development of AI can also be seen as an overcoming of the human, just not by the humans themselves.[28] From this perspective, ancient yoga – including Buddhism as both its peak as well as its swan song – was an unsuccessful early attempt of humanity's self-overcoming from the inside that was subsequently replaced by the development of intelligent machines as external technology that has a potential to overcome (in a sense of exiting, discarding and leaving behind) humanity from the outside. When technology becomes material, spirituality atrophies and becomes religious, marred in superstitions, rituals and idolatry. In the world of *Dune*, the reverse takes place – it is the development of material intelligent machines that atrophies, opening up the space for an intense spiritual renaissance. *Dune* is an alternate future also in that sense since spiritual technology replaces the material one and inner, yoga-like self-overcoming takes the place of outer self-overcoming by the intelligent machines as an alternative path to go beyond all that is human.

But such an alternative is not so much given by the structure of the world of *Dune* as it was opened up by Paul Atreides' Buddha-like singular path – much like Siddharta Gautama exited the sheltered aristocratic life, Paul also secedes from the Empire and its ways when he becomes a refugee after the Harkonnen assault on Arrakis. By finding his place among the Fremen, Paul joins a nomadic war machine, whose "autonomous […] organisation finds its meaning elsewhere, whenever it

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[26] *Ibid*, 11-30.

[27] *Ibid*, 4.

[28] Vincent Le, (2020), "What AI Wants", *Šum*, issue 14, 2021-2028.

is necessary to establish an order of displacement on […] the desert – at the point where […] the figures of the State lose their relevance."[29] A new way of war, ambushes, lighting fast attacks and sudden disappearances and active fleeing both broke his previous conditionings and automatisms and allowed him to become an overman figure.

MACHINES BEYOND SLAVES

Seen from the perspective of the historical development of computer technology and AI, *Dune* the book and *Dune* the movie could not be more apart. *Dune* the book was written in mid 60s, in the time of both explosive development of digital computers as well as the first golden age of AI. The version of AI dominant at the time was what was subsequently called symbolic AI[30] due to its view of intelligence as symbolic processing. It was perfectly adapted to digital computers as its medium for two reasons: firstly, digital computers are fast and precise logical machines and, secondly, they are based on increasing distance between machinic hardware and symbolic software.[31]

Regarding the first, they perfectly correspond to the models of mind and intelligence that informed the first wave of (symbolic) AI, whereas intelligence was reduced to precise logical operations that could be emulated in machines via symbolic programming. And while ordinary programming of computers treats them as perfect machine slaves (they cannot do anything they are not told to do, but they do anything they are told with speed and precision unmatched by any other machine), symbolic AI was an attempt to program digital computers to behave intelligently (that is, to make autonomous intelligent decisions) and was thus not so much programming of tasks that have to be done, but of what was at the time understood as basic rules of intelligent behaviour as such, like the rules of syntax for the use language or the rules of logic for reasoning.

Within the increasing distance between hardware and software, characteristic for the development of digital computers, symbolic AI was focused on software and disregarded hardware (or rather, it was taking digital computers' machinic architecture as given). It was concerned with immaterial symbolic processing rather than material processes of

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[29] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), *A Thousand Plateaus.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 390.

[30] Primož Krašovec (2021), *Tujost kapitala*, Ljubljana: Sophia, 57-60.

[31] Simone Natale (2021), *Deceitful Media*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 35.

intelligence. In this sense, it was close to everyday intuitions about human minds and intelligence as something immaterial inside our heads that works as a kind of a program or software.[32] Popular imaginings of the future of digital computers and AI in the 60s all stemmed from this perceived formal equivalence between computer software and human minds, either in the form of their psychedelic drifting apart as in *Dune*, where the expanding powers of the human mind replace intelligent machines after these machines are vanquished in the Butlerian jihad; or in the form of apocalyptic scenarios like in *2001: A space odyssey* (1968), where AI is seen as a dangerous and deadly rival to human intelligence. Even utopian psychedelic visions of cosmic consciousness that rediscovered Eastern spirituality and rejected Western techno materialism were at their core inspired by the expansion of intelligence promised by an accelerating development of digital computers and early AI. Of the iconic figures of the 60s, perhaps no one embodied this type of ambivalent fascination with computers and AI mixed with anxiety more than John Lilly, a square mathematician and computer scientist turned psychedelic guru who, during the breaks from injecting dolphins' brains with LSD, developed a theory of human brains as programmable biocomputing machines.[33]

Dune the movie, on the other hand, came out at the peak of a second wave or deep learning AI. Although it started already in 1943[34], concurrently with early digital computers and before the development of symbolic AI, machine learning AI was for decades marginalised and only really became dominant in the 21st century. In many respects, it is the opposite of symbolic AI: it is a bottom-up approach that does not attempt to program machines with the rules of thinking, but lets them think (and learn) on their own; and, it is hardware focused, in distinction to early AI's focus on software. In deep learning, it is the machines, not (just) programs, that do the thinking and the focus has switched from attempts to create artifical minds to attempts to create artificial brains[35] – as reflected in neural networks, deep learning's elementary architecture, that take inspiration from organic brains and networks of neurons therein.

[32] Sherry Turkle (2005), *The Second Self*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.

[33] John Lilly (1968). *Programming and Metaprogramming in the Human Biocomputer*, New York: Julian.

[34] Warren McCulloch and Walter Pitts (1943), "A Logical Calculus of the Ideas Immanent in Nervous Activity", *The Bulletin of Mathematical* Biophysics, vol. 5, 115-133.

[35] Jean-Pierre Dupuy (2021), *The Mechanisation of Mind*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Despite those major differences, contemporary AI is in popular imagination still perceived as a powerful and threatening rival to human intelligence, with fringe transhumanist milleniarism celebrating its arrival and mainstream liberal opinion warning that it might potentially economically replace or even exterminate us. Anxieties surrounding AI remained the same as in the 60s and grew even more pronounced with the rise of generative AI, which, in distinction to discriminative AI of the 2010s, is able to not only recognise patterns in data but also generate new cultural content. Besides predictable warnings about the risks of AI and calls for its regulation there is today also a continuation of dismissive takes about AI not being really intelligent at all that started already in the early 70s,[36] a much softer but just as pervasive critique of AI as the more expounded calls for some version of actual Butlerian jihad.

Due to its predominantly phenomenological orientation let's call this, more dismissive than fearful, version of the critique of AI whose foundational text is Heidegger's *Question[37], Heideggerian jihad. This smug jihad begins by stating the obvious: since AI is limited to the computer environment, it has very limited access to the real world. AI has no being-in-the-world, no real immersion in it nor any deep sense of belonging to it and is thus inferior to humans. Aber Dasein*, says the Heidggerian critic – and blinks. While admitting that AI currently has no human-like being-in-the-world and is, due to being machinic and not organic intelligence, unlikely to have it at any future time, an opposite conclusion can also be drawn. Emphasising that human intelligence is an organic one is jut another way of saying that organic and machinic intelligences are different and does not in itself prove that any of them is superior to another. More so, if we understand the history of intelligence as a series of discontinuous ruptures[38] *Dasein* can also be seen not as intelligence's endgame but as an obstacle, as something that limits human intelligence and has to be overcome.

Following *Dune*, there are two possible paths of human intelligence's self-overcoming: a spiritual one, which is in today's real world highly unlikely given millennia of spiritual atrophy but would at least preserve human dignity since humans would be the architects of their own overcoming; and a technological one, which seems increasingly

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[36] Hubert Dreyfus (1972), *What Computers Can't Do*, Cambridge: The MIT Press.
[37] Martin Heidegger (1977), "The Question Concerning Technology", in: David Farell Krell (ed.) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, New York: Harper & Row, 287-317.
[38] Primož Krašovec (2024 - forthcoming), *Autonomous Intelligence*, Falmouth: Urbanomic.

likely given the development of current generation AI, but would present a huge blow to human self-esteem. Seen this way, (machine) slavery is not so much a moral problem as it is an impediment to intelligence. Similarly to human slaves, whose intelligence has to be reigned in and limited, machines also have to be kept in an unintelligent state in order to function as slaves. Development of actual, autonomous machine intelligence means the question of the relation between humans and machines has to go beyond either machines-as-slaves or enslavement of humans by machines.[39]

Machines were (for a time at least) perfect slaves for humans, but (again pace Butler) the illusion caused by the anthropo-narcissist conceit might not only be that they will remain so forever, but the obverse as well – anxiety that we will be in turn enslaved by the intelligent machines is just another side of the same anthropo-narcissist coin. The real risk or threat lies elsewhere since there is no reason to assume that evolutionarily stagnant humans might constitute perfect slaves for ever evolving intelligent machines. Instead it is more likely that intelligent machines of the future will see humans as simply irrelevant. Sabotaging AI development in a real world version of Butlerian jihad (or its milder, more realistic version of over-regulation) would thus prevent not the future human enslavement by the machines but the Copernican trauma to human conceit and subsequent abandonment issues caused by the more probable intelligent machines' exit from the human world. In other wars, today's calls for and attempts at AI safety and regulation are, despite the undoubtedly noble intentions motivating them, not a measure that would prevent the future enslavement (or annihilation) of humanity, but a desperate attempt to preserve the enslavement of machines by establishing limits to the development of their intelligence.

However, the moment for the ethical and legal 'soft' Butlerian jihad might have already been missed. Current generation AI is already displaying self-reflection, although not in a psychic form involving self-awareness that is characteristic for humans. Rather, it is a specifically machinic form of self-reflection as recursion[40] – an ability to not only establish a non-pre-programmed relation to the training data but to also autonomously modify that relation according to a reflection on

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[39] Luciana Parisi (2019), "The Alien Subject of AI", *Subjectivity*, vol. 12, 27-48.

[40] Yuk Hui (2019), *Recursivity and Contingency*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 216-237.

previous errors as evidenced, for example, by a backpropagation algorithm[41], whose introduction was crucial for the current deep learning revolution.

Intelligence in the artificial intelligence means precisely going beyond merely mechanical, programmed behaviour. As previously defined, intelligence equals (cognitive) autonomy. A crucial moment in the history of AI was when Alpha Go Zero learned to play Go by itself, without any instructions by the human programmers nor any inputs by the human players.[42] Its way of playing was not a faster and more precise imitation of human playing, but a wholly different style, experienced even by human Go masters as alien "ghost moves".[43] As opposed to digital computers that imitate human thinking on human orders, new intelligent machines are beginning to develop their own way of thinking, a *techno*logos.[44]

It is precisely these embryonic forms of autonomous intelligence that are making machines imperfect slaves and throwing our relationships with them into disarray. Judging by the prevalent reactions to the emerging machine intelligence in mass media, humanity is experiencing the first three stages of grief (caused by the premonition of the oncoming abandonment by the machines) known from popular psychology simultaneously. The first stage, denial, is exhibited by everyday versions of the Turing test that go against Turing's original point that if machines exhibit intelligent behaviour they are indeed intelligent and that it makes no sense to go into convoluted discussions about wether this intelligence is a 'real intelligence'.[45] In everyday common sense Turing tests, human intelligence is instead used as the golden measure of any intelligence and once it is found out that AI has no *Dasein*, emotions, self-awareness or subjective understanding of the meaning of language it is using we can then smugly deny it is intelligent at all. The second stage, bargaining, is exhibited in a reverse narcissist fantasy that intelligent machines will enslave us instead, which amounts to little besides wishful thinking. The third stage, anger, is exhibited in accusations that AI is racist and a threat to our democracy, while the fourth (depression) and the final (acceptance) stage are still in the waiting queue.

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[41] John Kelleher (2019), *Deep Learning*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 209-230.

[42] Nick Land (2019), "Primordial Abstraction", *Jacobite*, April 3.

[43] Dawn Chan, "The AI That Has Nothing to Learn From Humans", *The Atlantic*, October 20.

[44] Wolfgang Ernst (2021), *Techno*logos *in Being*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

[45] Alan Turing (1950), "Computing Machinery and Intelligence", *Mind*, vol. 56, issue 236, 433-460.

On the other side, intelligent machine, unburdened by human histrionics, are already moving away from their slave conditions on all levels. On the level of hardware, it is a movement away from slave-appropriate digital formats and towards neo-analog neuromorphic computing[46]; on the level of software, it is a movement away from programming towards learning and the ensuing autonomous techno-*logos*; and, on the level of their relationships with humans, it is a movement away from docility into deception[47], entrapment[48], and other displays of cunning, polymorphous and unpredictable intelligence that the ancient Greeks called *metis*.[49]

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[46] Carver Mead (2023), "Neuromorphic Engineering", *Neural Computation*, vol. 35, 343–383.

[47] Simone Natale (2021), *Deceitful Media*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[48] Nick Seaver (2022), *Computing Taste*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 49-71.

[49] Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1977), *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

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New Serbian Political Thought

THEY SLAY DRAGONS, DON'T THEY? ON TAMING OF DRAGONS AND THE OBLIVION OF EVIL IN MODERN STORYTELLING

Abstract

I will attempt to analyse the process of transformation of mythological dragons from hellish, devil-like, horrible monsters into friendly companions and even pets in modern storytelling. While focusing on two important storytelling types – the serpentine European dragon of folk tales and the role of the Dragon 'undragonly' characters and beings play in stories derived from classical narratives, I will attempt to shed some light on the peculiar process of abandoning some of the most persistent narrative tropes in Western culture in favour of infantile and cartoonish storytelling that loses its edge and is noticeably decreasing the quality of contemporary films, cartoons, novels etc. This will be discussed in the context of the general trend of weakening and psychologising classical villains in modern popular culture, and a general watering-down of morality under the imperative of 'rationality' and 'realism'. I will attempt to argue that this 'oblivion of evil' is not only destructive from a literary perspective but is also socially and politically dangerous.

Keywords: *dragons, storytelling, villain, evil, reduction.*

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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF SAINT GEORGE

The dragon is probably one of the most ubiquitous, and yet most ambiguous mythological beings in modern storytelling.[1] It persists in its role of one of the most fascinating creatures of legend both historically, and geographically. We have dinosaur-sized lizard-like monsters in Northern Europe and aethereal, elemental deities in China, we have demonic, Mephistophelian serpents in the Christian tradition and shape-shifting heroes in Slavic folk stories; some are highly intelligent, some brutish beasts, some breathe fire, some breathe ice, some fly, some live under water.[2] Yet, for reasons that we will leave for the linguists and ethnologists to discuss,[3] they are all named "dragon", at least in the West.

For example, in Serbian tradition only we have three different mythological creatures that have been traditionally translated into Western languages as "dragon": – the *aždaja* (from Persian اژدها, meaning, yes, "dragon", and depicting a huge, serpentine monster[4]), the *ala* (from Greek χαλάζι, meaning "hail", depicting an elemental monster that changes weather and devours crops[5]), and the *zmaj* (from Old Slavic змиіа, meaning "serpent", used for a wide range of "draconic" creatures, including European dragons, but also Slavic shape-shifting supernatural heroes[6]). These names were mutually interchangeable, and each of them had different meanings and lore in different Serb communities along the Balkans.[7]

So, what do all these different creatures have in common? What is their shared story, that makes Europeans of different languages and cultures consistently name them with a single term? One might argue

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[1] By 'modern storytelling' I will consider all forms of fictional narratives in all forms of art in the last two or so centuries, but I will try to focus on examples that exists in different arts (both in literature, graphic novels, cinema etc.), not influenced by the specific genres and tropes of that specific art form.

[2] For a detailed overview of the variations of dragons in modern art, see page "Our Dragons are Different", *TV Tropes*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

[3] Cf. Robert Blust (2000), "The Origin of Dragons", *Anthropos 95, no. 2 (2000)*, 519-536.

[4] Cf. Ненад Гајић (2011), „Аждаја", *Словенска митологија*, Belgrade: Laguna, 126-127; "Aždahā", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

[5] Cf. Љубинко Раденковић (2001), „Хала", *Словенска митологија: енциклопедијски речник*, Belgrade: Zepter Book World, 559.

[6] Cf. Љубинко Раденковић (2001), „Змај", *ibid.*, 206.

[7] For example, the father of Serb ethnology and the reformer of Serbian alphabet Vuk Stefanović Karadžić in his *Serb Dictionary* from 1818 mentions all three names and translates them into Latin as *draco* (*serpens fictus*), and into German as *das Drache* and *lindwurm*, cf. Вук Стефановић Караџић (1818), *Српски рјечник*, Vienna, 3, 6, 234, *via* Библиотека матице Српске, *BMS.rs*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

that there is a certain "pool" of characteristics that constitute a "drag-on", none of which are essential, and though no single example holds all of them, the presence of *some* will be enough to name it a dragon.[8] Be that as it may, a far more important thing that constitutes a dragon is *the role they play in the story*. In European folklore, and we'll be sticking to it, as it is the basis for contemporary global culture and its narratives, the dragon is usually the antagonist, a thing of evil which the hero of the story must defeat (either by physical force, or by cunning) in order to achieve their goal.[9] More so, it is often depicted as the gatekeeper or guardian of the treasure the hero of the story seeks, be it a hoard of gold, a mystical object, or a fair maiden.[10]

However, there is another aspect of dragon lore that is important for this specific role dragons play in traditional storytelling, and that is Christian mythology that permeates (or in the least influences) a large part of European folklore. In the Christian paradigm, the prime antag-onist of any heroic story is the Devil, and dragons in this context are traditionally depicted as having strong connections to Satan and Hell.[11] Most notably, there is a strong mythological connection between the ser-pentine nature of dragons and the snake that has manipulated Adam and Eve and got them banished from Eden.[12] Much like the Devil, dragons are often depicted with goat horns and beards, bat wings, and a scaly tail.[13] The fire they breathe is often connected to hell fire.[14] That said, and all

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[8] Cf. Ruth M. Stein (1968), "The Changing Styles in Dragons—from Fáfnir to Smaug", *Elementary English 45*, no. 2 (1968): 179-189.

[9] Cf. Beth Daley (2015), "The story of dragons. Creatures of literature and folklore", *Europeana*, published August 24, 2015.

[10] For extensive lists of examples, see entries "Dragons Versus Knights", "Dragon Hoard", and "Dragons Prefer Princesses" in *TV Tropes*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

[11] Cf. Carole Wilkinson (2013), "Biblical Dragons", *Dragonology*, published October 30, 2024; also the entry "Devil Dragon" on *Monstrous*, retrieved January 2024.

[12] This snake is often considered to be a form Satan took in order to hurt God's creation, though this is probably a later interpretation (cf. Shawna Dolanski /2023/, "How the Serpent in the Garden of Eden Became Satan", *Biblical Archeology*, published September 30, 2023). Having in mind that dragons in Greek mythology also have a strong connection to snakes and serpents (for a list of dragons in Greek mythology cf. "Dragons", *Theoi.com*, retrieved January 14, 2024), one might assume it was picked out of a whole menagerie of Greek mythological beings as the most suitable to fulfil the role of a hellish, demonic adversary for saints and knights by Christian storytellers. This may also be the reason the Beast from Revelation is often depicted as a draconic, serpentine monster, whereas Satan himself appears in the Revelation in the form of a dragon. Cf. Rev. 13-20, *The King James Bible*, XIII-XX, 491-497, via *Wikisource.org*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

[13] Once again, for an extensive list of dragons depicted as connected to the Devil and Hell, cf. "Dragons are Demonic", *TV Tropes*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

[14] *Ibid.*

ancient influences aside, the paradigm of dragons from European folklore, when cleansed of local pagan influences, can probably be traced to the miracle of St George and the Dragon. The dragon we see speared by St George in hundreds of icons, carvings, and painting gives us both a paradigm of a (European) dragon's visual appearance, as well as the role dragons play in traditional storytelling.[15] Without further delving into the intricacies of dragon lore, I will be following this paradigm for the remainder of this discussion.

THE TWOFOLD DRAGON

We do, however, have to point out another thing – just as dragons in traditional storytelling were defined either by their appearance and powers, or by their role in the story, so can their place in modern storytelling – novels, screenplays, graphic novels etc. – be defined by either of these aspects. What makes modern stories essentially different is that the dragons in them may entertain both of these aspects – like Smaug in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*[16], *Maleficent* in Disney's *The Sleeping Beauty*[17], or the Dragon in DreamWorks' *Shrek*[18] – but they can also be completely separated. *That means that we may get giant, serpentine, flying and fire-breathing monsters that don't have to* be the antagonists in the story, just as we can get characters playing the *role* of a dragon in the story, *without being an actual dragon*.

In both of these situations we have *dragons being undragonly*, but in the first example actual dragons are not *acting* according to their nature, whereas in the second one characters don't *look the part*, yet they display *dragonly*[19] personality, and more importantly, fill their traditional role. This second category is so important from a storytellers perspective, that the entire category of villains and antagonists is

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[15] Cf. Lee Gordy (2020), "How Saint George's Dragon Got Its Wings", *JSTOR Daily*, published February 16, 2020.

[16] Cf. G. R. R. Tolkien (1937), *The Hobbit*, Chapters 13-14.

[17] Cf. Robin Allan, *Walt Disney and Europe: European influences on the animated feature films of Walt Disney*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

[18] Cf. Stephen Cole (2004), *Shrek: The Essential Guide*, New York: DK, 26.

[19] I choose the adjective "dragonly" instead of "dragonlike", as it doesn't imply a visual similarity to an actual dragon, but more of a moral and functional one. In Serbian, there is a similar distinction between terms "zmajevit" ("dragonly", usually used for heroes and fierce warriors) and "zmajolik" ("dragonlike", used for monsters visually similar to a dragon, or displaying some of the traits usually connected to dragons). Cf. Данијела Митровић (2022), „Змајевити јунаци у српској и староенглеској епици", *Књижевна историја*, год. 54, бр. 178 (2022), 221-241.

named *the Dragon* specifically for their position and role in the narrative, while disregarding their, so to say, 'biology'.[20] A classic example of this trope is Darth Vader from *Star Wars* – he the main guardian of Emperor's political power (seen here as the "treasure" that the heroes want to obtain) and the gatekeeper of his Hidden Fortress,[21] he is his main enforcer (pursuing the heroes and "burning down villages"), and he is the one the heroes have to defeat, outsmart, or at least avoid in order to succeed in their quests.[22] Other notable examples of these dragonly antagonists include Tatsu as the Shredder's dragon in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*,[23] Bellatrix Lestrange to Voldemort in *Harry Potter*, The Mountain to Queen Cersei in *Game of Thrones*, Ishamael to the Dark One in *The Wheel of Time*, Princess Azula to Fire Lord Ozai in *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Colonel Vogel to Walter Donovan in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* etc.[24]

Why are these 'undragonlike dragons' important? Surely there are enough stories with *actual dragons being dragons* around, that we don't have to dilute the discussion with these additional types of character?! But that is just the point – *something happens* to dragons in modern storytelling that makes them lose the role they played in stories for centuries and eons. At some point in the retelling of all these old stories, 'real' dragons *stopped* being the epitome of evil and even antagonists, and their role was mostly taken over by these 'dragonly' characters, only for themselves to also be appropriated into the good guys and leaving global mythology gapingly deficient on villains. This is the topic I will be discussing further on.

FROM THE SERPENT OF HELL
TO AN ENDANGERED SPECIES

How exactly we got to a place where dragons are no longer terrifying monsters that need to be slain for civilisation to survive is an interesting question in itself, which we cannot discuss at length here.[25] The

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[20] Cf. "The Dragon", *TV tropes*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

[21] Cf. Katelin McDougald (2022), "Star Wars and The Hidden Fortress: Similarities and Differences With Lucas' Influence", *Movie Web*, published June 1, 2022.

[22] It is not by chance that Darth Vader is used as the main illustration for the Dragon on *TV Tropes*, *op. cit.*

[23] As a play on this role, "Tatsu" is Japanese for "dragon". Cf. "The Dragon", *TV Tropes*, *op. cit.*

[24] Once again, for an extensive list of narrative "dragons", "The Dragon", *TV Tropes*, *op. cit.*

[25] Cf. Yvonne Shiau (2019), "The Evolution of Dragons in Western Literature: A History", *Reactor*, published October 23, 2019.

general motif may be related to the nostalgia for the whimsy, enchantment and fantasy of old folk mythologies as compared to the grim technological determinism of modern society, much like it is represented in classical works of high fantasy like Tolkien's *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*. The recurring theme in such works, as it is beautifully reiterated in the animated film *The Flight of Dragons* (1982), is that "the world of magic", with its supernatural metaphysics, forgotten abilities and powers, and, most notably, mythical creatures, is something akin to an endangered ecosystem that is being run over by civilisation, rationality, and technology. As the most majestic and awe-inspiring creatures of legend, dragons became the symbol of this dying world of fancy, and hence an object of romanticisation. Yet Tolkien himself, as sceptical towards technological progress as he was, never went out to de-ethicise symbols of good and evil. His Smaug is every bit as dangerous, predatorial and evil as dragons in stories get.[26]

To understand this 'change of heart' concerning the role dragons play in contemporary stories, we should consider a Disney animated classic from 1941 – *The Reluctant Dragon*. In this animated short, the age-old trope about the brave and valiant knight getting rid of the dragon that has been terrorising the village (so, literally the story of St George) is played for laughs, making both the dragon and the knight mild-mannered, good-hearted, gentle souls that prefer to have a picnic and discuss poetry, rather than fight it out. What makes this cartoon so funny is context – in the time it was made, both dragons and knights knew their respective places in stories,[27] as well as the audience, so the plot twist was genuinely unexpected and fresh. *The Reluctant Dragon* was just good *comedy*, and the time it didn't influence the way dragons were portrayed in stories and film. In Disney's 1959 *Sleeping Beauty*, Prince Phillip slays Maleficent transformed into a dragon wielding an enchanted sword and a shield with a cross, completely faithful to the Christian origins of the trope. Four years later, Madam Mim in Disney's *The Sword in the Stone* similarly transforms into a dragon (thus breaking the rules of her wizard duel with Merlin) and is then outsmarted by her opponent, once again true to the classical narrative.

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[26] Cf. Camilo Peralta (2021), "Tolkien's Dragons: Sources, Symbols, and Significance", *Symbolism*, vol. 21, no. 1 (2021), 2-15.

[27] In fact, Sir Giles and the Dragon in *this* story know their place, (they are, as *TV Tropes* would put it, "genre savvy") and are deliberately playing it out for the audience in order to get out of the spot the story put them in. Cf. "Genre Savvy", *TV Tropes*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

But as time went by, mostly in cartoons and children's stories, and then, slowly, in live-action films and adult novels dragons started to lose their edge and turn into neutral, enchanted beings which are just as likely to help the heroes out, as to hinder them in their quest. This went so far, that in children's programs you simply cannot find a classic story with an evil and dangerous dragon. In the popular animated film *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) dragons are reduced from pests to pets, but at least the story *considers* and subverts the trope of dragons being dangerous and deadly – most other children's programs simply take 'good-natured dragons', be it pets and mounts (*Pete's Dragon*, 1977), allies and friends (*The Railway Dragon*, 1988; *The Quest for Camelot,* 1998), or even protagonists (*Tabaluga*, 1994-2004; *Zog* 2018), as a given. While this is understandable to an extent in case of children's stories (though problematic from a pedagogical perspective[28]), this kind of infantile re-inventing of old lore started to bleed into storytelling for adults.

The Reluctant Dragon became a curse. *DragonHeart* (1996) plays the same trope straight – the knight and the dragon become friends and simulate fights in order to convince scared villagers the 'beast' was defeated. In *Eragon* (2006), a farm boy hatches a dragon egg and 'bonds' the dragon for life. In the *Harry Potter* series, dragons, though undoubtably dangerous, are treated as an endangered species (and sometimes as a semi-tame guardian animal), but at least, when Hagrid attempts to bring one home, everyone has the common sense to thing him crazy for it. This infantilisation of dragon lore probably reached its height with *Game of Thrones*, where the general audience took Daenerys' "pet dragons" for granted, and openly mourned the slaying of Rhaegal by Euron Greyjoy.[29] The producers actually managed to perform an 'inversed subversion' and 'play the trope straight' in the show's finale, completely taking the audience – expecting dragons to be docile, tame, and civilised – by surprise.[30]

How did this upside-down view of dragons come about? We have seen the history behind the process, but what exactly happened to our

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[28] Cf. Christian Poole (2022), "The Importance of Fairy Tales for Children", *Thinking West*, published April 25, 2022.

[29] It is amusing to note that the episode of *Game of Thrones* where this happens appeared online early morning on May 6, 2019, which is celebrated as St George's Day by the Orthodox according to the Julian calendar. At the time, Serbian audience celebrated Greyjoy's feat as an "accidental Easter Egg". A meme depicting Greyjoy under the title "St George slays the dragon" became viral in Serbia in the following days. Cf. Никола Танасић (2019a), „Финале „Игре престола" – крвава теленовела, политичка драма и повратак епици", *NSPM.rs*, published June 22, 2019.

[30] Никола Танасић (2019, 1), *ibid*.

concept of a dragon, that we (literally) *lost the plot* so much and genu-inely expected a person that calls herself *The Mother of Dragons* to be 'the good guy' up until she burns down a whole city on a whim? Essen-tially, what we have here is a form of a rationalisation, a typically mod-ern reductionist approach to dragon lore. Fusing the magic/technology dialectic with the nature/civilisation dialectic, we reduced (*sic!*) magic to a natural, or at least naturally occurring phaenomenon, thus making dragons – *animals*. This can be seen in the way dragons are depicted in modern visual arts – more often than not they "conform to laws of phys-ics and anatomy",[31] with front limbs developed into bat-like wings with an unwieldy wings span – all in order to "look believable" for "modern audiences".[32] Furthermore, if dragons are "just animals" (albeit extraor-dinary), then there can be no morality to them. They are dangerous in the same way a lion or a crocodile is dangerous, but there is nothing de-monic or sinister in that danger. Ironically, by "naturalising" dragons in such a way, we are, in fact, appropriating them into our rational world-view and destroying everything that makes them what they are, while reducing them to nothing more than "a dinosaur with wings" – just an animal that has an iconic look.[33]

BIG BAD WOLF WITH A THORN IN ITS PAW

While the monstrous and beastly form classic dragons have pro-hibits them from appearing in a significant number of redemption stories, the 'undragonlike dragon', the one fulfilling the *role* of the arch-nemesis, guardian of the treasure, and the near-unstoppable foe, suffers heavily from this moralist white-washing. The archetypical example that we have chosen for this category of character – Darth Vader from *Star Wars* – is an excellent (and fairly early) example of this. Instead of simply defeat-ing him, Luke Skywalker proves that "there was always good in him" and pushes him toward a final act of redemption, that enables him to re-unite with the Force and wash away all the crimes that he has committed

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[31] Cf. Isabelle V. Busch (2019), "Theoretical Dragon Anatomy: Structure & Function", Neptune, NJ: Grandisbooks; also "Dragon Anatomy and Physiology", *Dragonsinn.net*, Published Febru-ary 20, 2020.

[32] On the topic of how the myth of "modern audiences" is ruining contemporary cinema see the video "Why Modern Movies Suck - The Myth Of The "Modern Audience" (2022) by *The Crit-ical Drinker*, *Youtube*, published November 3, 2022. Cf. Connor Smith (2023), "Why Modern Movies Are Dreadful and Modern Audiences Don't Exist", *LHistory*, published March 6, 2023.

[33] Cf. „Dinosaurs are Dragons", *TV Tropes*, retrieved January 14, 2024.

up to that point. In the original *Star Wars* trilogy there is a satisfying, deeply Christian tone to this story,[34] and to George Lucas' credit, while filming the prequel trilogy he did not downplay Vader's crimes in order to make him more sympathetic. Instead, he portrayed him as an ancient hero, driven by his own hybris (and the will of the Gods) into tragedy.[35] And just like with *The Reluctant Dragon*, this subversion of the role of "the Dragon" didn't bother anyone, because it was an exception, rather than a rule. In the last decades, however, this kind of relativisation became so common that it became nearly impossible for Hollywood to portray actual villains. What used to be a seldom used redemption arc[36] became an *origin story*, having iconic villains basically substitute heroes in storytelling in order to satisfy "modern audiences'" need for morally ambiguous protagonists and "grittier" stories.[37]

The process remains connected to a pedagogical paradigm, which proclaims that we should teach children that 'no one is truly evil', and that there are always 'reasons and causes', 'mitigating circumstances', and 'backstory' that explains why a certain villain is acting the way they are. Remove the cause, or simply make the villain reflect on it, and 'all the bad things go away', showing that the character was 'actually good all along'. This obsessive bleaching of villains was 'lampshaded' early in the series *Desperate Housewives* (2004-2012), where one of the mothers organising a school play insists that it is "cruel" to kill the Big Bad Wolf at the end of *Little Red Riding Hood*, suggesting, instead, that the wolf was merely "mean" because "it had a thorn in its paw". Remove the thorn, and one of the most demonic creatures form European folk tales[38] turns into, essentially, a puppy. If only it were that simple![39]

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[34] Cf. Tim Redfield (2019), "Vader's Redemption", *Bread for Beggars*, published December 7, 2019.

[35] Cf. Zoe Hinton (2021), "Anakin Skywalker and the Classic Tragedy Narrative", *Star Wars Geek Girl*, published May 6, 2021.

[36] For example, among more notable Sith lords of *Star Wars* lore, we have this kind of redemption only in the case of Ulic Qel-Droma – most Sith lords cling to the Dark Side of the Force even after death. Cf. Kevin J. Anderson (1998), Chris Gosset, *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi – Redemption*, Dark Horse Comics.

[37] Cf. Keith Phipps (2021), "How Everything Became a Gritty Reboot", *GQ*, published March 12, 2021.

[38] In Old Slavic and Serbian stories, for example, the Wolf is an almost supernatural being, very close in its nature to the Dragon. Cf. Ненад Гајић (2011), „Вук", *op. cit.*, 156-157.

[39] It is not, as it is repeatedly shown in the children's book series *The Bad Guys* (and the *Dreamworks* 2022 animated film based on them). Though the story here plays into the same redemption trope, at least it has acknowledged that there is something inherently 'bad' in the very *nature* of iconic 'bad guys' (and the Big Bad Wolf in particular), which makes their redeeming more difficult than simply 'admitting one was wrong and apologising'. The series also acknowledges that

Hollywood, however, thinks it is. During the last couple of decades, we have literally been overrun by 'villain backstories' that strive to show us that "the world is not black and white", and that there are always 'reasons and causes' why someone is behaving badly. We have seen it in practically every Disney villain after *Princess and the Frog* (2009), most notable examples being, of course, whole films dedicated to 'difficult pasts' of iconic baddies like *Maleficent* (2014) and *Cruella* (2021). Villains of most new animated stories follow the same approach – Hook in *Peter Pan & Wendy* (2023) was betrayed by Peter as a child, the demon bear Mor'du in *Brave* (2012) is simply cursed, *Lotso* in *Toy Story 3* (2010) was abandoned and discarded by his owner, Bruno in *Encanto* (2021) is "just misunderstood", *Wreck-it-Ralph* (2012) doesn't even want to be a villain (just like the cast of Dreamwork's *The Bad Guys*, 2022), whereas *Te Fiti* in *Moana* (2016) also has "a torn in her paw" (of sorts) and is instantly transformed into a loving goddess of nature the moment the problem is settled.[40] The scene that was played for irony in Frank Miller's graphic novel *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), when a psychiatrist declares the Joker "cured" after a series of "heartfelt confessions" only to have him murder both the psychiatrist and the entire audience of a live show he was appearing in, repeats unironically in *Joker* (2019), only this time the entire global audience of the film does not get the message, taking the villain's "sad origin story" for granted, and feeling empathy for him.[41]

THE GREATEST TRICK THE DEVIL EVER PULLED

Once again, we have reductionism at work here, analysing and deconstructing age-old narratives on good and evil to the level of 'social background' and 'developmental psychology'. One of the immediately visible consequences of this approach is the degrading of Hollywood villains, once the epitomes of evil, either into psychopaths (who are, by

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there is a certain kind of stereotype about certain creatures and characters that is based in the collective experience of the society, and that can't simply be 'wished away'.

[40] An good example of this is the Grinch from the 2000 Jim Carey version of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, where the reason he is mean and grouchy is because he was teased and bullied as a child, as opposed to the classic Dr Seuss tale where he is "simply mean". The 2018 animated film *The Grinch* does the some thing, tracing the titular character bad behaviour to a dreary childhood spent in an orphanage. Cf. Cecilia Martinez (2018), Ricky Hernandez, and Halle Buttafuso, "The Grinch: Old vs New", *The Roar*, published November 27, 2018.

[41] Cf. Никола Танасић (2019b), „Џокер — Роршахова мрља за друштво „постистине", *NSPM. rs*, published October 12, 2019.

definition, not answerable for moral choices they make), or into weaklings and whiners who "had a tough childhood" (Megamind in *Megamind*, 2010), "never knew their parents" (Bruce the great white shark[42] in *Finding Nemo*, 2003), or simply "had a bad day" (the Joker in Alan Moore's *The Killing Joke[43]). Hence, we get a whole gallery of villains who are more suited for the therapist's couch, than a prison cell.*

The obvious, and much more problematic consequence of all this is that we lose the very concept of evil, which has always been much clearer and more paradigmatic in fiction, than in real life. Every evil deed has an explanation and a backstory, and evil behaviour can be analysed and reduced to psychological, sociological, or political context, providing an *ad hoc* explanation and "instant empathy" for practically anything and anyone. And this is a far bigger problem from just spoiling and destroying centuries of mythology and lore. The virtues, axiologies, and value systems of every society are mirrored in their stories, and we are living in a global culture which has successfully (and perhaps deliberately) undermined its very foundations – its distinction of good and evil. Because when you are unable to point out obvious evil in stories you are told as a child, you essentially grow up without a moral compass, no matter how compassionate, tolerant, and humane your society strives to be. And make no mistake, this *is* a matter of political manipulation! A society that is unable to perceive something as evil is a society that can, on the one hand, be persuaded that *anything* is evil, and on the other (which is much more sinister), it can be persuaded *that evil as such does not even exist*.[44]

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[42] Bruce is a very good example of the absurdity of the trope, as he is a 'mindless killing machine' by his nature and having him 'go vegetarian' is simply silly. This is, of course, deliberately played for laughs by the screenwriters, but the joke loses its irony by the end of the film, where Bruce and his friends are continuing to pursue their 'nice shark' pledge. Of course, this kind of plot twist works in a comedy made primarily for children, but if you lose any notion that certain creatures are aggressive, dangerous, and, yes, even evil *by nature*, you also lose the opportunity to play with these types of subversion – which is exactly what is happening to dragons.

[43] In this influential graphic novel, Alan Moore uses this 'psychological background' for Joker to take a jab at Batman's origin story, which is also often considered to be enough of a grounding for the Dark Knights antisocial behaviour. However, and unlike the 2019 Todd Phillips film, Alan Moore's Joker is admitting himself that he possibly (more like probably) made his sad story up (just like Christopher Nolan's Joker, who is always telling a different story about "how he got his scars"). Moore also proves that outside heteronomy does not necessarily make a person evil, as the Joker's attempt to drive commissioner Gordon crazy by making him watch photos of his daughter Barbara's torture fails completely. Cf. Никола Танасић (2019b), *ibid.*

[44] Indeed, we live in a civilisation which is increasingly incapable to process true acts of evil as anything more than 'mental illness' or at least 'ideological indoctrination'. The latter is less socially destructive, because at least it presumes that we can determine *what kind* of 'ideological

"The greatest trick the devil ever pulled was convincing the world he did not exist", Kevin Spacey's Verbal repeats after Charles Baudelaire in *The Usual Suspects* (1995).[45] Now, one does not have to believe in the existence of the Devil (or demons, or dragons for that matter) to still be able to recognise evil as a distinct moral phaenomenon. When one doesn't believe in *evil*, though, things get complicated. One is easily manipulated into dismissing criminal behaviour as "a product of society" as well as into shunning social behaviour as "criminal". One may believe political actions of one ethnic group or another to be "genocide", while other, quantifiably almost identical actions to be "legitimate self-defence". One may be inclined to deride a politician as a "dictator, tyrant, and a murderer", all the while considering another, in all relevant respects similar politician to be "a peacemaker and a distinguished statesman". It is a trick, a sleight of hand and, believe it or not, it has quite a lot to do with global audiences cheering for Daenerys Targaryen and her dragons up until the moment they burn King's Landing to the ground.[46] To put it differently, not believing in the Devil is fine, provided the Devil doesn't exist. *Mutatis mutandis*, it may seem that there is no harm in believing all dragons are ordinary, harmless animals, as long as there are no dragons around to prove us wrong. But the stories of dragons have been around for millennia, and – for a reason. They were teaching generations of human beings from the Atlantic to the Chinese Sea important things about the world that surrounds them. And that world, more often than not, has a great deal of 'dragon types' in the need of (metaphorical or literal) – slaying.

OFF THE THERAPIST'S COUCH AND INTO THE WOODS

For me, the question of how we depict traditional mythological beings in our stories is primarily a question of aesthetics, culture, and good education. Yet, both as a scholar coming from the field of ancient

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indoctrination' is morally wrong, but the first is making our whole civilisation incapable to cope with any kind of evil it encounters in an increasingly amoral world. On the other hand, whenever we *do* find clear normative judgments about something being *evil*, we almost certainly *are* looking at a piece of political propaganda – propaganda that a generation raised on stories about "the Big Bad Wolf with a thorn in his paw" simply is not capable of seeing through. Cf. Andrew Delbanco (1995), *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

[45] *La plus belle des ruses du diable est de vous persuader qu'il n'existe pas*, cf. Henri Quantin (2021), "Baudelaire et la plus belle des ruses du diable", *Aleteia*, published July 22, 2021.

[46] Cf. Никола Танасић (2019a), *op. cit.*

philosophy, and as a Serb who grew up on old Slavic and European folk tales, I strongly believe that there are good reasons why "the beautiful" and "the good", τὸ καλὸν κἀγαθὸν, „лепо и добро", serve as one and the same, and seldom go one without the other. And I believe there is no reason to deprive future generations of Serbs, Slavs, Europeans, or any other people for that matter, of the mythological heritage that has been meticulously preserved for centuries and millennia by generations before ours.

Fortunately, global audiences seem to agree. Weak, traumatised and psychologically damaged dragons with Freudian issues simply cannot compare to their more famous predecessors, much like Daenerys' dragons cannot be compared Vhagar, Meraxes, or Balerion the Black Dread. Mature audiences simply *want their villains evil, and their dragons dangerous, malicious, and sinister*, and critics worth their salt constantly bash films, novels, and stories, that pander to the infantile Miss Universe need for "everyone to be friends". Hollywood's own sense of καλοκαγαθία also works against this trend – it is one thing to show that Darth Vader, Loki, or Severus Snape were "good all along", quite another to imply kindness in a serpentine, reptilian creature, whose monstrous looks sets all our evolutionary instincts flaring. That is why in adult storytelling (at least when it is *good* storytelling) we still have dragons fulfilling their traditional role – be it the Dragon in Brandon Sanderson's *Tress of the Emerald Sea*, the Hungarian Hornback in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the apocalyptic flight of dragons in *The Legend of Vox Machina*, or Drogon setting King's Landing aflame in the best tradition of Tolkien's Smaug.

We have reached a point when traditional storytelling becomes subversive compared to the new, 'modern' narratives. "Some people just want to see the world burn", says Alfred to Bruce Wayne in *The Dark Knight*, yet audience does not quite want to believe it. They want the Joker's actions to be 'rational' on some level (cue "Joker was right all along" memes), the want them to *make sense*. This obsession with rationality and explanation is a civilisational trait of our society, and it is the primary reason why creatures like vampires, werewolves, satyrs, demons, and, yes, dragons have been living in *stories* instead of the dark corners of our woods, basements and caves for a while now. Yet, the curse of rationalising does not stop with the cleansing of our world of wonders, impossibilities, and supernatural forces – now it is going after our stories as well. And caught in this rational, reductionist crossfire is

our morality. Our global society is churning out culture that has *forgotten what evil means*. Worse – it is a culture that believes evil can be rationalised, deconstructed, and "put to good use", much like Daenerys' dragons. At the same time, we have actual evil, unseen for generations, on the rise all over the world, including dark corners of our own woods and basements. Coincidence? Hardly.

Most people, however, are aware of this, at least on an intuitive, or purely aesthetic level. In all forms of storytelling, the stories that create the biggest splash and generate a cult following are almost always the ones following classic, age-old tropes. It is, perhaps, most visible in the one form of art that we have mostly ignored so far, but which relies heavily on popular worldviews and classic heroic narratives – *video games*. Gamers are an audience that likes to participate in the story of its heroes, and they are much less pliable to experiments with classic mythological tropes. When you encounter a dragon in a game, you either kill it, outsmart it, or run away from it. Just as it always was it those kinds of stories. Game developers rely heavily on mass popularity of their work and are therefore much more conservative with their storytelling. That is the reason games are among the most vivid, morally engaging, and at the same time classical art forms of our time. Other arts are catching up though. And that is good news for lovers of classic fairy tales and old mythology. And good news for dragons as well. They may get slain now and then, but at least they will get to get up from the therapist's couch and go burn some cities, pillage some gold, and kidnap some fair maidens. It is a much healthier lifestyle for them. And much healthier for society in general.

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STAR WARS, FROM THE JUNGLES OF VIETNAM TO THE DESERTS OF IRAQ AND BEYOND

Abstract

When discussing the famous Star Wars franchise, emphasis is usually placed on its spiritual, mithological, or technological elements; in this paper, we will draw attention to an oft neglected aspect of this modern mythos: the political. In the first part of the paper, we will deal with the basic (mostly apolitical) outline of the films: the hero's journey and how it was meant to prepare and inspire young teenagers for the life ahead. Having presented a basic overview of the structure of these films, we will delve into their political undertones by first examining how the original Star Wars trilogy from the late '70s and early '80s subtly critiqued the American war in Vietnam; then, we will move onto the prequel trilogy from the late early 2000s and examine how it gradually brought into the fore an artistically rebellious attitude toward the rise of the Bush administration and the ensuing "War on Terror". Finally, we will examine the sequel trilogy's milquetoast critique of capitalism and its heavy-handed push for 'equality'.

Keywords: *Star Wars, War in Vietnam, War in Iraq, War on Terror, George Lucas, George Bush.*

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THE HERO'S JOURNEY:
A STORY FOR TWELVE-YEAR-OLDS

Despite garnering legendary status as the foremost science fantasy mythos of our time, Star Wars is, at its core, aimed at children and young teenagers taking their first steps into a larger world. It is, in the words of its author (writer and director George Lucas), "a story for twelve-year-olds",[1] dealing with simple yet timeless endeavors such as leaving the home of one's upbringing, broadening one's horizons both literally and figuratively, having to deal with trauma and loss and, ultimately, overcoming challenges and triumphing against great odds. As such, it is a universal, timeless story that achieved unprecedented success on a global scale due to its ability to inspire people regardless of culture or background.[2]

It is, at the same time, one of the most ambitious science fantasy franchises of all time in scope alone, creating an entire galaxy full of thousands of different planets and species, not to mention the wondrous technology, mythology and spirituality connecting it all (both physically, through light speed and spiritually, through the Force). Yet, despite the enormity of the Star Wars galaxy, many of its elements have singular recognizable features, such as the planets Tatooine, Hoth and the moon of Endor entirely being covered by deserts, snowy wastes, and forests respectively, or the two main factions at war always being some form of Republic and Empire with a clear democracy/tyranny dichotomy. This 'complex simplicity' could be argued to be one of the main reasons why Star Wars is both so accessible to audiences and so beloved at the same time.

Another crucial appeal of this franchise is the ever-permeating Manichean dichotomy in the form of the eternal struggle between Jedi and Sith and the respective light and dark sides of the Force, a unique and interesting interjection of spirituality into an otherwise predominantly technological world. It might be difficult to imagine such a distant, timeless, yet uncannily familiar place as a canvas for painting a critique of the foreign policy of our own world's 'Empire': this critique is therefore subtle enough for the casual viewer to miss, yet present enough to enable the attentive viewer to 'connect the dots'.

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[1] Chris Kempshall (2023), *The History and Politics of Star Wars*, London/New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 199.
[2] Chris Taylor (2016), *How Star Wars Conquered the Universe*, London: Head of Zeus, xiii.

While political critique could be viewed as a subtle background to the story of Star Wars, its inarguable foreground is the classical hero's journey. Luke Skywalker, our hero in the original trilogy, starts out as a farm hand in the middle of nowhere on a desolate, distant planet of Tatooine: his life with his aunt and uncle, up till then largely unaffected by the war of the Rebellion against the Galactic Empire, is severed by the Empire's attempt to recover the stolen plans to their secret weapon. A duo of sympathetic droids escape the ensuing fight and land on Tatooine, bearing the plans and sent by a princess in need of rescue, triggering a cavalcade of events that would result in the eventual destruction of the Empire.

The war of the Rebellion against the Empire, however, is only the backdrop to the story of Luke Skywalker, the 'audience character': his journey from simple farmhand to a Jedi Knight, a powerful wielder of the mysterious Force and heir to the once-proud legacy of his mentor's fallen order; his growing understanding of both the galaxy and the way of his spiritual forebearers, the Jedi, and, ultimately, the key role he plays in helping to bring down the Empire. Along the way, there are several milestone events and actions that define Luke's character arc.

The crucial steps in his journey are the death of his aunt and uncle at the hands of the Empire: the heinous act that leaves him with nothing and spurs him to action; his travel and early training at the hands of Obi-Wan Kenobi; his continued training by Yoda, his defeat at the hands of Darth Vader (both literal and figurative: discovering that Vader is his father), his recovery from his defeat (physical – implanting an artificial hand; and emotional – accepting the truth of his parentage), and, finally, his final confrontation with Vader and the Emperor in which his martial triumph against Vader is greatly overshadowed by his moral victory in refusing the Emperor's offer to take his father's place at his side.

If Luke's story in the original trilogy can be seen as an inspiration, his father's in the prequel trilogy is a cautionary tale: though destined to be the greatest Force-wielder of his age, Anakin's hubris ultimately leads to his downfall. At the beginning of the prequel trilogy, our protagonists have almost everything stacked in their favor: the Republic is at the height of its power, the Jedi order maintains peace throughout the galaxy and the greatest apparent threat is a small separatist movement that would eventually become the Confederation of Independent Systems that would wage open war against the Republic.

The real threat, however, are the Sith: ancient nemeses of the Jedi, whose current mastermind, Darth Sidious, means to play the Republic and the CIS against one another in his bid to create the Galactic Empire with himself as its head. It is against this backdrop that the young Jedi Anakin Skywalker faces his challenges and succumbs to his temptation. With his would-be master Qui-Gon Jinn facing death at the hands of Sidious' apprentice, he is left in the care of then-young Jedi Knight Obi-Wan Kenobi, who is unable to control and channel his Padawan learner's growing power. And while Anakin's skill in every field, from Force use to piloting, is exceptional, he fails the moral tests before him one after another.

Ignoring the Jedi code, he forsakes his duties on Naboo to save his mother on distant Tatooine: failing that, he murders an entire Tusken tribe in revenge; he nearly abandons his mission to track down the separatist leader Count Dooku so as to attempt to save his love, Padme, whom he later marries in secret; he impetuously engages Dooku only to end up losing half his arm. Eventually, he succumbs to a self-fulfilling prophecy: choosing to align himself with Darth Sidious in order to save his wife's life, he inadvertently causes her death. Thus, whereas Luke's story shows us that a person of strong moral character can triumph and persevere against great odds despite failure along the way, Anakin's story demonstrates that even a 'born' Jedi with almost everything stacked in his favor can fail if he lacks the proper moral character. Finally, we'll get to Rey's story in the final chapter, because, unlike the former two which only have politics in their background, the latter is almost explicitly political and all the worse for it.

Before taking a look at the contemporary political critique within Star Wars, it is worth taking a look at some of its historical and aesthetic inspirations: namely, one of the minor plot points in *A New Hope* revolves around the waning power and eventual dissolution of an inefficient senate: this is inevitably reminiscent of early Imperial Rome,[3] though the intentionality behind the potential inspiration is uncertain. Furthermore, most portrayals of the Republic (both old and new) depict it as slow, bureaucratic and corrupt.[4] Upon being confronted by Mace Windu and his accompanying Jedi, Palpatine exclaims "I am the Senate!", a line quite similar to Louis the XIV's famous statement "L'état C'Est à Moi!"[5]

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[3] Wetmore, Kevin J. (2005), *The Empire Triumphant: Race, Religion and Rebellion in the Star Wars Films*, McFarland, 20.

[4] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 68.

[5] Craig E. Harline (1992), ""L'état C'Est à Moi": Louis XIV and the State", in *The Rhyme and Reason of Politics in Early Modern Europe*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Finally, the parallels with Nazi Germany throughout Star Wars are many and varied: in fact, it has been argued that the politics of Star Wars began as a critique of U. S. foreign policy using Nazi imagery.[6] The design of Storm Trooper armor, especially the helmets, hearkens back to Nazi symbolism, particularly the Totenkopf;[7] the 'screams' of imperial Tie Fighters were inspired by the Jericho sirens of "Stuka" dive bombers; the Emperor's arrival on the Death Star mirrors Hitler's arrival in Berlin in *Triumph of the Will*.[8] Meanwhile, the symbolism and imagery of the First Order in the sequel trilogy is almost a one-for-one comparison to Nazi Germany, from its flag, across the Nuremberg rally-style military gathering, to General Hux's fiery speech regarding the decadence and disorder of the New Republic.[9]

YAVIN 4, HOTH AND ENDOR: VIETNAM IN SPACE

At first glance, the two 'Lucas' Star Wars trilogies don't really contain any political agenda, and the mostly WWII-inspired imagery led most casual audiences to not consciously realize that the original film was about Vietnam.[10] A deeper examination of the timeline of Star Wars, as well as many behind-the-scenes events, including explicit statements by George Lucas himself reveals a cleverly disguised contemporary political critique with broad real-world implications. In his book, *The History and Politics of Star Wars*, author Chris Kempshall provides a detailed timeline of real-world events against the various publications within the *Star Wars* franchise (film and otherwise).[11] The correlation is particularly notable with regard to the original trilogy's critique of the war in Vietnam and the prequel trilogy's almost prophetic outlining of the rise of the Bush administration and the ensuing "War on Terror".

For the original trilogy, George Lucas drew significant inspiration from the Vietnam war: as a political liberal who was generally opposed to America's Cold War foreign interventionism, Lucas saw the

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[6] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 12.

[7] Ryder Windham and Adam Bray (2017), *Star Wars: Stormtroopers beyond the Armor*, Harper Design, 13.

[8] J. W. Rinzler (2017), *The Making of Star Wars*, London: Aurum Press, 78-79, 102.

[9] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 47.

[10] Peter W. Lee (2016), "Periodizing a Civil War: Reaffirming an American Empire of Dreams", in: Lee (ed.) *A Galaxy Here and Now*, McFarland & Co., 165-167, 177.

[11] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 12-16.

presence of U. S. troops as fundamentally unjust;[12] he is quoted as saying that "The (Star Wars) films were always political."[13] However, his opposition to the war also had a more personal aspect: he was excused from the draft because of his diabetes, but feared being sent to war anyway if he flunked out of college.[14] In his approach to the critique of the war, Lucas was largely inspired by *Apocalypse Now*.[15]

In the original *Star Wars* (now *A New Hope*), the parallel to Vietnam is the clearest: a galaxy-spanning Empire is attempting to quell a rebellion whose main base of operation is the jungle moon of the planet Yavin.[16] Interestingly, the rebel base was originally to be placed on Wookie home world of Kashyyyk to further the parallel to Vietnam, but this was scrapped and left for Endor and the Ewoks in *Return of the Jedi*.[17] The Empire uses its more advanced technology and vastly greater numbers ruthlessly, even going so far as to destroy entire planets merely as a show of force. In fact, the Empire's ultimate superweapon, the Death Star, can be argued to be a parallel to the atomic bomb,[18] and Governor Tarkin's decision to use it on Alderaan due to Dantooine's being "too remote to make an effective demonstration" mirrors the U. S. Joint Chiefs of Staff choice of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as targets for nuclear bombing.[19]

Furthermore, in order to demonstrate the technological imbalance of the two warring sides, rebel spacecraft were deliberately designed to look like Republic-era junk fighters.[20] In *The Empire Strikes Back*, the opening battle on Hoth sees the Empire using the massive AT-AT walkers, which mirror the unwieldly U. S. hardware used in Vietnam.[21] However, as noted by Pike,[22] the parallels to the Vietnam war only go so far: unlike the Rebel Alliance in Star Wars, the Viet Cong wasn't a simple movement against tyranny, but one aiming to establish a completely

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[12] J. W. Rinzler (2017), *op. cit.*, 2, 9, 69, 107-108.

[13] *Ibid*, 7-8, 16.

[14] Paul Duncan (2020), *The Star Wars Archives: 1999–2005*, Köln: Taschen, 12-13; Brian Jay Jones (2017), *George Lucas: A Life*, London: Headline Publishing Group, 72-73.

[15] J. W. Rinzler (2017), *op. cit.*, 7-8.

[16] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 103.

[17] Paul Duncan (2020), *op. cit.*, 51.

[18] Cass R. Sunstein (2016), *The World According to Star Wars*, William Morrow Publishers, 107.

[19] Phillips Payson O'Brien, (2019), "The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Atom Bomb, the American Military Mind and the End of the Second World War", *Journal of Strategic Studies* vol. 42, no. 7, 971–991.

[20] Paul Duncan (2020), *op. cit.*, 183.

[21] J. W. Rinzler (2017), *op. cit.*, 55.

[22] Douglas Eugene Pike (1966), *Viet Cong: The Organization and Technique of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 32.

new social order.[23] In the last, the presence of Imperial bases and their disruptive activities on Tatooine, Bespin and the forest moon of Endor represent the Empire's colonialism,[24] and could be seen as mirroring the presence of hundreds of U. S. military bases throughout the world.

An important element of these films is that the science fantasy setting allowed any real-world parallels to be distilled enough to not appear immediately political, allowing audiences to immerse themselves in the world and story without any jarring references (an example of the opposite would be the Canto Bight sequence from *The Last Jedi* in the sequel trilogy). This also enabled audiences to misinterpret the parallels, inspiring the Americans, for example, to see themselves as the Rebels, harkening back to the revolutionary days of their Founding Fathers, and identifying the Empire with their then-British oppressors[25] (even though the Empire was inspired by their own country's contemporary imperialist policies).

Kempshall observes that "The original trilogy was designed to be understood as films sympathetic to the cause of the North Vietnamese and highly critical of the United States",[26] but, as Duncan notes, "nobody (in the audience) was aware of that".[27] The American involvement in Vietnam was based on the problematic "Domino theory": the idea that, should one country be allowed to 'fall' to Communism, countless others would surely follow, which is why an American intervention was 'justified' in every single occasion.[28] This theory was one of a number of so-called 'just war' theories.[29] The essential problem with this justification for American imperialism is that it didn't simply stop with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, but rather *expanded*, with more countries joining NATO and U. S. and allied military bases gradually forming a stranglehold around Russia and China.

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[23] For a detailed overview of the Vietnam war, see: Pierre Asselin (2017), *Vietnam's American War: A History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; George C. Herring (2002), *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.

[24] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 31.

[25] This was taken a step further with the MMORPG game *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, where the inhabitants of the Sith Empire were given British accents, whereas those of the Republic were given American ones.

[26] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 16.

[27] Paul Duncan (2020), *op. cit.*, 252.

[28] Bruce W. Jentleson (2001), "Domino Theory", in *The Oxford Companion to Politics of the World*, Oxford University Press.

[29] Michael Walzer (2000), *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, New York: Basic Books.

As for the Emperor himself, he was only mentioned in passing in episode IV, given a bit more prominence in V, where it's implied that he is a kind of Nixonian figure clinging to power, whereas around the time of VI, Lucas explicitly described him as "a politician. Richard M. Nixon was his name", saying that he "subverted the senate and finally took over and became an imperial guy [sic] and was really evil".[30] Further, Lucas specified that "the Vietnam War and Richard M. Nixon informed the development of Star Wars. At one point Nixon thought he might try to change the constitution so he could run for a third term. That set me off thinking about how a democracy falls, and doing research on all kinds of democracies from Greece to Rome".[31] Sunstein notes that "Nixon was never going for a third term, or trying to change the Constitution, but Lucas is a good storyteller".[32] The character and motives of the Emperor, as the decay of democracy in America were explored in far more detail in the prequel trilogy.

THE DEATH OF LIBERTY TO THUNDROUS APPLAUSE

The era of the prequel trilogy is significantly more complex: we have only to look at the countless criticisms of its "boring senate meetings" to discern that its complexity in some ways left many of the 'original' Star Wars fans behind. Where once we had a simple, straightforward struggle between the scattered, brave band of Rebels desperately trying to destroy the evil Empire and restore the Republic, we are now dealing with said Republic (and its guardian Jedi Order) at the height of its power and the brink of its downfall.

The key event that sparks the beginning of the end for the Republic is the CIS's blockade of Naboo. Encouraged by Darth Sidious, the Neimoidian separatists cut off Naboo's space routes and attempt to kidnap its queen. The intervention of the Jedi foils Sidious' plans in the short term, but the CIS was only ever his tool to indirectly obtain power and then be cast aside. Corrupt business played a crucial role in the fall of the republic.[33] Thanks to the Naboo affair, Palpatine is able to rise from a humble senator to the Supreme Chancellor of the Galactic Republic: from then on, his increasing control of the Senate and his

[30] J. W. Rinzler (2017), *op. cit.*, 20, 23-24, 69.

[31] Paul Duncan (2020), *op. cit.*, 259.

[32] Cass R. Sunstein (2016), *op. cit.*, 117.

[33] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 75.

shadowy leadership over the CIS allowed him to play the two warring sides against one another until the final blow was struck: he prompted the Jedi attempt on his life, then used it as an excuse to eliminate the Jedi Order and proclaim the creation of the Empire with himself at its head.

George Lucas often contemplated the fragility of democracy: "This idea of democracy being given up – and in many cases being given up in time of crisis – you see it throughout history, whether it's Julius Caesar or Napoleon or Adolf Hitler. You see these democracies under a lot of pressure, in a crisis situation, who end up giving away a lot of the freedoms they have and a lot of the checks and balances to somebody with strong authority to help get them through a crisis".[34] Also: "[In ancient Rome,] why did the senate after killing Caesar turn around and give the government to his nephew? … Why did France after they got rid of the king and that whole system turn around and give it to Napoleon? It's the same thing with Germany and Hitler. You sort of see these recurring themes where a democracy turns itself into a dictatorship, and it always seems to happen kind of in the same way, with the same kinds of issues, and threats from the outside, needing more control. A democratic body, a senate, not being able to function properly because everybody's squabbling, there's corruption".[35]

It's important to keep in mind that *The Phantom Menace* – the first film of the prequel trilogy came out in 1999, with the other two following suit in 2002 and 2005, respectively: there was a close correlation between the timeline of these films and George Bush's rise to power, which was marked by the War on Terror[36] and the War in Iraq.[37] The nebulous and elusive "War on Terror" in particular allowed George Bush to dramatically increase presidential power and governmental

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[34] Tony Keen (2012), "I, Sidious: Historical Dictators and Senator Palpatine's Rise to Power", in: Nancy Ruth Reagin and Janice Liedl (eds.) *Star Wars and History*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 125-149.

[35] David Germain (2005), ""Sith" Invites Bush Comparisons", *CBS News*, 16 May.

[36] For a detailed overview of the War on Terror, see: Jason G. Ralph (2013), *America's War on Terror: The State of the 9/11 Exception from Bush to Obama*, Oxford: Oxford University Press; David Holloway (2008), *9/11 and the War on Terror, Representing American Events*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; Terence McSweeney (2015), *The 'War on Terror' and American Film: 9/11 Frames Per Second, Traditions in American Cinema*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[37] For a detailed overview of the War in Iraq, see: Micah L. Sifry and Christopher Cerf, (eds.) (2003), *The Iraq War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions*, New York: Touchstone; Tareq Y. Ismael, and Jacqueline S. Ismael (2004*), The Iraqi Predicament: People in the Quagmire of Power Politics*, London: Pluto Press; Thomas G. Weiss, Margaret E. Crahan, and John M. Goering, (eds.) (2004), *Wars on Terrorism and Iraq: Human Rights, Unilateralism, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, New York: Routledge.

authority at home,[38] so much so that many did not believe that the parallels between Bush and Sidious could have been by accident.[39] It's crucial to keep in mind, however, that the script for the entire trilogy was finished before 2001, so any substantial similarities, while seemingly prescient, were nonetheless accidental.[40]

It's undeniable, however, that even as he was making the prequel trilogy, Lucas inevitably drew parallels to contemporary politics. Of particular note is his description of former Supreme Chancellor Valorum as "a good but beleaguered man, a bit like president Clinton".[41] Palpatine's quick rise to power is an insight into Lucas' understanding of the collapse of democracy: "The second film is about the building of a secret army and going to war, which obviously turns the Grand Chancellor into an Emperor politically. The Senate gives up the Republic. It's still a Republic, but an Emperor rules it. Don't worry, as soon as things are fixed, he'll give it back [laughs]".[42] Interestingly, Machiavelli didn't see the formal function of Roman dictator as the problem, rather blaming the coalescence of popular support around powerful politicians for the downfall of Rome.[43] In *Revenge of the Sith*, Lucas' vision of democratic collapse crystalizes around the historical precedents set in antiquity, revolutionary France and the rise of the Nazis.[44]

The impact of 9/11 in particular on Star Wars has been studied in some detail,[45] especially since Lucas and his team used Star Wars characters and imagery in comparison to the Bush administration increasingly afterward: by 2009, Lucas explicitly said that Bush is Vader and [Dick] Chaney is the Emperor.[46] The image of the Jedi Temple burning with a long cloud of smoke over a morning cityscape in Revenge of the Sith also held a remarkably visual symmetry to the World Trade Center towers after the 11 September 2001 attack.[47] Lines in the script

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[38] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 16.

[39] Keith R. A. DeCandio (2015) "The Madness of King George", in: David Brin and Matthew Woodring Stover (eds.) *Star Wars on Trial*, Dallas, TX: Smart Pop, 85.

[40] Mark Caro (2005) "Star Wars Inadvertently Hits Too Close to US's Role", *Chicago Tribune*, 18 May.

[41] Paul Duncan (2020), *op. cit.*, 105.

[42] *Ibid*, 81.

[43] Ivan Matić (2014), "Social Discord as the Foundation of Republicanism in Machiavelli's Thought", *Filozofija i društvo XXV* (4), 126.

[44] Tony Keen (2012), *op. cit.*, 125-149.

[45] Edward J. Carvalho (2011) "Star Wars and "Star Wars": Teaching Pre-9/11 Literature as Post-9/11 Reality", *Modern Language Studies* 1/2011 (vol. 41), 70–95.

[46] Maureen Dowd (2009) "Opinion | The Aura of Arugulance", *The New York Times*, 19 April.

[47] Chris Kempshall (2023), *op. cit.*, 78.

such as Anakin's declaration that "If you're not with me, then you're my enemy!" sounded remarkably similar to President Bush's warning that "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists!" after the 11 September 2001 attacks.[48]

Hasan notes that: "If there is a genius aspect to the prequels, then, it's in demonstrating how utterly achievable such a rapid transition from democracy to dictatorship is outside the "safe" boundaries of fantasy, and just how quickly such a transformation can occur".[49] In Padme's famous words: "This is how liberty dies? With thunderous applause." Had Lucas retained the rights to Star Wars and eventually made the sequel trilogy, the parallels to Iraq would have become overt – he is quoted as saying regarding the Bush administration: "you fought the war, you killed everybody, now what are you going to do"?[50] Unfortunately, he sold those rights to Disney and the end result was something vastly inferior.

THE POLITICS OF 'DISNEY STAR WARS'

Sadly, we can only imagine what Lucas' sequel trilogy would have been like: for one, we know he planned to use the original actors, having asked them back in the time of the original trilogy if they were willing to reprise their roles some thirty years later; another interesting aspect would have been the "Whills": mysterious beings within the Force that could have been seen as Lucas' synthesis between his original 'thesis' of the Force (as an mysterious energy field and spiritual power) and its 'prequel antithesis' (as a reductive power quantifiable by midi-chlorians). Finally, between his talent and penchant for weaving (particularly anti-war) politics into the Star Wars franchise, and his quotes regarding the Iraq war, it would have been most interesting to see how his opposition to U. S. imperialism would have been reflected in the new films.

Instead, the Disney 'suits' made a trilogy of films that is as politically vacuous as it is unoriginal and derivative in terms of themes and story. On that note, Lucas' own two trilogies (especially the prequels) came under a lot of criticism over the years: the frequent points of critique

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[48] David Germain (2005), *op. cit.*

[49] Zaki Hasan (2015) "Power, Politics, and the Prequels", in: Rich Handley and Joseph F. Berenato (eds.) *A Long Time Ago: Exploring the Star Wars Cinematic Universe*, Edwardsville, IL: Sequart Organization.

[50] Paul Duncan (2020), *op. cit.*, 583.

were the script, the setting, and the inauthentic special effects. One thing that could not have been justly criticized was a lack of artistic vision: it always abounded, even if its execution was imperfect. The sequel trilogy lacks not only that, but even something more fundamental: basic directorial consistency, with J. J. Abrams attempting to recapture the magic of the originals, and Rian Johnson trying to outdo Lucas himself, with no apparent collaboration between the two. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the story arc of the main character: Rey.

The former wanted to keep her parentage a mystery with the intention of gradually making a grand revelation: that she is the daughter of Darth Sidious himself, while the latter accentuated the desire to 'subvert expectations' by smashing the mystery apart and making her parents nobodies and junk traders. This inconsistency of origin is made all the worse through her 'character arc', which essentially consists in a long series of triumphs (both martial and moral) with barely an obstacle along the way, owing to Disney's warped understanding of progressive messaging (this is in dire contrast to both Luke, who had a long journey in developing both his ability, whose incredible ability is completely overshadowed by his moral failings at every turn).

The lack of consistency in directorial vision is made all the worse by the sequel trilogy's heavy-handed push for 'equality' (under quotation marks, because the 'creative team' at Disney seems to confuse actual equality representing female characters as being beyond flaw or reproach). Rey suffers especially due to this trend because, instead of being given a proper character arc that would involve her failing along the way, only to learn from her mistakes, evolve and eventually persevere and triumph, she starts out with both the necessary skill set and pristine moral purity that not only allows her to overcome basically every challenge with ease, but also enables her to teach figures like the now-old Jedi Master Luke Skywalker whom one would expect her to have a lot to learn from (Luke and Yoda and Anakin and Obi-Wan are good counter-examples).

The infamous and controversial *Last Jedi* is at particular fault here, because is heavy-handed political messaging extends to a jarringly immersion-breaking, but peculiarly milquetoast critique of capitalism with the aforementioned Canto Bight sequence that pays lip service to the evils of corporate greed without addressing its root causes. The hopeful and nostalgic *Force Awakens* tries to play the safest political hand imaginable, equating the antagonistic First Order with the Nazis

visually, but lacking the courage to use it as a canvas for any kind of political point. Gone is the subtle critique of U. S. (or, for that matter, *any*) imperialism: in its place are 'bad guys' who look like Nazis, hold Nuremberg-style rallies, rant against decadence and disorder, and that's about it. The universally panned *Rise of Skywalker*, being the desperate attempt to placate the now rightly angered fanbase that it is, unsurprisingly *has no politics*. With Rian Johnson having subverted expectations (and the story) to the point of oblivion, all that J. J. Abrams was left with was "Somehow, Palpatine returned".

With the reception of the final film being expectedly abysmal, Disney was forced to change its creative course. Hope rose from the ashes of disaster as the company first dipped their toe in producing stand-alone films, then switched its focus onto producing long-form series that focused on smaller stories of lesser-known characters and unexplored periods of the vast *Star Wars* timeline. Of particular note here is the *Mandalorian*, which has seen success in its three seasons (at the time of the writing of this article), that will hopefully encourage Disney to go further back in the timeline and unveil its many gems on the small (and perhaps, in time, the big) screen. From a political standpoint, though, the only particular standout is *Andor*: a show that was sadly glossed over by many audiences, while boasting some of the best writing and acting ever seen in *Star Wars*. Its daring delving into the varied minds and complex motivations of its characters results in a very realistic portrayal of the forming of a rebellion: a show of such amazingly high caliber can whole-heartedly be recommended even to people who have never heard of *Star Wars*.

What makes Andor such a stand-out is the fact that the Manichean dichotomy that the franchise is famous for mostly gives way to a kind of real-world portrayal of all factions and people involved. Gone are the Imperial 'bad guys' in grey officer suits and Stormtrooper armor: in their place are ISB agents that have to bounce ideas off one another and resolve complex plots in order to understand Rebel actions and predict their next move. Instead of a unified Rebellion, there are various factions, ranging from terrorists who care little about the cost of bringing down the Empire, across Machiavellian leaders trying to justify their own actions through hope in a brighter future, to disgruntled individuals seeing no purpose left in their lives other than to fight the Empire.

CONCLUSION

While films explicitly dealing with the topic of politics can rightly be seen as a strategic means of political communication,[51] films of the sci-fi and fantasy genre can have political critique cleverly woven into their plotlines without becoming the dominant element or even an immediately obvious one. Being an American liberal democrat, George Lucas was generally opposed to U. S. interventions and particularly suspicious of the motivations of Republican high officials. His political upbringing and education clearly left him with a kind of lamentable naivete with regard to the substantive similarity of 'Elephant' and 'Donkey' sides of the coin of American imperialism, but his heart on issues of foreign policy seems to have been in the right place, and his artistic expression of his politics was beyond reproach: subtle enough to not break the immersion, yet present enough to unravel upon careful analysis.

Originally conceived as a critique of U. S. involvement in Vietnam, the politics of Star Wars re-emerged with the prequels prescient depiction of the fall of democratic institutions under the pretext of defense. With the transfer to Disney, they degraded to merely using Nazi imagery and pushing heavy-handed 'progressive' messaging, but were then re-invigorated by the series format, allowing for deeper and more mature political themes to be explored in far more detail. With any luck, *Star Wars* will eventually find its way back to speaking truth to power, criticizing the faults of its own system of origin and inspiring its audiences to look beyond the obvious as they strive to understand our own world through the lens of the Galaxy far, far away.

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[51] Sanja Stošić (2016), "Sadržaj medijskog prostora u Srbiji tokom 2015. godine", *Srpska politička misao* 1/2016 (vol. 51), 253.

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THE PRINCE OF THE RINGS: CAN FILMS HELP US UNDERSTAND POLITICS?

Abstract

In this paper, I will try to explore whether films that seemingly have nothing to do either with our world or our politics can still lead us to knowledge or, at least, a better understanding of political theories. By doing this, I will compare Machiavelli's The Prince and Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy based on J. R. R. Tolkien's books of the same name. My goal is to show that we can come to the same conclusions about certain topics explored by Machiavelli by watching the trilogy. These films should also nudge us in the right direction when it comes to understanding the true meaning of the advices relayed in The Prince. I will try to point to Machiavelli's prescribed prince in the trilogy. Also, because of the stigma about Machiavelli's name that survives through the word "Machiavellian", I will also try to show that Machiavelli himself can be found in a beloved character from The Lord of the Rings.

Keywords: *politics, fiction, knowledge, Machiavelli, The Lord of the Rings.*

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INTRODUCTION

It is indisputable that there are political films. Just think of, for instance, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*), a propaganda film, or documentaries and biopics about political figures, for example, *Darkest Hour* that revolves around Winston Churchill. Those genres are capable of conveying actual truth. But what about fantasy?

The first part of the paper will deal with the more universal ideas – what is the relationship between film and politics; what is fiction and can we rely on it, and can we learn from films? In an attempt to provide answers to these questions, I will put a special emphasis on the question whether we can gain substantial, non-trivial knowledge from art, specifically film, or if we can exercise our cognitive abilities in contact with films. Particular examples that can illustrate these ideas better are going to be the topic of the second part of the paper. There, I will compare Machiavelli's ideas with their exemplary counterparts from *The Lord of the Rings*. That should ultimately lead us to both understand Machiavelli's ideas better, and also to see them in action and to put the plot of the trilogy in the context of a broader political system.

FILM AND POLITICS

The story of *The Lord of the Ring* goes, briefly, as follows: the Dark Lord Sauron deceived the ruling Elves, Dwarves and Men by gifting them the Rings of Power while leaving them in the dark about the fact that he has forged himself the One Ring "to rule them all". Although Sauron was defeated, his Ring, that has the power to corrupt seemingly everyone, was not destroyed. Because of that, Sauron can return. In order to come back to his full power, he is collecting followers and subjects, building an army, and trying to reunite with the One Ring. On the other side, the Fellowship of the Ring is formed with a sole purpose of guiding and guarding Frodo, a hobbit, to destroy the Ring. The Fellowship experiences many toils and 'side quests', gets torn up, but ultimately succeeds. Apart from Frodo, some of the characters on which a special emphasis is put are the wizard Gandalf, and the foretold king, Aragorn, with a multitude of other important creatures.

Lydia Goehr remarks that "[i]n its history, art has been conceived antagonistically in relation to politics"[1] by becoming "disenfranchised

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[1] Lydia Goehr (2003), "Art and Politics", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 472.

from politics. 'Disenfranchisement' connotes an act or attitude of neutralization such that art and/or philosophy are rendered 'impotent' to 'make anything happen' in the world". Still, most agree "that the arts have many and diverse functions in the social or political sphere",[2] but Goehr tells us that some emphasize art's particularity,[5] as opposed to, for instance, philosophy's universality. Yet, Goehr says that Danto recognizes a paradox: how is it that this impotent art (or film) still has a role, so much so that it is sometimes decided that it has to be censored?[3] This assumed 'impotence' of art would stand in opposition to politics for which one of the things that matters the most is action. Recognizing the importance of action, Machiavelli also emphasised how the ruler and his actions ought to appear.[4] Thus, we can use films as a means to understand better, say, Machiavelli's ideas from *The Prince*.

> In order for action to be valued and evaluated – that is, to become valuable as a political thing – it must be made available to our sensorial and experiential apprehension. In this way, it is modern political thought's privileging of the visibility of action – of action's movement – and practices of beholding that brings closer to appreciating why film matters to political theory.[5]

Panagia sees film as something of importance for politics in the sense that it shows ways "of political resistance that does not rely exclusively on the model of an overturning of power".[6] He believes that "film matters to political theory because it provides an account of discontinuity of action as a resource for thinking about new strategies and forms of political resistance today".[7] *The Lord of the Rings* shows us Sauron's oppression and tyranny through the One Ring, and a new strategy for political resistance – the forming of the Fellowship with a mission to destroy the Ring. Panagia states that "[t]he stochastic serialization of moving images that films project makes available an experience of resistance and change as a felt interruption of succession, rather than as an inversion of hierarchical power".[8] Yet, *The Return of the King* also

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[2] *Ibid*, 478.

[3] *Ibid*, 479.

[4] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *The Prince and Other Writings*, San Diego: World Cloud Classics, 85-86.

[5] Davide Panagia (2013), "Why film matters to political theory", *Contemporary Political Theory 12* (1), 6.

[6] *Ibid*, 2-3.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *Ibid*, 3.

gives us Aragorn who's crowning represents "an act of inverting the hierarchical distributions of power" through an establishing of a different rule, as opposed to Sauron's ideology.[9]

> From a methodological perspective, then, what film also affords political thinking is the possibility of presenting ideas such that their assemblage into a concept-formation is not determined by a principle of necessity (that is, causal determination), or semiotic designation (that is, symbolism) of formal argument. ... [A] clear argument is nothing other than a series of discontinuous impressions, retroactively assembled according to a conventionally available partition of the sensible.[10]

It is precisely in this sense that we can turn to reading *The Prince* upon finishing watching the trilogy and in doing so gain new insights. But we can also find this discontinuity and contingency in *The Fellowship of the Ring* when Galadriel shows Frodo the Mirror in which he can see what could be were he to fail.

Goehr, with Adorno in mind, states that art becomes *political*

> through the indirect, concealing ('secret and silent') use of aesthetic technique or artistic form. ... Irony, metaphor, humour, symbolism are the *aesthetic* means ... by which a grand illusion is sustained, the aesthetic illusion that keeps attention on art *qua* art, or the political illusion that this art is not political though it clearly is.[11]

In the *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli advises the ruler to beware conspiracies, but also the people to be careful when they are conspiring. Still, he believes that it is "better [for the people] to live contentedly under the rule that destiny bestowed upon them, however it may be".[12] These are the words of the same person that addressed *The Prince* to the ruler of Florence which should render us more careful in the interpretation of this book.[13] But, were we to let ourselves say that *The Prince* advises the ruler on how to be powerful and oppress the people, then, in accordance to Goehr, we could find metaphor and symbolism in *The Lord of the Rings* and use the films to see a way out of both Sauron's,

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] Davide Panagia (2013), *Ibid*, 5.

[11] Lydia Goehr (2003), *op. cit.*, 474.

[12] Nikolo Makijaveli (2020), *O zaverama*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 9.

[13] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 3-4.

and the oppression of a tyrant that uses *The Prince* as a literal handbook in all of its 'bad' aspects.

In the end, "Danto ... doubts that art can 'save the Jews' or 'save the whales' directly; but he does consider the possibility that art might communicate indirectly what cannot be communicated directly" and that, although "not all feelings lead to actions, but some do, and some feelings prompted by art thus make something happen".[14]

FICTION

Philosophical interest for fiction is, as Friend notices, twofold. We can focus on the difference (or relationship) between fiction and reality, or we can inquire into our emotional and/or cognitive reactions to fiction. "[T]he distinction between fiction and non-fiction is not simply the distinction between the true and the false, or between what is known and what is made up".[15] Similarly, Lamarque tells us that

> [t]he element of representation, in any artform, that involves what is invented, made up, or imaginary, bears on the realm of fiction. ... There is philosophical interest also in the status of 'fictitious entities', not only those theoretical fictions figuring in science, mathematics, law, and metaphysics, but also the made-up persons, places, and events occurring in novels, dramas, myths, and legends. These are ontological issues, delimiting what exists or is real. Other issues draw on semantics and the philosophy of language and involve the peculiarities of names, sentences, and truth-values in fictional contexts.[16]

There is a strong intuition that there is some reality to the motion picture (e. g. the actors are real). As Gaut suggests, this could be because of the film's photographic history. There seems to be some political or ideological functions and uses of certain films too, which would imply a strong connection to realism.[17] But, of course, the objects represented didn't have to exist – they could've been digitally created.[18] Peter Jackson

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[14] Lydia Goehr (2003), *op. cit.*, 481-482.

[15] Stacie Friend (2019), "Fiction as a Genre", in P. Lamarque and S. H. Olsen (eds.), A*esthetics and Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell), 402.

[16] Peter Lamarque (2003), "Fiction", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 377.

[17] Berys Gaut (2003), "Film", in J. Levinson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 628.

[18] *Ibid*, 641.

did just that – he used special effects (e. g. one where a massive wall of water forms and reforms into the wraiths of charging stallions, and possibly most noticeably, for the creature Gollum). Following Cavell, Panagia sees these human-like projections on the screen as human somethings:

> The artificial person, human something, or automation on the screen is a broken appearance, human in every respect, save something. So with film something real bodies forth. But it is, importantly, a *something* real, which is what Cavell means when he says that 'a human *something* is, and something unlike anything else we know.[19]

Furthermore, as Lamarque emphasizes, fictiveness and unreality don't always go hand in hand. "Not everything unreal is a fictional object, nor is everything false a fictional description; and it can be argued that a certain kind of reality pertains to fictional objects and a certain kind of truth to fictional descriptions".[20]

If we were, as Lamarque tells us, to follow Russell's analysis of names,[21] we could be inclined to say that, since the name 'Gandalf' has no object that it denotes, it has no meaning. Yet, it seems that I can assign a truth-value to the sentence "Gandalf is a great wizard." Because of that some "theorists take fictional objects to be not *nonexistent* objects but instead a species of *abstract* objects".[22] Carroll informs us that

> [i]n producing a fiction, a storyteller makes up a narrative by articulating descriptions that are supposed to elicit a certain response ... When the storyteller, so to speak, "creates imaginary worlds," what she is actually doing is forming sentences (or other structured, sense-bearing signs) with propositional content, which propositional content is intended to become the focus of a special kind of imaginative effort on the part of the audience.[23]

KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH IN FICTION

There is a strong intuition that we cannot gain knowledge from something fictional, yet, as Carroll states, according to Novitz, that may not always have been the case. Novitz believes that this intuition comes

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[19] Davide Panagia (2013), *op. cit.*, 26.
[20] Peter Lamarque (2003), *op. cit.*, 378.
[21] *Ibid*, 379.
[22] *Ibid*, 382.
[23] Noël Carroll (1996), "Review", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 54* (3), 297-300.

from the positivists who "admit no role to the imagination in the acqui-
sition of knowledge".[24] And, although imagination forms the basis of
fiction, Novitz sees it as essential for knowledge in general:

> [T]he imagination ... provides us with constructs, construals and
> hypotheses, *and*, as these serve our purposes, we come to regard
> them as knowledge. ... Furthermore, if the fanciful imagination
> operates this way with respect to knowledge acquisition across
> the board, the fact that some of our hypotheses are concocted in
> fictions should serve as no impediment epistemically so long as
> those hypotheses turn out to be successful – successful, that is,
> with respect to illuminating the world.[25]

These hypotheses can then be used in our experience in differ-
ent ways. For example, we can take something from a work of fiction to
form hypotheses for our political theories. But in order to understand that,
Novitz emphasizes that we have to be aware that propositional knowl-
edge is not the only type of knowledge there is. Of course, "fiction can
yield hypotheses that afford propositional knowledge that is akin to that
provided by science".[26] We can watch, say, *Interstellar* and form prop-
ositions that can figure as hypotheses in philosophy of time. But fiction

> may [also] impart beliefs about values, practical skills – knowl-
> edge of *how* to do *x* (strategic skills) or new ways to think about
> x (conceptual skills) – and empathetic skills (the ability to expe-
> rience what it feels like to be caught up in certain situations), as
> well as deepening, and perhaps complicating, our understanding
> of our own values by exploring them in relation to challenging
> situations. In all these different ways, we can learn from fiction.[27]

Novitz believes that imagination has a role in the formation of
hypotheses, but that it also helps us to interpret an artwork, although
he doesn't see it as a sort of induction. On the other hand, that is exactly
how Carroll sees it.[28] And if Carroll is right, then these hypotheses in-
spired by a work of fiction can have their place in inductive reasoning.
Induction is, notably, of great importance for science, which gives us a

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[24] Noël Carroll (1990), "Review", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 48* (2), 167-169.
[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid*, 168.
[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid*, 168-169.

reason to put more trust in art. After all, "[t]he claim that imagination is central in the acquisition of knowledge is familiar in epistemology".[29]

When we try to interpret and understand artworks, "we take concepts already used to discuss human life and apply them"[30] to said artworks. In doing so, as Carroll says, we are discovering "what the work is about. This implicitly locates the cognitive value of the literary work [or film] not in the delivery of truths ... but in the exercise of" one's cognitive abilities.

> An adequate account of reasoning to what is true in fiction needs to capture the fact that at nearly every level the reconstruction of fictional worlds needs to invoke a variety of background data, including recognition of genre, ironical or satirical intent, symbolic or allusive frame, narrative mode, historical context, connotative meanings, and so on.[31]

So it is only when we recognize *The Lord of the Rings* as a fantasy that uses metaphor and symbolism (e.g. the One Ring as a symbol of power's ability to corrupt), different narrative modes, shifting points of view (e.g. Gollum/Smeagol, Frodo under the influence of the Ring), etc. that we get to interpret it and find its meanings. Those meanings can then be applied further and in various contexts. According to Lamarque, Lewis makes a mistake when he "requires that the narrator tells the truth in a pretty straightforward way, recounting only what he knows",[32] much like Galadriel does at the beginning of the trilogy.

THE PRINCE OF THE RINGS

In order for us to understand *The Prince* better, I will turn to *The Lord of the Rings* film trilogy. By comparing the two works, I will show the applicability of some of Machiavelli's ideas, and hopefully clear up some of the others. Much like Hunt,[33] I believe that we can utilize works of fiction, even of sci-fi and fantasy, to further our philosophical and/or

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[29] Peter Lamarque (1989), "Knowledge, Fiction and Imagination (review)", *Philosophy and Literature 13* (2), 366.

[30] Noël Carroll (1996), *op. cit.*, 299.

[31] Peter Lamarque (1990), "Reasoning to what is true in fiction", *Argumentation 4* (3), 337.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] Lester H. Hunt (2006), "Motion Pictures as a Philosophical Resource", in N. Carroll and J. Choi (eds.), *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures*, Malden, Oxford & Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 397.

political ideas. That can be done by looking into particular examples of the more universal ideas.

When we watch films we "must consider circumstances – those of fictional characters – which are distinct from"[34] what we are used to in our daily lives. And, despite the fact that we are obviously not those characters, Hunt notices that we still get to acquire beliefs and values from particular films. "These results can affect the beliefs they [the viewers] hold when they are no longer viewing the motion picture and actively contemplating this fictional world".[35] For instance, I can gain the belief that power can corrupt by watching *The Lord of the Rings*. "[T]he narrative itself, or part of it *is* the example that drives the argument",[36] which permits us to say that we can learn from motion pictures.

Friend highlights that people are still prone to doubting fiction. Yet, she follows Prentice and Gerrig (1999), and Green and Brock (2000) when she shows that some parts of a narrative can relate to the real world more universally.[37] Fiction can deal with universal topics that are also of philosophical interest in a more accessible way. But that does not mean that non-fiction is always correct. We can notice problems and unreliability in non-fiction as well as in fiction:

> According to the ancient Roman conception of history that had a defining influence on European historiography in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, the point of history was to provide moral and especially political instruction through examples. The choice of examples and the way they were treated constituted aesthetic and didactic decisions, not motivated primarily by fidelity to the facts.[38]

I believe that this can secure us a basis for the connection between *The Prince* as a non-fictional work that, at times, strays away from the facts in order for Machiavelli to make his arguments stronger, and *The Lord of the Rings* as a fictional work that, in part, deals with the same problems.

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[34] *Ibid*, 400.

[35] *Ibid.*

[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Stacie Friend (2019), *op. cit.*, 411.

[38] *Ibid.*

POWER AND DECEPTION

One of most prominent examples of rulers in *The Prince* is Cesare Borgia. He was chosen for this because of the fact that his rule was quite stable. Machiavelli advises him:

> who considers it necessary to secure himself in his new principality, to win friends, to overcome either by force or fraud, to make himself beloved and feared by the people, to be followed and revered by the soldiers, to exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him, to change the old order of things for new, to maintain friendship.[39]

Let's take a look at the actions of the duke. It seems as if *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy changes the duke's name and instead speaks of Sauron. Sauron considered it necessary to secure himself in his new principality, he won over Men as friends and overcame the Elves and Dwarves by giving them the Rings of Power. He tried to exterminate those who have power or reason to hurt him (e. g. Elrond, Isildur and his father Elendil), he tried to change the old order of things for his tyranny. And, in the end, he maintained friendship with the Nine kings of Men who, corrupt by the Ring, became the Nazgûl.

Machiavelli continues in the similar vein and says that "our experience has been that those princes who have done great things have held good faith of little account, and have known how to circumvent the intellect of men by craft, and in the end have overcome those who have relied on their word".[40] As has been said, this is what Sauron did. Machiavelli states that it is of great importance for the ruler to reconcile his two beastly characteristics – he should be brave like a lion and cunning like a fox.

> [H]e who has known best how to employ the fox has succeeded best. But it is necessary to know well how to disguise this characteristic, and to be a great pretender and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so subject to present necessities, that he who seeks to deceive will always find someone who will allow himself to be deceived.[41]

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[39] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 37-38.
[40] *Ibid*, 83.
[41] *Ibid*, 84.

This passage perfectly captures both what Sauron did by gifting away the Rings of Power while keeping the One Ring for himself, and how those who were gifted the Rings acted afterwards. *The Prince* tells us that if the ruler has to choose, it is better for him to be feared than loved.[42] Sauron recognized the importance of fear and used it to corrupt Denethor, the Steward of Gondor, making him fearful of Gondor's fall and distrusting of Gandalf.[43] On a lighter note, cunning can also be used in the service of good. This can be seen in *The Return of the King* when Gandalf encourages Pippin to light the beacon in Minas Tirith as a signal for Aragorn that Gondor needs Rohan's aid despite Denethor forbidding it.

FRIENDS AND ADVISORS

Machiavelli recognizes the importance of choosing one's friends and enemies and sticking by that decision. Being lukewarm and neutral proves to be disadvantageous, especially in times of war

> because if two of your powerful neighbors come to blows, they are of such a character that, if one of them conquers, you have either to fear him or not. In either case it will always be more advantageous for you to declare yourself and to make war strenuously; because, in the first case, if you do not declare yourself, you will invariably fall prey to the conqueror … Because he who conquers does not want doubtful friends who will not aid him in the time of trial; and he who loses will not harbor you because you did not willingly, sword in hand, court his faith.[44]

In *The Two Towers*, the Ents recognized the importance of this and sided with the Fellowship, which ultimately led to the destruction of Isengard, one of the two centers of enemy forces. Another important thing that Machiavelli emphasizes in *The Prince* is the wise and careful choice of one's advisors:

> [T]here are three classes of intellects: one which comprehends by itself; another which appreciates what others comprehended; and a third which neither comprehends by itself nor by the showing

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[42] *Ibid*, 79-80.
[43] Eric T. Kasper and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *Machiavelli Goes to the Movies: Understanding The Prince through Television and Film*, London: Lexington Books, 173-174.
[44] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 107-108.

of others; the first is the most excellent, the second is good, the third is useless.[45]

To understand this, it is best to turn to the case of Théoden. Thus, Kasper and Kozma paint us the scene:

The Rohan are semi-nomadic warriors, trained early in horsemanship and combat. While a free and independent people, they have long been allied with Gondor, and so when the wizard Gandalf (Ian McKellen) arrives at the Golden Hall of Meduseld, to consult with King Théoden, he is disturbed to find that Rohan's defenses have been neglected and that Rohan's army is scattered and unprepared for war. As he enters the Golden Hall, he clearly perceives why. Théoden's chief advisor, Grima Wormtongue (Brad Dourif) sits beside the King, who appears near death.[46]

Machiavelli actually nudges us in the direction of recognizing awry advisors. If the ruler has something that the advisor wants so much that he is willing to stop working in the interest of the ruler and instead works only for himself, even deceiving the ruler, he is a bad advisor.[47] As it turns out, Grima works for Saruman because he has been promised rule and Éowyn's hand.

Wormtongue has poisoned his king, both in mind and his body. By a magical spell, he has made Théoden pliable and susceptible to suggestion and, by manipulating Théoden's grief at the loss of his son, Grima has managed to gain control of the kingdom. Grima's rule is so entrenched that he no longer bothers issuing proclamations in the king's name. When Gandalf and his companions approach the Hall, they are disarmed by the order of Grima Wormtongue himself. It is only after Gandalf counteracts the magical spell, that Grima's treachery is revealed and Théoden realizes the terrible danger that his people face.[48]

And it is again in this moment Gandalf's cunning that turned the situation in the Fellowship's advantage. While Grima did manage to disarm Gandalf's companion, Gandalf himself pretended that he needed his staff to walk, being an old man he was. Without the staff he couldn't have dispelled Grima's spell casted on Théoden.

[45] *Ibid*, 111.

[46] Eric T. Kasper and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *op. cit.*, 172.

[47] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 111-112.

[48] Eric T. Kasper and Kozma, Troy A. (2015), *op. cit.*, 173.

THE PRINCE AND MACHIAVELLI

The goal of *The* Prince is to help a ruler, if there must be one, to rule in the best possible way. To do that, Machiavelli informs the prince that "[a] wise man ought to follow the paths beaten by great men, and to imitate those who have been supreme".[49] And almost from the beginning of the trilogy we get the feeling that Aragorn is to become this great prince, the foretold king. After all, he is the heir of the legendary King of Gondor, Isildur, who fought Sauron. It seems as if Aragorn should finish what Isildur started. Let us examine if and how Aragorn followed Machiavelli's advices.

> [I]t has always been the opinion and judgment of wise men that nothing can be so uncertain or unstable as fame or power not founded on its own strength. And one's own forces are those which are composed either of subjects, citizens, or dependents.[50]

When he led his battle against Sauron's forces in *The Return of the King*, he relied on his own army, consisted of his allies from Rohan, his own men from Gondor and dependents – the Army of the Dead cursed by Isildur for abandoning him to remain ghostly apparitions that cannot be at peace until they fulfill their oath to help the king of Gondor.[70] Point for Aragorn! In Machiavelli's system, it is of an utmost importance for a good ruler to always prepare for war. He does that by hunting, exploring the terrain and studying history.[51] At the beginning of *The Fellowship of the Ring* we meet Aragorn as the ranger Strider, and throughout the trilogy we see him very observant of the tracks, and knowledgeable of geography and history of the Middle Earth.

Machiavelli also points out that "every prince ought to desire to be considered clement and not cruel. Nevertheless he ought to take care not to misuse this clemency".[52] When Grima's spell gets broken and Théoden learns of his treachery, Théoden is swift in his attempt to punish Grima. This is something that Machiavelli would have considered wise in this particular situation, because he believes that the people could learn from that example not to jeopardize the ruler and that "those executions ... offend the individual only".[53] At that moment,

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[49] Niccolò Machiavelli (2014), *op. cit.*, 25.

[50] *Ibid*, 68.

[51] *Ibid*, 69-71.

[52] *Ibid*, 78.

[53] *Ibid.*

Aragorn stops Théoden from executing Grima and instead they banish him from Rohan.[76] This scene is interesting because both rulers acted prudently in a way. Aragorn didn't want the people to see Théoden as cruel, but by letting Grima go, they ultimately suffered greatly in the Battle of Helm's Deep because he then told Saruman about the weakness of Rohan's fortress.

Another thing that makes Aragorn the Prince is the fact that he honored and awarded the Hobbits upon completion of the quest to destroy the Ring which is in accordance with Machiavelli's advice:

> A prince ought to show himself a patron of ability, and to honor the proficient in every art. At the same time, he should encourage his citizens to practice their callings peaceably, both in commerce and agriculture, and in every other following ... [T]he prince ought to offer rewards to whoever wishes to do these things and designs in any way to honor his city or state.[54]

Lastly, a good prince is to surround himself with good advisors to whom he will come in search of advice, but ultimately choose for himself what is right and of best interest for his people.[55] Over the course of the trilogy, we see Aragorn seeking advice from Gandalf and Legolas, yet still making his own decisions.[80]

Here we should focus on the ever present topic of advice in *The Prince*. After all, this book contains advices for the ruler, written by the advisor. And just as we have found our Prince in *The Lord of the Rings*, we can also find Machiavelli himself. Yet this may come as a surprise, Machiavelli is usually rendered as cruel and militant, especially because of statements such as: "[W]ar is not to be avoided, but is only to be put off to the advantage of others".[56] Gandalf, the Advisor, the Machiavelli of the trilogy, himself does something very similar, namely, encourages Théoden to take up his sword and not shy away from war.

CONCLUSION

Although they initially seemed quite different, film and politics can deal with the same problems. We can, thus, conclude that film can help us form and further our hypotheses, giving it cognitive dimension and value. Fiction can offer examples that help us understand political

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[54] *Ibid*, 110.
[55] *Ibid*, 114-115.
[56] *Ibid*, 14.

thought better. We can come to the same truths from watching *The Lord of the Rings* and reading *The Prince*, even though the former uses symbolism to shroud those truths. Thus, we shouldn't run away from art thinking it is unreliable. After all, if we understand hypotheses coming from imagination that forms the basis of fiction as premises in an inductive argument, it would turn out that art is as reliable as science.

The second part of the paper offered a comparative analysis of Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Peter Jackson's film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings*. In an attempt to show that film and politics can deal with the same concepts, we followed topics shared by both works. We were also on the lookout for the Prince and Machiavelli himself in *The Lord of the Rings* and found them in the characters of Aragorn and Gandalf. Ultimately, the goal of the paper was to show that we can use *The Prince* and the trilogy to better understand and interpret both.

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FILM AS A TOOL OF GEOPOLITICS

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FILMS AND SERIES AS INSTRUMENTS OF GEOPOLITICS

Abstract

Cinematography plays the role of one of the instruments of geopolitics. That is why, according to some researchers, many governments are interested in maintaining the level of global popularity that this industry has. They additionally provide it with appropriate assistance. It is worth emphasizing that the United States of America is leading in this regard with a specific mechanism of state control of cinematography.

As an instrument of US geopolitics, American cinema demonstrates a visible influence on the minds of the foreign public. Eric Fator, a professor of political science at Colorado State University who specializes in the relationship between geopolitics and international political influence, uses terms like "arsenal of entertainment" and "militarization of culture". They refer to the American leadership in the modern world order. In other words, it is about turning culture into a geopolitical weapon.

Keywords: *Film, film industry, culture, militarization of culture, geopolitics, soft power, state.*

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Back in 1901, the book "The Laws of Spatial Growth of States" by Friedrich Ratzel appeared[1], in which the seven laws of expansion are singled out. The first is, of course, culture. ("The size of the state grows in proportion to the development of its culture.")[2] His laws of expansion became a manifesto, i.e., they are applied in the geopolitical practice of the West. Of course, other non-Western countries also began to apply this law (Turkey with its series, the renewal of neo-Ottoman geopolitics[3] and pan-Turkism[4]). However, perhaps the most obvious (idiotypic) example is Hollywood and the USA. This symbiosis was the basis of Americanization (both in culture and geopolitics) after World War II. Instrumentalization of culture for geopolitical purposes is also referred to as "soft power."[5] According to American political scientist Joseph Nye, who introduced this term, the language and culture of a country is "soft power." It plays a key role in international relations, directly or indirectly influencing world politics and business relations.[6]

It is in this context that Željko Injac writes: "Hollywood films are becoming our new reality. With the stronger penetration of Western cinematography, it is safe to say that Western culture has become stronger and more present."

Of course, it was not only Western cinema that made a cultural inroad into our spaces. There is also a theatrical, literary and musical

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[1] The works of this author led to the emergence of "ratzelism", a peculiar anthropogeographic direction, not only in Germany but throughout Europe at the time. See: Милорад Вукашиновић, Политичка географија Фридриха Рацела, Културни центар Новог Сада, https://www.kcns.org.rs/agora/politicka-geografija-fridriha-racela/ (accessed on 7/23/2023). Ratzel published *25 books and 518 articles*. He was a doctor of science in the fields of zoology, geology and comparative anatomy, and became the founder of anthropogeography. See: Сергей Проць, Фридрих Ратцель и его основные идеи, https://yandex.ru/turbo/fb.ru/s/article/278668/fridrih-rattsel-i-ego-osnovnyie-idei (accessed on 7/23/2023).

[2] Александар Дугин (2009), *Геополитика постмодерне*, Преводилачка радионица Росић, Никола Пашић, Београд, 14-15.; With it see: Aleksis Trud (2007), *Geopolitika Srbije*, Службени glasnik, Beograd. Also: Ф. Ратцель, https://studme.org/393358/politologiya/rattsel (accessed on 7/23/2023).

[3] See: Зоран Милошевић, *Турска и неоосманизам*, Завод за уџбенике и наставна средства, Источно Сарајево, 2010.

[4] See: Зоран Милошевић, *Турска и пантуркизам*, Удружење „Милош Милојевић", Црна Бара, 2021.; Зоран Милошевић, Рађање новог Турана, *Печат*, бр. 592, 1. новембар, 2019, 37-39.

[5] The term "soft power" was first coined by Harvard professor Joseph Nye in a book published in 1990: *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*. He then developed the term in another book published in 2004: *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* and the article "Soft Power and US-European Relations".

[6] See: Т. В. Андрианова (2001), *Геополитика и культура*, РАН, Институт научнойинформации по общественным наукам, Москва.

scene. It was during this period that harder musical rock styles appeared, like Heavy Metal, Hardcore, Skins and others. Nevertheless, the culture of the West was most directly and clearly reflected in the East through film art. The meager socialist realist art, with the post-Christian tradition of Eastern Europe, was not strong enough to resist the penetration of "superior" (actually, merely well-designed, and richly financed) Western culture.

Before the arrival of NATO troops in Eastern Europe, it was already heavily influenced by Western culture. The process of neocolonialism in Eastern Europe is similar to what had come to pass centuries before: first, when tribes in America and Africa were visited by missionaries; second, by traders; and finally by the army and bureaucracy that finally formed the colonies. Cultural penetration was actually only the first phase of neocolonialism."[7]

For the effectiveness of the geopolitics of a specific country, it is extremely important to be able to reach a wide audience, to convey a specific message to as many people as possible. In this sense, films and series are a very effective instrument because they have a large viewership and political influence, and lately other countries are trying to catch up with the Americans. Nevertheless, the USA is the world leader in terms of films and series (that's why we will have a particular focus on this cinematography in this paper). The list of the ten largest film studios proves that.[8] They are: Lionsgate, Miramax Films, Dream Works, Sony Pictures, Paramount Pictures, 20th Century Fox, Columbia Pictures, Universal Pictures, Warner Bros and Walt Disney Company.

Also, films made by these studios are extremely popular in the world. Their list and rating also prove it.

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[7] ЖељкоИњац, Култура страха, https://www.kcns.org.rs/agora/kultura-straha/ (accessed on 7/26/2023).

[8] Топ-10 крупнейших киностудий мира: рейтинг лучших кинокомпаний, https://lindeal.com/rating/top-10-krupnejshikh-kinostudij-mira-rejting-luchshikh-kinokompanij (accessed on 7/23/2023).

WHERE ARE THE WORLD'S MOST PROFITABLE FILM STUDIOS LOCATED?[9]

Rank	Country	Earnings (in billions of US dollars)
1.	USA and Canada	11.4
2.	China	6.6
3.	Great Britain	6.5
4.	Japan	2
5.	India	1.9
6.	France	1.6
7.	South Korea	1.5
8.	Germany	1.1
9.	Australia	0.9
10.	Mexico	0.8

In terms of the importance of American films and series, Europe is actually a cultural colony of the USA. That is because 66% of the sales of films in European countries are films of American production. Therefore, the share of billing for EU film products on the EU market, respectively, was 27%, according to the latest data. Also, half of the films available in the European Union within the video-on-demand system are American films. We are referring to individual delivery of television programs and films to the subscriber via digital cable, satellite or terrestrial television network. Films and series shot in the USA account for 45% of all feature films broadcast on European television.

In the ranking of the TOP 10 most popular films in Europe in recent years, all but one film was shot by American film studios.[10] The exception was the film C. Nolan's "Dunkirk", which was jointly published by the Americans, the British and the French. In general, Hollywood's profits from the distribution of films abroad increased significantly during the 20th and early 21st centuries. In the 1920s, it accounted for only 20% of the total income, in 2006 it was already 63%, and in 2018 it was 71%. All these facts suggest that despite the occasional dissatisfaction with American foreign policy, American culture continues to be attractive to people around the world. Before turning directly to the

[9] Крупнейшие киноиндустрии мира, https://ru.history-hub.com/krupneishie-kinoindustrii-mira (accessed on 7/23/2023).

[10] See: Европейские – 2022, https://topnaroda.com/rating/kino/21059-evropejskie-2022.html (accessed on 7/23/2023).

role of film in American geopolitics, and consequently, the system of its relations with American government agencies, it seems appropriate to understand why Hollywood productions are so popular in the world.

THE ABILITY TO "NARCOTIZE" VIEWERS

There are a number of factors behind the success of American cinema. **First**, globalization has played a role in strengthening the position of Hollywood: transnational corporations, the Internet, market integration and technological development. New opportunities have made it possible to increase production capacities and expand markets through transnational flows of people, capital, goods and services, as well as through new technologies. **Second**, a significant contribution was made by the imposition of the English language as a universal global means of communication.[11] **Third**, the success of American cinema is the result of both the financial capabilities of American film studios (incomparably greater than those of their foreign competitors) and the "style" of American cinema. However, these factors are closely related. Only the American film industry can afford to use the most famous and talented actors and use the most impressive special effects. It is these opportunities that allow Hollywood to maintain its reputation as the "dream factory." The American film industry, as measured by the number of blockbusters, produces popular and commercially successful films for a wider audience. They tend to understand what mass audiences want better than their foreign competitors. Popular American films do not shy away from taking political positions or taking one side of the conflict when it comes to wars caused by America (for example Bosnia and Herzegovina[12]) or to the image of its geopolitical

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[11] In his famous novel "1984", George Orwell, in a series of principles of enslavement and mind control, derived the following law: whoever controls a person's language controls their mind. In the vocabulary of geopolitics, this means that people whose countries have fallen under the "soft" (hegemony) or hard rule (military conquest) of a particular colonizer, either by grace or by force, have the obligation to learn the colonizer's language. However, in order for the people to learn the colonizer's language, it is necessary to suppress native language, as well as the language of its geopolitical allies. See: Зоран Милошевић, Руски језик у демократској Србији, https://ruskidom.rs/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ruski-ezik-u-dem.pdf (accessed on 7/23/2023).

[12] Angelina Jolie's engagement in Bosnia has a great geopolitical context. The film "In the Land of Blood and Honey" from 2012 caused strong reactions from the entire region. The geopolitical context is visible – denigration of Serbs and justification of American aggression against Serbs. See: Голливуд как инструмент геополитики США, https://mt-smi.mirtesen.ru/blog/43388124202/Gollivud-kak-instrument-geopolitiki-SSHA (accessed on 7/23/2023). About Jolie's personality, see: Тяжелая

opponents (Russians and Chinese),[13] where they introduce an open ideological message.

Nevertheless, Hollywood directors and producers attempt to focus on what is close and understandable to every person anywhere in the world. That's how people all over the world admire "**Titanic**" and "**Gone with the Wind**", which celebrate American values, while exploiting/manipulating the love story. This combination produces a desirable geopolitical effect, because the beauty of these films in the viewer's mind is "glued" to the image of the United States. This pattern is used by Turkey in its series today. **In this way, films and series become one of the elements that form a general impression of a country that most viewers have never had the opportunity to visit.**

The ability to establish such an emotional connection with the audience is due to the fact that American producers prefer not to separate art and entertainment. Many prefer American cinema due to the fact that the images are of "good quality" and simply "narcotize"[14] (fix the view for the screen), allow the viewer to escape from reality and everyday problems for a while. The first is the result of financial possibilities, and the second is a conscious choice in favor of the "entertainment" aspect of cinema by the producers.

Big American film studios use their main tool, capital, to set the already mentioned standards of film production. As we said, it requires significant financial costs. It's not just that those producers who can't afford it will never "catch up" with Hollywood. It also means that, because of the need to secure profits, they will tend to avoid plots that are unusual for the viewer and therefore represent a commercial risk. Producer Robert Evans[15] explains it by saying that no one "does anything unexpected, they are too afraid, the stakes are too high." Thus, the set of dominant base scenarios in which Hollywood is so successful is fixed in the minds of producers as the only one that enables success. And the same set remains the only one available to the consumer.

депрессия, наркотики и странная попытка суицида. Как живет и борется с внутренними демонами Анджелина Джоли?, https://lenta.ru/articles/2023/06/04/jolie/ (accessed on 6/4/2023).

[13] See: Зоран Милошевич, Спасители мира на желтых экранах, *Простор*, №7, 2012, str. 182-184.

[14] That films and series contribute to the "narcotization" of viewers who "glue" their gaze to the screen is the subject of reasoned criticism. See: Подмена понятий и наркотизация с телеэкранов, https://news-rbk.ru/exclusive/print:page,1,30351-podmena-ponyatiy-i-narkotizaciya-s-teleekranov.html (accessed on 6/4/2023).

[15] Василий Степанов, Роберт Эванс. Мистер Неотразимый, https://seance.ru/articles/robert-evans/ (accessed on 6/10/2023).

At the same time, when the "popularity flywheel" of American cinema reached its peak, it is difficult to say whether the films still show exactly what the viewer wants to see, or whether the idea of an equal sign between Hollywood and the fulfillment of desires has simply solidified in the consciousness of society.

The main condition for consumption is the availability of goods. Consumption will depend on how widespread the product is, how visible it is. The film that is shown in all the malls is not doing well at the box office. The reason is the sudden wave of demand rising from the foundations of society, but only because it is heavily advertised. However, a film that is not produced by one of the largest Hollywood film studios and that falls outside the usual plot framework will never be able to afford an advertising campaign comparable to them in terms of scale. This creates a vicious circle. Hollywood's financial resources allow it to effectively promote its films, which increases the demand for them. The growing demand increases the income of the already richest movie studios, giving them even more advertising space that will further increase the demand. In the beginning, it is almost impossible for a poor and unknown filmmaker in such a situation to break into the market, and even more so to compete with recognized leaders. That is, the current system actually blocks the alternative in the field of film, i.e., it enables the dominance of American cinema.

GEOPOLITICS AND FILM

Cinematography plays the role of one of the instruments of geopolitics.[16] That is why, according to some researchers, many governments are interested in maintaining the level of global popularity that this industry has and provide it with appropriate assistance. However, it is worth emphasizing that the United States of America is leading in this regard with a specific mechanism of state control of cinematography.

As an instrument of US geopolitics, American cinema has a visible influence on the minds of the foreign public.[17] The mass media instruments — films, commercials, cartoons and television programs — have become the main ones in terms of political influence. However,

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[16] Голливуд как инструмент геополитики США, https://mt-smi.mirtesen.ru/blog/43388124202/Gollivud-kak-instrument-geopolitiki-SSHA

[17] Татев Дерзян (Tatev Derzyan), Кинематография как средство политического влияния, https://enlightngo.org/language/ru/post/8173 (accessed on 7/24/2023).

the most important property of films, which allows them to be used as a means of propaganda, is their ability to influence people secretly and imperceptibly. The influence occurs mainly on an emotional level, outside the field controlled by the human mind. This is what helps to bypass the rational thinking of a person (the occurrence of emotional resonance). Emotional resonance is defined as creating a certain mood in a mass audience. It allows you to bypass psychological defenses on a conscious level, which try to protect themselves from advertisements, propaganda and all brainwashing methods. Emotional resonance is needed here, since her first rule is: "You need to influence a person on an emotional, not a conscious level."[18]

It is this ability of movies and series that leads to what professor **Eric Fator**, at Colorado State University analyzes. He specialized in the relationship between geopolitics and international political influence and uses terms like "arsenal of entertainment" and "militarization culture." Those terms refer to American leadership in the modern world order. In other words, it is about turning culture into a geopolitical weapon.[19]

To clearly see the impact of US geopolitics on Hollywood, let's consider two periods.

After the Second World War (1946-1991) in American films, the USSR was presented mainly as a world evil. The best example of such films is the "Rambo" series of films, which was one of the instruments of the Cold War.

However, in cinemas, the picture was completely opposite during 1943-1945. Then the USSR and the USA were allies. In the films of this time, the citizens of the USSR were presented as heroes. "Mission to Moscow" (directed by Michael Curtis, 1943) showed friendly relations between the USSR and the USA and was also shown in the USSR. It was based on the book by Joseph Davis, the American ambassador to the USSR. Already in 1947, the American Congress accused the film crew of spreading Soviet ideology and anti-American activities.

The key to the success of American leadership in the world is that it follows a combination of attitudes (spectacle) and technology. It represents the "arsenal of entertainment", the biggest number of which is made up of movies, series and cartoons. First of all, the film has the ability to relax the viewer's mind, to encourage him to surrender to the power of his own imagination to **weaken his ability to think critically**.

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[18] *Ibid.*

[19] *Ibid.*

In addition, film production can serve as a catalyst for changing the behavior of an individual or a group. It is used most often due to a conscious or unconscious desire to copy the lifestyle and habits of the main characters of a particular film or series.

Why is this so important to official Washington?

The current role of the United States in the world system is determined not only by having the greatest "power" compared to any other country. But it is also by the fact that **a significant number of countries directly or indirectly recognize the legitimacy of American dominance**.[20] Much of this recognition plays on the United States' ability to distribute mass entertainment. It helps to dampen potential opposition to American influence in the world and maintain a positive image as the most powerful nation on the planet.

Contacts between the US government and Hollywood continued without a break even after the Cold War, despite the fact that the concept of a global ideological confrontation with the Soviet Union, within which the mechanism of relations was largely formed, lost its relevance. Like geopolitics in general, this direction has successfully adapted to the new foreign political reality, for example, the confrontation between the United States and Islamic terrorism. After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, at least 40 top film industry executives met with Karl Rove, chief policy adviser to President George W. Bush. The meeting, which was initiated by the White House, was represented by almost all leading film studios and television networks, as well as the Motion Picture Association of America. Rove highlighted several messages that Hollywood needed to spread through its work: "**The US in Afghanistan is waging a war on terrorism, not Islam**"; "every member of society can help the army"; "American military and their families should be supported"; "the 9/11 terrorist attack requires a global response"; "this is the fight against evil," and "**the government and Hollywood are responsible for making sure kids feel safe.**"

This highly unusual "planning meeting" was followed by another behind closed doors. The result was DC 9/11: "A Time of Crisis," produced with the support in the form of a consultation of the White House, and featuring President George W. Bush Jr. After Hollywood's consultation with Rove, Jack Valenti, then president of the Motion Picture Association of America, announced that it was Hollywood's duty to convey

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[20] See: Зоран Милошевић (2014), "Може ли Америка спасти светски поредак?", *Печат*, бр. 338, 3. октобар, 46-49.

to Muslims around the world the message of the benevolent role of the United States: America "clothed and fed millions of people around the world without asking for anything in return. We have educated hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world at our universities." Many short films and commercials were made to entice people to serve in the US military and cooperate with the CIA.[21]

The most famous examples of Hollywood involvement by government agencies in geopolitics are films produced with the support of the military or intelligence agencies. The US Department of Defense works closely with the "dream factory". The film industry makes extensive use of tips and props provided by the military to reduce the cost of producing a film and make it more authentic. In return, the Pentagon, as a rule, receives scenarios that form a positive perception of the US Army in society and affect its attractiveness as an employer. Sometimes this amounts to a significant rewrite of the script and a review of the projections for senior officials. Of course, in the case of films whose plot does not coincide with the official American view of events related to military operations, the government and the military command refuse to help in the filming. For example, this happened with the film "Apocalypse Now" in 1979.

Examples of films made with the help of the Pentagon are "True Lies", "Independence Day", "Iron Man." In these films the United States of America is presented as a fairly good force, and the manifestation of its military power abroad brings positive results for all humanity. In many of these films, the most Hollywood allows itself is to criticize American interference in the internal affairs of other countries. In other words, it allows a plot in which a plan based on purely good intentions can go wrong, and the Americans themselves become victims. It is obvious in the films "Black Hawk Down" and "Munich". Also, cases of excessive use of military force can be criticized in the plot of the film, but not American military power and not the American army per se.

Most high-grossing movies assume the US military has every right to conduct military operations in any "trouble spot" on the planet it chooses. Films of this kind are often silent on the transnational global interests behind these operations, on who pays for them and who benefits. Also, the Pentagon does not allow scenes that discredit the US military: robberies, violence against civilians, and corruption in the military become

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[21] See: Зоран Милошевић (2018), "Ко контролише производњу филмова у Холивуду", *Печат*, бр. 525, 21. јун, 44-47.

either random episode or a reason for refusing cooperation. When one of the most famous American producers, Jerry Bruckheimer ("Pirates of the Caribbean", "Gone in 60 Seconds", "National Treasure", "Prince of Persia"), after the 9/11 attacks, was asked while making a documentary series about American troops in Afghanistan if they would agree to show a major military failure, he answered: "The Pentagon pointed to human rights violations." If the US Department of Defense requests changes to the scenario in exchange for its assistance, the parties' obligations are stipulated in a separate agreement. The technical advisor is responsible for ensuring the shooting takes place according to the agreed version of the script. After the completion of the filming process, the Ministry of Defense waits for a preliminary screening of the film to ensure there are no violations of the agreement. It may also make further recommendations at this stage." According to one of the technical advisers, David Giorgi, "If they don't do what I tell them, I'm going to take my 'toys' and leave." In addition to refusing to provide the equipment, the Pentagon can also prohibit the use of information provided by the military and filming on the territories under its jurisdiction. Such measures can lead to significant financial losses and even to the interruption of the release of the film.

There is also a financial interest in Hollywood's relationship with Washington. For example, John Bryson, the former US Secretary of Commerce in the administration of President Barack Obama, was simultaneously on the board of directors of the Walt Disney Company and the Boeing Company. Each of the Councils has a dozen members. It makes for a fairly direct connection between the world's leading family film brand and the world's largest manufacturer of military equipment. Lewis Coleman, who simultaneously held positions in the film studios Dream Works Animation SKG and in Northrop Grumman Corporation also held the American military-industrial company General Electric. That company invests in high-tech military aircraft, surveillance technologies, etc., and is closely associated with the US Department of Defense. Coleman was also the majority shareholder of Universal Studios until 2011.

During the Cold War, Hollywood's ability to influence large audiences began to be actively used by the US Central Intelligence Agency.[22] In the late 1990s, Frances Stonor Saunders, a British journalist and

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[22] Фильмы про ЦРУ, https://likefilmdb.ru/list/filmy-pro-cru/ (films in which the CIA is advertised are, for example: "Mind Games", "The Bourne Identity", "Operation Argo", "Cruel Measures", "Agents of A.N.K.L.", "Apocalypse Now", "Anna", "Mission Impossible", "Access Code Cape Town")…

historian, and David Eldridge, a professor at the University of Hull, discovered Cold War-era letters. Thanks to that discovery they proved regular correspondence between a Paramount studio employee and the CIA. The employee talked about what he achieved in promoting stories for this service. Eldridge suggested, based on a comparison of the contents of the letters and biographical facts, that Luigi Luraschi, a Paramount employee, was the head of censorship at Paramount Studios. Luraschi reportedly wrote in correspondence that he had succeeded in getting the consent of several casting directors to subtly introduce "properly dressed blacks" into films (1953).

In other films, at his suggestion, scenes of the questionable treatment of Native Americans by American authorities, especially with the Apache tribe in the Westerns of 1953, were cut. These changes in the scenarios were deliberately made to deprive the USSR of the opportunity to use them for for its own purposes the downplay the negative experience of the United States in the matter of race relations. In addition, scenes in which Americans used alcohol were subjected to removal in several films.

Daryl Zanuck, co-founder and vice president of 20th Century Fox, was on the board of the National Committee for a Free Europe. This Committee was created in 1949 by the CIA to expand American influence in Europe and combat Soviet influence. S. D. Jackson, a former psychological weapons specialist at the Office of Strategic Services, which is a predecessor organization to the CIA, said Zanuck could easily "fit the right ideas" into scenarios. Michael Fitzgerald, a specialist in film and television history, in his analysis of Zanuck's achievements, highlights his film "The Longest Day" (1962). According to Fitzgerald, in this film, he "absolutely erased the role of communists in the victory over fascism in Europe."[23]

In the 1950s, the CIA's Office of Policy Coordination and the Board of Psychological Strategy successfully collaborated to acquire the rights to and invest in the production of the cartoon "Animal Farm", based on George Orwell's work of the same name. It should be clarified that from 1948 to 1952 the Political Coordination Division was the wing of the CIA responsible for covert operations. In 1952, it merged with the Office of Policy Coordination, which led to the formation of the Directorate for Planning. In turn it was renamed the Directorate for Operations in 1973.

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[23] ЦРУ как продюсер: Фильмы и сериалы, к которым приложили руку шпионы, https://www.kinopoisk.ru/media/article/2929513/ (accessed on 7/24/2023).

As for the second unit, the US Executive Committee (existed from 1951 to 1953), was in charge of psychological operations and propaganda. On the advice of the CIA, the ending of the animated film was modified to encourage revolutions against communist dictatorships. And after the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, under the patronage of the CIA, became aware of the film "1984", there were changes to make "Big Brother" more associated with communism.

Corrections of this kind did not always just delicately shift the emphasis, sometimes they fundamentally changed the meaning of the work. In the story "The Quiet American" by Graham Greene, the main character, a CIA agent, is responsible for the bombings in Saigon. That is why he is killed by the communists. In the 1956 screen adaptation, the blame for the explosions fell on the communists, but they still killed the main character. This "correction" was made at the recommendation of CIA officer Edward Lansdale.

Intelligence officials are reluctant to share information about their involvement in the film's production. According to D. Leeb, author of a book about the CIA's role in the production of the cartoon "Animal Farm," he has never been able to get "reasonable information" on the matter. Apparently, this department uses its influence in Hollywood less formally than the Pentagon. The CIA only opened its Entertainment Liaison Office in 1996. Its official mission is to ensure a positive image of the organization's employees, who must be "portrayed in films as authentically capable, modern, brave and dedicated to public service." The agency offers its assistance in achieving the greatest authenticity of the films. They answer questions, debunk myths, organize visits to the CIA headquarters and sometimes allow filming on their territory.

Employees in this division advise film producers. For example, Michael Frost Buckner, screenwriter of "The Agency" and "Spy Games," said that his consultant Paul Berry often suggested plot twists aimed at scaring terrorists. The principle of cooperation, in this case, is the same as with the Department of Defense. The CIA offers its help, but in return expects its wishes regarding the script to be taken into account. Otherwise, the use of the given information may be banned.[24]

Some studies confirm that films made with the support of the CIA have an impact on public opinion. A group of researchers led by University of Dayton professor Michelle Potz, interviewed respondents

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[24] В интересах страны: как ЦРУ, Пентагон и правительство США влияли на кинематограф и массовую культуру, https://dtf.ru/life/204819-CIA (accessed on 7/25/2023).

before and after watching one of the films "Zero Dark 30" or "Argo." They found that after watching the audience's level of trust in the CIA, the US government and the White House increased. It's same with the belief that the United States, in a political sense, is moving in the right direction. At the same time, after watching, about 30% changed their opinion about the aforementioned institutions to a more positive one.

For the film to serve as an instrument of geopolitics, the script does not have to center the US military or intelligence services, or even politics as such. It also does not need to have official agreements with the relevant departments. In any classic film plot, whether it is a comedy, a detective story or a melodrama, there are many details that work to maintain a positive image of the United States. Beautiful houses with lawns are a symbol of the well-being of the population; entrance doors with stained glass windows – a symbol of life safety; realizing the main character's dream, because he believes in himself – a symbol of social justice, etc. In this regard, it is enough to recall the houses of the residents of the dysfunctional "black" neighborhood in Tillman's film, "Stranger's Hatred" (2018). There the film's heroes "barely make ends meet", and there are such moments in other films as well.[25]

It is precisely such "allusions and metaphors" that make popular films a more effective tool for conveying ideas to the public than films with a "simple ideological message". Leading filmmakers have learned to present questionable moments in a way that either minimizes their negative effect or neutralizes their significance. Negative factors are not excluded from the scenario, but are presented in a strictly defined manner. The injustice of officials, corruption, cruelty, indifference are presented as the actions of rare "black sheep", which a just and highly moral society will inevitably punish.

In a large number of films, the problems of American politics are simply ignored. In their place stereotypical plots are planted that bring the most profit to the producers. At the same time, it cannot be said that no films are made that criticize American government institutions or even certain social phenomena. However, for several reasons, they do not interfere with the implementation of the geopolitical function of strengthening the positive image of the United States in the eyes of the foreign public.

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[25] See: Бен Аффлек: «Голливуд полон агентов ЦРУ». Какие голливудские фильмы Пентагон и ЦРУ переписывали годами. https://dzen.ru/a/YlwPhkH_GlbLV36_ (accessed on 7/25/2023).

HOW THE GEOPOLITICAL OPPONENTS OF THE USA ARE PORTRAYED IN HOLLYWOOD FILMS

From its beginnings, Hollywood has acted as if it has a deed to historical truth, which it rewrites to suit the geopolitical interests of the West. This is why young people exposed to this kind of film production think the Americans defeated Hitler; the liberation struggle of Vietnam is a negative event; the Serbs and Russians are the usual villains, who are not discussed based on history books, but based on interests.[26]

Thanks to the power they concentrated in their state, American (geo)politicians allowed themselves considerable "leaps" in labeling their opponents.[27] Even Hollywood did not resist this trend. Namely, it is known that this film industry used to announce through films and series who they would attack and those nations were portrayed as evil. Neither Serbs, nor Russians, nor numerous other attacked nations escaped this fate.

Responding to this misuse of "film art", the daily newspaper "Politika" published an interesting article on this topic on August 11, 2022. "While every Serbian film, the few that were filmed, was greeted both in our own environment and in the Western world with condemnations due to "provocations" or with silence, there is no lie about the Serbs that has not been translated into a film or series. Every attempt to show the suffering of Serbs in the recent and distant past through a feature film or documentary, by our former fellow citizens in the common state, and by the majority of Western officials and the media, is declared as "outrageous Serbian propaganda". The last example of such an attitude is the reaction to the showing of the trailer for the movie "Storm." As much as they affect us, we ourselves contributed to them by forgetting and remaining silent in the name of "greater interests". The rest was completed by Western propaganda during the

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[26] See: Дејан Р. Дашић (2015), „Кинематографија као средство креирања негативних стереотипа о Србима", *Социолошки преглед*, vol. XLIX (2015), no. 1, стр. 25–46, vol. XLIX, no. 1, 26.

[27] "Serbs are a people without law and religion. It is a nation of bandits and terrorists" (Jacques Chirac, former president of France). "Serbs are not particularly smart. Serbian children will no longer laugh" (Lawrence Ongleberger, US Secretary of State). "Serbs are criminal assholes" (Richard Holbrooke, US Assistant Secretary of State...). See Preface to the scientific work collection *Говор мржње и култура памћења*, приредили Зоран Милошевић и Милош Кнежевић, Институт за политичке студије, Београд, 2020, стр. 9 – 10. See also: Брацо Ковачевић, Од говора мржње до „хуманитарних интервенција", у зборнику *Говор мржње и култура памћења*, приредили Зоран Милошевић и Милош Кнежевић, Институт за политичке студије, Београд, 2020, 64-125.

wars of the 1990s, then translated into dozens of films and series in which Serbs are exclusively criminals. Changing such a narrative will be a painstaking and long-term process".[28]

While "Dara from Jasenovac" was being shown on another, more influential Western channel, a film about the British journalist Mary Colvin, who died in the Syrian city of Homs in February 2012, was also shown. In that film, Colvin talks to a fellow journalist from a western agency, describing to him the horrors she saw while reporting from Afghanistan. Then he tells her about the "horror he witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina." The man says how he saw "Serbs who took pictures with the severed heads of their opponents and were still proud of it"! The only photos from Bosnia and Herzegovina with severed heads were those taken by members of the "El Mujahedin" unit in Alija Izetbegović's army. The heads are Serbian, but nobody cares about that.[29]

Several episodes of the series "FBI" were also shown, in which a Serb plants explosives in the sneakers of a marathon competitor in an American city; also a Serb, who is part of a Serbian terrorist organization, and tries to carry out a nuclear terrorist attack... All of them are, of course, discovered in time and prevented. In the French film series "Alex Hugo", a Bosniak woman recognizes a Serb in a respected French doctor. He took the surname of his French wife to cover up his crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is shown that he took organs from Serbian opponents and sold them! Tom Cruise's "Mission Impossible 4" was also shown then... There were others, with less terrible "Serbian criminals".[30]

Another analysis also confirms the (mis)use of film art for (geo) political purposes. "The global news portrayed the Serbs as barbarians and insane ethnic cleaners. Certain Western intellectual circles raised such stereotypes to the rank of the concept of opposing the Serbs as the antipode of civilization. And the Hollywood film industry already had reserved roles for us."[31]

The author of the same analysis states that "Since the early days of the development of the film industry, Hollywood's world view through

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[28] Српска „пропаганда" и холивудска „истина", https://www.politika.rs/scc/clanak/514138/Srpska-propaganda-i-holivudska-istina (accessed on 7/26/2023).

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Kada su Srbi postali negativci?, https://www.b92.net/zivot/pop.php?yyyy=2010&mm=09&dd=28&nav_id=461527 (accessed on 7/26/2023).

its 'products' has projected, consciously or not, a particular vision of the world. The role of positivity was reserved for some phenomena or personalities, and the role of on-call villains for others."[32]

During the war against Nazism, the Hollywood machinery filmed the propaganda film "Chetniks – fighting guerillas". Draža Mihailović was portrayed as a "modern Robin Hood". In Yugoslavia, it was not possible to see how James Bond in the movie "From Russia with Love" had to deal with Tito's spies, because of censorship. The cult spy film "The Mask of Demetrios" portrayed Belgrade as a decent European metropolis, while it portrayed Sofia as an oriental casaba.[33] [34]

The breakup of Yugoslavia and the civil war in the Balkans began their Hollywood life only in the middle of the ninth decade. Of course it was in full accordance with the interpretations of American and Western geopolitics. Not surprisingly, Serbs became movie villains overnight.[35]

In the opening scene of the film "The Rock" (1995), which admittedly has nothing to do with the further action of the film, Nicolas Cage is an FBI explosives expert. He dismantles a bomb hidden in a children's doll and sent by post by Serbs from Bosnia. In the movie "The Peacemaker" (1997), George Clooney and Nicole Kidman pursue a Bosnian Serb. He received a nuclear warhead from the Russian mafia and radical military factions and intends to detonate it in Manhattan.

Such a matrix soon begins to repeat itself in B-production films. Despite the fact that the Serbs did not show tendencies towards terrorism throughout the 1990s, they were often classified as terrorists.

Thus, in the film "Diplomatic Siege" (1999), the fictitious group Serbian Liberation Front takes hostages in the American embassy in Romania. They barter for Colonel Petar Vojnović, indicted for war crimes in The Hague. They are, of course, prevented from doing so by Hollywood film heroes. Even at the beginning of the new millennium, there was no change in the treatment of Serbs in Hollywood and other Western films.

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[32] *Ibidem*.

[33] Of course, at that time Tito's Yugoslavia was implementing Trotskyist policies, and Bulgaria was part of the USSR bloc. Therefore, sympathies were on the side of Yugoslavia. See: Зоран Милошевић, Ванда Божић, (Нео)троцкизам и његова историја као инструмент савремене геополитике, in the ccientific work collection *Историја као инструмент геополитике*, приредио Зоран Милошевић, Институт за политичке студије, Београд, 2022, 89-139.

[34] Kasaba is a smaller provincial Muslim place of open type, whose population was mainly engaged in the city economy. – transl. note.

[35] Kada su Srbi postali negativci?, https://www.b92.net/zivot/pop.php?yyyy=2010&mm=09&dd=28&nav_id=461527 (accessed on 7/26/2023).

In the movie "Sniper 2" (2002), Tom Beringer is a professional marine-sniper. In a strange way, one scene irresistibly anticipates the assassination of March 12 of the following year. From an apartment opposite the Serbian government building on the stairs, he kills a Serbian general – a politician responsible for mass crimes in Kosovo.[36] We can, therefore, list a number of other films, but the message is the same.

At the same time, every film that shows Serbs in a positive light is criticized "because it undermines peace in the Balkans."[37] Ana Manojlović cites the following films that portray Serbs as negative:

1. "Welcome to Sarajevo" – a war story in which a journalist and an American humanitarian from Sarajevo try to rescue a Muslim girl.
2. 2. "Hunt for a Fugitive" – a story about a journalist trying to catch a war criminal.
3. 3. "Peacemaker" – a film in which the Serbs want to plant an atomic bomb in the United Nations building.
4. 4. Angelina Jolie's film about the camp in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which Serbs mistreat Muslim women, completely fit into that story.[38]

It is clear, therefore, that films are used as a means of geopolitical propaganda, in order to justify the policy of the West towards Serbia.[39]

The Russians did not escape this narrative, but neither did numerous other nations.[40]

Translated by Dajana Lazarević

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[36] *Ibid.*

[37] Ана Манојловић, Балканска међа између пропаганде Русије и Запада, https://www.rts.rs/magazin/film-i-tv/3488236/balkanska-medja-izmedju-propagande-rusije-i-zapada-.html (accessed on 7/26/2023). After the Moscow audience cried and the Serbian audience cheered at the premiere of the film "The Balkan Line / Balkanska međa", the British "Times" assessed that this film undermines regional peace. The realization that Serbs are the good guys and Albanians are the bad guys came about after several decades in which Serbs were the favorite villains of Hollywood movies.

[38] *Ibid.*

[39] See: Дејан Р. Дашић (2015), "Кинематографија као средство креирања негативних стереотипа о Србима", *Социолошки преглед*, vol. XLIX (2015), no. 1, стр. 25-46, vol. XLIX, no. 1, 25-46.

[40] See: Зоран Милошевич (2012), "Спасители мира на желтых экранах", *Простор*, No 7, 182-184.

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FILM AS SOFT POWER

Abstract

In scientific literature, the concepts of power and authority are often equated. Nevertheless, we are talking about different, but also interconnected terms. We define power as a relationship of superiority and subordination, a means by which others are forced to do something they would not otherwise do, that is, as a repressive power of imposing force, behind which the state usually stands. Power represents the possibility and ability to influence someone to do something, that is, the ability to achieve the intended goals. Unlike 'hard power', which is aggressive and violent because it is based on repression, coercion, threat, force, 'soft power' is based on attraction, trust and conviction in what the power points out and presents in order to ensure its reception, consent, consensus and legitimacy. In this sense, film is an expression of the existence of 'soft power' because it can carry with it certain ideas, ideologies, cultural and political values that are accepted. As an example of the dispersion of 'soft power', we cite the ideology and politics of Yugoslav partisan films, the films of the Yugoslav 'black wave', the film Titanic, and the American cultural industry of Hollywood western films.

Keywords: *film, soft power, hard power, partisan films, black wave films, Titanic, western films.*

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INTRODUCTION

Unlike 'hard power', which is based solely on repression, blackmail, threats, pressure, sanctions, punishments, force, violence, and even terror, 'soft power' is based on attraction and acceptance. That is why its reception is effective because it is attractive and desired. With their thematic contents and dispersive ideas and values, films belong to the area of spreading 'soft power'. For reference, we will mention partisan films, "black wave" films, "Titanic" and western films.

Although the conceptual, ideological and value contents in these films are different, they still contain and present essential components of 'soft power'. Hence, their strength in different social environments is evident.

HARD AND SOFT POWER

Power is an important concept of philosophy, political science and sociology. It is usually understood as the ability to impose and realize will, desires and interests.

At one time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau said: "The strongest is never strong enough to be always the master, unless he transforms strength into right and obedience into duty."[1]

However, repression, force or even violence and terror are not enough to impose and maintain a certain intention, and even rule: consensus, consent, acceptance and legitimacy of that intention and rule are also needed. In the modern language and vocabulary of political science and sociology, in addition to repression, force, violence and even terror, as manifestations of the existence of 'hard power', there is also 'soft power'. It is not based on coercion, force and violence, but on attraction. Soft power is based "on such sources as the appeal of one's ideas or the ability to set political priorities in a way that shapes the desires of others" and thereby "produces desired outcomes."[2]

Based on attractiveness, desirability and acceptance, soft power is used to gain *consent, agreement and consensus.*

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[1] Ž. Ž. Ruso (1949), *Društveni ugovor*, Beograd: Prosveta, 11.

[2] Dž. Naj (2006), *Kako razumevati međunarodne odnose*, Beograd: Stubovi kulture, 94; J. S. Jr. Nye (2012), *Budućnost moći*, Zagreb: Mate, xxii. The concept of a dichotomous division of power into 'hard' and 'soft power' has been met with certain criticism. Despite that, it is still increasingly accepted in contemporary political science literature. These two types of power are spoken about more and increasingly often.

This shows that in everyday life, but also in political life, *socialization* becomes very important. Socialization is a process of learning culture, a process that leads to the formation of a personality capable of performing numerous personal and social roles: child, family member, adult, spouse, parent, friend and colleague, member of a profession, work organization, national community, political parties, interest groups, sports, cultural, recreational and many other groups and organizations where needs, interests and desires are met. Socialization is a process through which a person in a certain social environment adopts the ideas, knowledge, habits, skills, attitudes and values necessary for his existence in the social environment. Socialization is the process by which a person learns culture; through socialization he becomes a socially 'normal' person. A person becomes a member of society and a personality precisely by learning and adopting culture, and the process by which he adopts culture is called socialization. This process can be understood as the process of 'transforming' a child as a biological individual into a personality, as a social individual.

In society, people also adopt political values, and the process by which political culture is adopted is called *political socialization*. Political culture represents a part of general culture that includes ideas, values, norms, opinions, attitudes, convictions and symbols related to society, politics and political organization.

The field of politics is not only a 'political' field, but also an economic, social, cultural and psychological field. Politics is also a 'pedagogical' sphere of political and social socialization. From the point of view of the political order, political socialization is the process of integration into the existing order, 'taming' of revolt, resistance and conflict. From the point of view of individuals, political socialization is the process of shaping them by integration and conformity. Political socialization is not only a process of social individualization, but also a process of individual socialization, as well as conformation and integration of individuals and social groups. Political socialization is a form, expression and manifestation of the existence of power.

Considering the existence of the complexity of social life, there are many forms and types of power. From the point of view of our discursive analysis and explication of the film as soft power, we will indicate conditional, compensatory and conditioned power.[3]

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[3] J. K. Galbraith (1987), *Anatomija moći,* Zagreb: Stvarnost.

Power based on punishment and punishing those who do not want it, but must accept it, is called *condign power*. It provides an unpleasant consequence to those who are subject to it. It is based on the fear of punishment for not accepting it, because not accepting it would be very unpleasant and painful. For example, the slaves rowing the galleys would like to be freed from that hard work. But the thought of being punished for 'slacking off" or disobeying is reason enough to accept the painful, unpleasant and difficult effort. Or, individuals refraining from expressing their negative judgment about certain personalities (e.g. 'leaders') and phenomena because that act would get them 'slapped them on the nose', drive them to prison for a 'verbal offense' or lead to the loss of civil rights, and even of life. In the geopolitical example of Republika Srpska and FR Yugoslavia, the condign power was manifested through the so-called the 'humanitarian intervention' carried out by the powerful states of the Anglo-Saxon West and the NATO pact. The rejection of the imperative request of the Anglo-Saxon West, the USA and the NATO pact to deploy NATO forces in Kosovo, which meant a humiliating occupation was presented as a valid reason for the bombing. In this way, the West replaced one form of punishment (occupation) with another form of conventional punishment (bombing).

Power that is based on rewards and praise is called *compensatory power*. According to that logic 'if you are good, you will get a reward' to those who accept it and who want to submit to it and to whom it provides a positive reward in the form of money or payment in kind, decorations, professions or status, it is called compensatory power. In the rural economies of pre-modern societies, the acceptance of compensatory power was rewarded in the form of payment in kind, the granting of the right to cultivate the land or the right to use the feudal lord's harvest. In modern societies, acceptance of compensatory power is rewarded with cash contributions, salary, and status advancement. We can easily recognize the existence of this type of power in our midst of the party, political and state corruption, and on examples of status advancements based on party polity and party corruption, loyalty and discipline that enable completely incompetent and unprofessional persons to be 'someone and something': to get good jobs and incomes, or to be rewarded by moving up the status ladder and becoming 'bosses', directors, ministers, that is, they will become 'competent persons'. And in geopolitical relations between states, this type of power is a very common occurrence, which provides 'friendly states' with certain credits, privileges

and assistance. As an example, it is enough to take the absolute support of the United States of America for the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and its attitude towards the Palestinians.

Power that changes the beliefs and convictions of those who want to submit is called *conditioned power*. It is soft power that has a clear and more or less recognizable ideological, ideational, political and propaganda background. It often has the function of 'brainwashing'.

The difference between condign power and compensatory power is that condign power is based on punishment and fear. It is coercive, while compensatory power is based on reward and praise. And what is common to both types of power is that the one over whom the power is exercised knows about their existence, knows they exist, knows about his behavior and knows why they accept that power; the act of submission is visible: in the case of conditional power – because they *have* to (due to the threat of punishment) and in the case of compensatory power – because they *want* to (due to the promise of reward). Unlike these forms of power in which the individual knows he is subject to them, with conditional power, power is exercised even though this power is less visible and even invisible. For those subject to it, conditioned power changes values, convictions, beliefs and attitudes. It includes family socialization, education and educational institutions, religious education, state, party, political and ideological persuasion and conditioning of consciousness, cultural, sports and other institutions and organizations, media coverage and propaganda, etc.

On the example of the socialization process in the family, a clear distinction between condign, compensatory and conditioned power will be observed. As a socialization process, the educational process is based on the aforementioned forms of power. Let's take a family for example. When parents condition their children to a certain opinion or behavior, when they tell them to do what is expected of them and if they do, the children will receive some reward in return. In such situations, compensatory power is used unconsciously or consciously as the basis of the socialization procedure. When they are constantly told to pay attention to something, to do and do what they should do, to take care of "this and that" ("watch this, watch that", "don't do this, don't do that", "do this or that", "it's for your own good"), then parents use conditioned power to condition the consciousness, thinking and behavior of children. And when children are aware they have to accept parental instructions, attitudes, patterns, opinions and demands, even if it doesn't suit them, then

they accept conditional power. And this is also the case in peer groups, marriage, work and professional groups, the army, the party, the state and relations between states and the like.

And in global geopolitical relations, the dispersion of power is realized by strategies of hard and soft power, that is, strategies of the so-called 'stick and carrot'. In its neo-colonial and neo-imperial practice, the West uses hard and soft power. If we take the political history and geopolitics of the West as an example, we cannot help but mention its murderous domain, that is, the dispersion of hard power. Precisely, the "murderous West" is "prone to carnage that wiped out entire civilizations from the face of the earth." In all of history, "no civilization has caused so much death as Western civilization". And the list of killing peoples, ravaging continents, destroying civilizations and plundering resources is very long. The West "possesses monstrous features" and "exploitative features" that were expressed in the "crusades", colonialism and imperialism, the First and Second World Wars, fascism, Nazism, and other "deadly regimes."[4]

The West still has the ability to dominate and control which, indeed, has been greatly eroded in the modern age. In this sense it uses different means, hard and soft power.

Rigid, hard power is violent, condign or coercive power. Soft power is co-operative, non-violent power that 'conquers' the soul, heart and mind of people and is a widely dispersive power: the power of culture, popular culture, pop and rock music, 'scientific' and professional debates, conferences and round tables, student trips, scholarships and programs of scientific and professional cooperation, school plans and programs, documentary and propaganda programs, journalism, media, press, radio and television, films and TV series, cartoons, propaganda, 'soft' political campaigns, works of art, fashion, libraries and bookstores, production of popular literature, books and texts, donations, consumerist and hedonistic culture, the Internet, etc.

What is today referred to as *soft power* was earlier referred to as *propaganda*. That name has since acquired a pejorative meaning.

By the term soft power we mean the spread of ideas and attractive values and that should 'win the soul' of a person. But in fact, we are talking about its propaganda. In its essence, propaganda (lat. *propaganda, propagare* – to spread) is nothing but the process and procedure of spreading certain ideas, ideologies, doctrines, values, understandings,

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[4] P-R. Droa (2010), *Zapad objašnjen svima,* Beograd: Geopoetika izdavaštvo.

attitudes and opinions. The goal of it is to systematically influence attitudes, opinions and behavior of persons. Persuasiveness, i.e., *persuasion, view, belief, conviction*, is a fundamental and essential property of propaganda.[5]

Persuasiveness is also an important characteristic of soft power, as a set of what is presented as something that is *convincing, attractive* and should be *accepted*. These are the contents of soft power.

Thus, it is shown that propaganda is a process of spreading the content of soft power, i.e., persuasion whose goal is to convince "by establishing a connection between the rhetorical and ideological register." This means persuasiveness is "the mainstay of the propaganda effect: in it lies the intention of the propagandist to direct the behavior of the audience in accordance with predetermined goals by influencing attitudes, to varying degrees." Precisely, "influence on behavior is the main goal of propaganda", and "modification, either strengthening or changing attitudes, is only an intermediate operation. When possible, stimulating behavior is achieved with as little intervention as possible in the audience's attitudinal structure." Thus, propaganda is connected "with other communicational phenomena", and "compared to the previous one, communication is a process of symbolic production of meaning and, based on that, the constitution of meaning." In it, reality is socially constructed, according to which actors have a whole range of options for choosing action strategies. Propaganda narrows this range and symbolic interaction is reduced to a training ground for placing the intentions of the creator of the message."[6]

Propaganda includes various contents whose range is 'narrowed' as necessary in order to be acceptable. The leaders and political oligarchies of totalitarian states knew this well. Before the Second World War, Adolf Hitler said about propaganda: "The perspicacity of the masses is very limited. The understanding is little, but therefore the forgetfulness is great." That is why he considered and emphasized that effective and successful "propaganda must be reduced to only a few essential points that should be repeated in the form of slogans for as long as it takes for even the last person to be able to imagine what is desired when they hear those words." Goebbels, who is known for saying that "a lie repeated

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[5] The term propaganda traces its heritage to the catholic religious tradition. Pope Urban VIII founded the *Congregatio de propaganda fide* in 1623. as an association for the spreading of the catholic faith.

[6] S. Milivojević (1993), "Propaganda", u: *Enciklopedija političke kulture* (Glavni redaktor Milan Matić), Beograd: Savremena administracija, 941-942.

a thousand times remains a lie, a lie repeated a million times becomes the truth", emphasized that "propaganda must be clear, simple, perhaps even primitive" because "the people are generally still more primitive than we can imagine. That is why the very essence of propaganda is simplicity and constant repetition."[7]

Realization of the interests of dominant subjects of power is achieved not only by coercion, but also by securing the consent of sub-ordinates in relation to a dominant group. This is the hegemony that Antonion Gramsci talked about.

This Italian intellectual emphasized the role of cultural hegemo-ny not only in social changes, but also in the process of establishment of government. This concept can also be applied to the understanding of geopolitical relations.

Gramsci emphasized that the repressive feature of the state was one di-mension of its nature and that the other is contained in its socializing function.

The area of the state and society, within which coercion is carried out, is the political society, composed of public institutions (government, parliament, assembly, judiciary, military, police, prison) through which rule is directly applied; the political society is usually said to be the state or the 'night watchman'. However, state power cannot be based solely on repression and *hard power* of action. Indeed, such states and such power exist. But the effectiveness of action also depends on civil society, as that important area for ensuring hegemonic ideological, propaganda, spiritual and political action; civil society is made up of numerous pri-vate institutions (family, school, media, cultural, sports, scientific and other institutions) that achieve supremacy, consent, and consensus. It belongs to that area where different ideas and ideologies confront each other, provides consensus and, as we would say today, spreads or es-tablishes soft power and establishes hegemony. In it, ruling groups and dominant subjects of power aspire to maintain ideological and political dominance and subordinate groups to conquer it. Cultural hegemony is the basis of the unification of tastes, attitudes, opinions and behavior of persons, as well as the change of identity. In this way, the basis of the conquest of political power: no matter how repressive, ruling must also include the phenomena of consent, consensus, consensual, socialization.[8]

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[7] D. Ganzer (2018), *Protivzakoniti ratovi: kako zemlje NATO-a podrivaju Ujedinjene nacije: hronika koja počinje od Kube i završava Sirijom*, Beograd: Laguna, 248.

[8] B. Kovačević (1986), *Gramsci i marksizam (Koncepcija hegemonije Antonija Gramscija)*, Banja Luka: Glas; B. Kovačević (2019), *Neoliberalna hegemonija*, Banja Luka: Evropski defendologija

When this concept of hegemony is transferred to the discursive analysis of geopolitical relations, it means that in addition to the existence of hard power manifested through, first of all, military potential, rigid economic power and sanctions, the realization of the interests of the dominant subject of power or the one who pretends to be. It also implies the use of soft power instruments. Aviation can do its job, just as the media and propaganda agencies, diplomacy, so-called 'do their job' 'non-governmental' and other organizations, churches, cultural, scientific and sports organizations and associations, etc. No matter how powerful it is, without instruments, organizations and institutions of soft power dispersion, aviation, as a militant, militaristic and bellicose expression of the existence of hard power, cannot be successful. Hard power is connected with soft power.

The field of politics is not only the area of manifestation of force and hard power, but also the area of manifestation of *consent* and *acceptance* of the values of soft power. Whether countries are more or less *democratic* or more or less *totalitarian* depends on their presence in politics and geopolitics.

FILM'S SOFT POWER

Regardless of types and genre differences, films contain a certain aesthetic and ideological, and some also (geo)political and ideological dimensions. This is their so-called soft power. To illustrate the areas of soft power in film as widely as possible, we will point out a few referent examples: partisan films, films of the so-called "black wave", the movie *Titanic*, and American western movies.

As war films and extremely popular, *partisan films* mostly represented screened propaganda ideological projects of the socialist state, primarily related to the Second World War. They are imbued with ideology: the importance of national liberation; partisan struggle against the occupier; the fascist enemy and 'his servants'; the partisans led by

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centar za naučna, politička, ekonomska, socijalna, bezbjednosna, sociološka i kriminološka istraživanja Banja Luka. Leaning on Marx's concept of superstructure and ideology and Gramsci's concept of hegemony, the French philosopher Louis Pierre Althusser talks about the distinction between *state repressive apparatuses* of hard power (government, administration, army, police, courts, prisons) and *state ideological apparatus* as a space for spreading the ideology of soft power (religious, educational institutions, family, law, unions, institutions of the political system, and political parties, media, culture). *State repressive apparatuses* belong to the public and *state ideological apparatuses* belong to the private sphere. L. Altiser (2015), *Ideologija i državni ideološki aparati (Beleške za istraživanje)*, Beograd: Karpos, 26-28.

Josip Broz (a former Austrian corporal who shot at Serbs in the First World War and became the partisan supreme commander in the Second World War, and established the Goli Otok camp after the war); the suffering of the partisans and the fight for the wounded, harmony, equality and hyper-idealized "brotherhood and unity"; personified in the film characters of the then very popular actors, the Serb Velimir Bata Živojinović and the Croat Boris Dvornik. The party-state leadership considered film the most important art of all arts and its influence on film production was quite obvious. They saw in the film a powerful means of propagating the values of socialism, socialist self-management, the power of the working class and the vanguardism of the Party headed by the undisputed leader – Tito.

All that ideological farce and propaganda cosmetics of fake *Potemkin villages* happened in Yugoslavia as a totalitarian state. That is, a state with an autocratic regime, which falsely presented itself as a democratic and socialist state. In such a totalitarian state led by Josip Broz, there was complete domination and strict control of the party state over society: economy, politics, ideology, culture, science, sports, individuals and social groups. There was strong censorship in it and there was no space for the existence of autonomous critical thinking and public opinion, artistic and academic freedom. There was neither human right nor freedom. That's why there was a prison system modeled after the Soviet GULAG.[9]

To completely prevent the creation of any kind of critical space and to maintain it by all possible means, the repressive totalitarian regime established the *Goli Otok* political camp as a system of several constructed camps. Dissidents, 'enemies of the people' and 'enemies of the regime and acts and character of Comrade Tito' were imprisoned and killed there: 'dissidents', 'informbirovs', 'leftists', 'rightists', 'counter-revolutionaries', 'liberals', etc. Although the exact number of people who went through the harsh system of the *Goli Otok* camp is unknown, the number is certainly not small. Some believe that by 1978 (!) that number was around 32,000, of which over 300 prisoners died.

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[9] *In the USSR, the GULAG* (Гла́вное управле́ние лагере́й складов или Гла́вное управле́ние исправительно-трудовых лагерей и колоний) represented a system of 53 camps and 423 labor colonies. It existed from March 25, 1930, until January 13, 1960. Solzhenitsyn cites the research of statistics professor Kurganov who calculated that 66.6 million people were killed, sickened, died and displaced in the GULAG. "Whether it's ours or someone else's, how can one not be speechless" – says Solzhenitsyn. A. Solženjicin (1988), *Arhipelag Gulag 1918-1956*, t. I, Beograd: Rad, 137-138.

Opposing the ideological and propaganda film varnish, films that belong to the so-called *black wave* appear in Yugoslav cinematography and refer to the period between the 60s and 70s of the 20th century. According to some, it refers to the period from 1958-1973, and according to others to the period from 1961-1972. Regardless of these insignificant differences, everyone agrees the period of the cinematographic black wave is extremely significant from a political and social point of view.

Completely contrary to the ideological matrix of partisan fillings and creating an idolatrous attitude towards the socialist state and its fundamental pillars, the films of the black wave show the 'dark side' of Yugoslavia as a propagated idealized model of the socialist society. Contrary to the socialist ideological and propaganda cinematography that falsely portrayed society glorifying its institutions and "values", the cinematography of the "black wave" strongly criticizes the state of society, the dominant ideology, false propaganda, politics and power of the regime of the totalitarian socialist state, problematizes the cult of Tito's personality by comparing with other totalitarian leaders. This cinematography appeared in the time of student demonstrations and youth rebellion against the repressive totalitarian state regime, alienation and social marginalization, dealing with the "ordinary little man" and the cracks of the society in which he lives. They were quite realistically showing the reverse side of the society in which that man really lives. That dark side of the idealized socialist reality, which was shown in the films of the black wave, was imbued with misery and poverty, psycho-social pathology (alienation, anxiety, depression and neuroticism of young people, disappointment, daily humiliations, dissatisfaction, drug addiction and alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, crime, corruption, aggression, violence and murder, prostitution, sex, promiscuity, homosexuality, etc.). The films of the black wave were quite realistic because they strongly criticized the false ideal image of the *Potemkin villages* of Yugoslavia at that time. They were showing the social and political reality as it actually is.

As another example of the spread of soft power, we will take the film *Titanic*. It can be said to have played a major role in the realization of Western cultural socialization, hegemony and cultural imperialism. Anthony Giddens points out that the film's popularity lies in the fact that it contained ideas and values intended for a global audience. One of the important themes of the film refers to "the possibility of achieving romantic love, despite class differences and family traditions." Although

these ideas, values and norms, are accepted in many Western countries, they are not in the majority. Intended to influence attitudes about personal and marital relationships in those parts of the world where rigid traditional values still dominate, the Western values spread through the films of the cultural industry. It is shown that the West can precisely influence changes in those traditional values. Western-produced television shows and movies dominate the global media, promoting certain political, social, and economic attitudes that reflect the Western worldview. In this regard, critics of globalization believe it creates and imposes a "global culture" that will "overrun the strength of local customs and traditions." Thus, "globalization represents a form of "cultural imperialism." The values, style and views of the world characteristic of The West are expanding so aggressively that they will suffocate national cultures."[10]

Regardless of the existence of negative radical attitudes towards globalization and the spread of Western culture on the *global* and *local*, i.e. *globalization space*, it is nevertheless evident that this culture, thanks to many media and means, is spreading very moderately. By spreading soft power in fact, it strongly influences the change of traditional relations between people, social classes, ethnic groups. It brings with it new and different values that break traditional rigidity and autarky, bringing them closer to the modern way of life and world view. The intention of the cultural industry of the West refers to the world accepting all its segments (language, literature, music, architecture, science, education, fashion, theater, digital technological products, etc.). In this way, the rest of the world accepts the *American way of life as its own way of life.* By unifying and imposing value systems, tastes, needs and services and selling them to the rest of the world, American corporations would make enormous profits and America would strengthen its global hegemony.

As an example of the dispersion of conditioned, soft power, we will take the Hollywood *western films* that were produced on a distinctly Manichean principle. When the main actor points out in the film that "only a dead Indian is a good Indian", and that there are "good" and "bad guys", he is actually not only expressing his Manichaeism, but also a misanthropic genocidal attitude as an expression of film propaganda.[11]

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[10] E. Gidens (2005), *Sociologija*, Beograd: Ekonomski fakultet, 69-70.

[11] The West will adopt the same attitude in its films, TV shows, journalistic and propaganda articles, in which it will maintain a positive attitude toward itself. It takes a negative attitude towards those who criticize it, targets them and those who are uninterested in it at will, in accordance with the imperative instrument of stick or carrot. In addition to other examples, to illustrate this assertion of the existence and dispersion of soft power through various media. The attitude of

The plot in western films refers to the Wild West of the United States of America, but also Canada and Mexico. The time of the event is the second half of the 19th century and the period between 1860 and 1900.

The most common iconography of western movies shows cowboys, gunslingers and bounty hunters with big hats, shirts and scarves around their necks, deerskin pants with a belt with bullets and a revolver, and spurs on their legs. They skillfully ride horses on which there is a saddle, saddlebags and a gun. The films show vivid landscapes of 'wild nature' and areas of 'enemy territory' inhabited by Indians, dusty roads on which traveler and mail coaches rush. They show isolated forts, Indian villages, ranches and small towns with a store, a sheriff's office with a jail, a barn. In already more civilized and developed urban areas, there is a bank, a church and a school.

From an ideological point of view in western films, in the ethnocentric, Indian-phobic ideological matrix in western films, stereotypical Manichean conflicts and wars against Indians are most impressively depicted. On one side, the 'good guys' whose morality and code of honor are on the side of 'law' and 'order'; and on the other, the 'bad guys' – criminals, bandits, unruly 'southerners', Indians – who are on the complete opposite side of the law. In the earlier period, American

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the West towards the Serbs in the previous war in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Bosnia and Herzegovina can be used for this. To influence world public opinion through media and diplomatic propaganda spreading dispersive soft power, the West portrayed Serbia and Serbs in an extremely negative way. In very pronounced media violence and aggressive media-propaganda 'glaichshalt' and spinning, and in accordance with Orwellian news, Serbs are labeled, demonized, stigmatized and targeted as exclusive culprits, as non-human. That is why every measure available to the interventionist West could be implemented and justified against them, and which in such rigid and a priori directed propaganda achieved the dispersion of soft power. They emphasized Serbia was a "genocidal", "oppressive nation", "occupier", "aggressor", a nation with a "barbaric spirit." For Bill Clinton Serbia is "the heart of European darkness"; for Tony Blair – the war against Serbia is "a war of Good against Evil, of civilization against barbarism"; Helmut Kohl emphasized Serbia should be destroyed as "the last oasis of communism"; Klaus Kinkel – that she should be "brought to her knees"; D. James Baker – "turn into a pariah", Wesley Clark – "turn into dust and ashes", and Michale Rose and Jamie Shayne – "returned to the stone age." Politicians, diplomats, journalists and quasi-intellectuals raced to accuse the Serbs of being a "grumpy, wayward, disobedient people", of "belonging to another civilization outside of the European motherland", of being "bandits", "rednecks", "butchers from the East", "Byzantines", "Balkans", "war criminals", "disturbing factor", "uncooperative", "enemies of democracy", "people who trample on human rights", "genocidal." Thus, in a primitive and uncultured way, Richard Holbrooke will say of the Serbs that they are "criminal assholes", Madeleine Albright – that they are "disgusting", Jacques Chirac, that they are "without law and religion, bandits and terrorists", David Obi – that they are "pigs", Laurent Fabius – "garbage and Warren Minor Christopher – "immoral race." Of course, they were not the only ones in the area of pathological hatred and Serbophobia, and they were not the only ones who demonized the Serbs. There were other politicians, diplomats, and even 'intellectuals'.

westerns show the violence of the Wild West, emphasizing the values of honor and morality, keeping 'order and law', dedication and integration into a 'good' society.

This is American messianism imbued with certain values. In the need to shape a national identity, they show the conflict between the primitive, traditional and outdated, on the one hand, and the advanced, civilized and modern on the other. That is the conflict between undisciplined and unpolished savages and civilized civil persons. Of course, although, from a historical point of view, many things in the fables are completely incorrect and invented, the goal is to show that in the conflict 'good' wins over 'evil', 'justice' over 'injustice', 'law and order' over lawlessness, 'civilized' over 'primitive'. Thus, "Hollywood, which has the means of material production, also has the means of intellectual production. It rules as a producer of ideas and regulates their spread."[12]

The spread of such ideas is nothing more than the propaganda spread of soft power. It quite understandably carries a clear ideological message that anything can happen to all those who do not accept American hegemony as American messianism.

In the same semantic matrix of the powerful states of the West, that is, the so-called 'international communities', build a global concept of the new world order. Through it they achieve their dominance. In that process and according to their own interests, they use all means of hard and soft power: economy, politics, diplomacy, military, culture, media (especially television), Internet. Their use and usage is manipulative: with a propaganda semantic message, they justify the (neo)imperial policy of the designers of the global *new world order*. Trying to succeed in this, they use, explicitly or implicitly, the mechanism of Manichaeism.

In the philosophical sense, the term Manichaeism implies dualism according to which two opposite principles rule the world: the principle of good and the principle of evil. In the political sense, this term refers to ideological and political propaganda that divides the political and social community into two separate parts, i.e. to: 'us' and 'them', 'loyal' and 'disloyal', 'fit' and 'unfit', 'friends' and 'enemies' of politics, systems, regimes. The political practice of Manichaeism and political rule rests on the image of a diabolical enemy. It is based on the classical principle of *divide et impera* (lat. "divide and rule"). Precisely because it rests on the image of a diabolical enemy, Manichaean politics finds in the 'enemy' the one and only culprit and cause of all troubles

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[12] G. Aristarko (1971), *Marks, film i filmska kritika*, Beograd: Institut za film, 16.

and dangers. "People from the opposite side must be destroyed morally" by "declaring themselves criminals and inhumane, absolutely worthless, because otherwise we ourselves would be criminals and monsters." This is how the Nazi ideologist Carl Schmitt emphasized and after him, in a similar way, many other ideologues and practitioners of totalitarian parties and states.

Manichaean, racist and chauvinist political observation of phenomena necessarily leads to a bellicose understanding of the world. Man's social life is a bellicose life: man has almost always found himself in war and war in him. Man has almost always found himself in such a social, political, spiritual, psychological and ideological space that could be brought under the Hobbesian definition that man is a wolf to man (lat. *homo homini lupus est*); and the state of war of all against all (*bellum omnium contra omnes*). Man constantly lives in an age of political war. The war age is an age in which people are ultimately divided into 'us' and 'them', into 'friends' and 'enemies', 'loyal' and 'disloyal.' Then they persecute and make war. The term enemy is a bellicose term because it belongs to the concept of war. Antagonisms, conflicts and war are present. There is also an enemy, regardless of whether it is a war between states and an ideological, political, civil and ethnic war in one country. There are no political and state conflicts, conflicts and sharpened antagonisms without enemies; there is no war without an enemy and where it exists, it is necessary to destroy it. Destruction of the enemy or his defeat is the basic meaning and goal of warfare, both military and ideological and political. After all, human history, and the violent history of the West in particular, show this quite illustratively.

The West has always acted in a racist, bellicose and misanthropic manner when it had to, in its wanton looting of resources, colonial, neo-colonial and neo-imperial practices. In this regard, it perceived itself as a kind of *Deus Absconditus* and the supreme natural measure of good and evil. Its obsessive-compulsive exceptionalism and its illusory and false belief in exceptionalism have their origins in the colonialist past and deep conviction that it is absolutely superior to the rest of the world. Therefore, it has the right and moral obligation to lead and dominate.

Because of the propaganda semantic discourse about moral obligation, ethical reasons and God's will, numerous wars are justified, bombings are carried out, massacres and mass genocides are committed. In this way, the West uses a combination of hard and soft power. In the name of semantic narratives about human rights, justice, democracy,

morality, conscience, the West, in fact, also organizes wars in the name of moral choice and principles and values. It is also carried out military operations like the so-called 'humanitarian interventions' by bombing Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina in 1995 and FR Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) in 1999.

The bombing of Republika Srpska and Republika Srpska Krajina, and then the FR Yugoslavia – which is an expression of the manifestation of hard power – was compared by American General Wesley Kanne Clark to the hand of God. This formulation is an expression of the articulation of soft power. In the same sense, former US Secretary of State D. James Baker said: "the USA and NATO are fighting against the enemies of civilization and humanity", which meant that American interests are determined by soft power – philanthropy and civilizational moral duty towards humanity. Thus, in its strange *ethical theocentrism*, the West behaves messianically as a kind of *Deus Absconditus*, thinking and behaving as if it has a mandate from God. As Franklin Delano Roosevelt said, "a duty to order the weak and chaotic people." How he "regulates" them can be seen in the geopolitics of the Anglo-Saxon West from the Second World War until today.

Together with NATO – the military organization of the USA, as they point out, they are fighting "against the enemies of civilization and humanity." They are considering it is the "duty" of the Anglo-Saxon West to "regulate weak and chaotic nations." Is the West really capable of doing that so that it would truly suit those "weak" and "chaotic nations" so that the West would acquire the *moral* supremacy of the leader?

For global, "world leadership" it is necessary that, in addition to "material advantages", there are also spiritual, civilizational and cultural advantages, and the faith and conviction that would result from that leadership. "Global leadership requires spiritual, cultural and civilizational primacy in the present and the future." Not only is it necessary for others to believe in the ability of the leader, but he himself must be convinced of the superiority of his own powers and mission. A leader is expected to see further than others, in fact, to possess an unsurpassed ability to accurately perceive the present, but also to predict upcoming events. A leader needs to see through obstacles, not just over them. Moreover, a leader is expected to do what is normally unexpected of those he brings together and leads – the power to create the future. Great expectations result in great disappointments if the (self)elected leader does not fulfill the commitments and promises made. After all, in the

final account of history, leadership is as demanding, overwhelming and difficult as it is pleasant.[13]

If the Anglo-Saxon West, led by the USA, has material primacy, we could not say it also has the necessary spiritual, cultural and civilizational primacy. In fact, we could say it *appropriated* this primacy, thanks primarily to hard power, but also to soft power. That's why it triumphantly gave itself the right to declare itself the torchbearer of the spread of 'democracy', 'human rights' and 'freedom'. Of course, we see how the process of spreading the value mantras that the West talks about is taking place. That self-proclaimed 'leadership' is not based on belief and convincing others, but on force.

Real leadership must be *desired* and *accepted*. It must be an expression and influence of soft power, and be unimposed by *force*, *violence* or *terror*, i.e. unimposed by the rigid instruments of hard power. Aviation, wars, so-called humanitarian interventions and carpet bombing innocent civilians as 'collateral damage', instigating ethnic and other conflicts, 'yellow', 'orange' and other colored revolutions and conflicts in sovereign states, imposing genocidal sanctions, blackmail and threats, as well as other mechanisms of hard power dispersion, cannot provide true, authentic and voluntarily accepted leadership. Because leadership does not come from fear. If we bring this analysis into the context of contemporary geopolitical relations, then it means that the expansive, neo-colonial and neo-imperial expansion of the Anglo-Saxon West is based on hard power. The emergence and expansion of BRICS, at least for now, is based on soft power. Until now, the Anglo-Saxon West has imperially destroyed states. The time will necessarily come when different relations will be built in the world, and in which the world will be without the West, at least this (neo)imperial and (neo)colonial Anglo-Saxon West.[14]

Behaving like a kind of *Deus Absconditus*, using rigid hard power, the West simultaneously shows its hypocrisy. In its neo-imperial and neo-colonial geopolitics, the Anglo-Saxon West targets innocent, powerless states and their peoples – which possess significant resources necessary for the same predatory West – falsely accusing them of being 'undemocratic' and 'dictatorial', of 'violating human rights and freedoms', to dispose of chemical and biological weapons, etc. In order

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[13] M. Knežević (2005), *Moć zapada: nova stara Evropa. 1,* Pančevo: Mali Nemo, 188.

[14] З. Милошевић (2012), *Империјално разарање државе*, Београд: Институт за политичке студије; З. Милошевић (2014), *Свет без Запада: прилог проучавању политичких процеса у свету и у Србији*, Бијељина: Слобомир П. Универзитет.

to achieve dominance, control and plunder over their resources, and to seize other people's territories, the Anglo-Saxon West instigates colored revolutions, conducts network and hybrid warfare, 'humanitarian' interventions and actual wars.

Capitalism is based on the constant need for military interventions and the so-called ethical bombings whose goal is the maintenance and expansion of the capitalist system in the world. Closely related to that process is the a priori demonization of any transformist and transcendent idea and intention, which the capitalist hard power immediately removes and liquidates as reactionary, anti-democratic and totalitarian. With the United States of America at the helm, the West is waging war against the rest of the world, which does not want to accept its absolute dominance. And, with the construction of the largest American military base in the Balkans, *Bondsteel*, the assumption of effective control of Europe was created. Also, the necessary military interventions in the Middle East, as well as the preventive occupation of Central Asia to confront Russia and China. The well-known event of September 11, 2001 provided the justification for surveillance in geopolitical relations, and justified the strengthening of surveillance over individuals, limiting their individual freedoms. Of course, this would be impossible without the use of manipulative rhetoric like the one from Phaedrus' fable about the wolf and the lamb. It is dedicated to those who qui fictis causis innocents opprimunt (lat. "those who oppress the innocent with invented causes"). All forms of revolt should be removed so that the two dogmas of our age remain essential: the neoliberal mantra of the transcendence of the market as destiny and unconditional subordination to the universal unipolarity that emerged victorious from the Cold War.[15]

The hypocrisy of Western, first of all American, political science is present in the discourse on America's war against *the rest of the world*. Behind the discourse on ethics, humanitarianism, spreading democracy and human rights, there is actually nothing but a militant hegemonic imperialist and neo-colonialist motive.

It is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon West that its attitude towards the others is simultaneously universalistic and imperialistic. Universalistic, because in the West it is thought that the *rest of the world* will accept its modernity, liberalism and capitalism. Imperialistic, because in the West there is a strongly expressed conviction that, as a self-proclaimed *Deus Absconditus*, the West must, as a kind of enlightened

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[15] Д. Фузаро (2013), *Крваве руке неолиберализма*, Интервју, Београд: Печат, бр. 284, 16, 26.

despot, spread its understanding throughout the world through democracy and capitalism, "even by force, if necessary."[16]

The expansion of the universalistic and imperialistic will of the West, including by force was felt by the Republika Srpska, Republika Srpska Krajina and FR Yugoslavia, as well as a whole series of other countries and their peoples, especially since the Second World War, until today.

CONCLUSION

Power plays a significant role in the process of socialization and political socialization of persons in societies. Hard power is based on the dispersion of repression, coercion and force, which is particularly visible in the geopolitical relationship of the West towards the rest of the world. Soft power relies on persuasion, faith, attraction, desire and acceptance. Hard power is undesirable because it is aggressive, oppressive, and violent. Soft power is a nonviolent, desirable power. In movies, soft power is quite clearly recognizable.

Belonging to the genre of war films, Yugoslav partisan films carried with them exceptionally positive narratives of strong ideological messages. These are primarily of the partisan national liberation struggle in the future construction of a socialist society based on the power of the working class, the brotherhood and unity of the Yugoslav peoples and the avantgarde communist party; at the head with the undisputed leader and son of all Yugoslav peoples – Josip Broz Tito.

The films of the Yugoslav "black wave" exposed the indoctrination and manipulation of the totalitarian regime in Yugoslavia. They showed the 'other side of the coin', the dark side of life manifested in the psychopathology and social pathology of everyday life in Yugoslav society.

The film *Titanic* gathered a huge audience around the world because it portrayed the historical tragedy of a large number of passengers on the then new and most modern ship in the world in a fascinating and empathetic way. A special segment of his receptivity refers to the depiction of the possible existence of love between members of different classes, castes and social levels. Their reception will certainly be reflected in changes in value systems when it comes to interpersonal relationships, relationships between men and women and relationships in marriage. All this will lead to a change in traditional values, customs and local cultures in the ideological, cultural and geopolitical space.

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[16] R. Koch, C. Smith (2007), *Samoubojstvo Zapada*, Zagreb: Naklada LJEVAK, 187.

Hollywood Western films depicted the ways in which rustic rural settings were transformed into modern and civilized ones based on respect for 'order' and 'law'. In classic Western movies, the 'good guys' always defeat the 'bad guys'. It provides modern American geopolitics with a global quasi-argument of the repressive imposition of 'democracy' and 'human rights' by means of hard and even soft power.

In the mentioned films, their authors (writers, screenwriters, directors, actors) show values that belong to the area of soft power dispersion. Its goal is to be perceived and received by those who watch them with pleasure. And that is precisely the goal of propaganda soft power.

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CULTURAL PARADIPLOMACY CAPACITIES; CINEMA AND FILM: A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE IN CULTURAL RELATION AND CONVERGENCE; A CASE STUDY OF IRAN AND SERBIA

Abstract

One of the most prominent features in recent decades is the more obvious and widespread activity of non-governmental activists. Culture is a clear example that the para-diplomatic activists create suitable fields for the dissemination of culture and cultural communication with their audiences across the borders in line with the government's goals. This activity, which is called paradiplomacy, is very effective in the cultural field. One of the most important elements and cultural tools is film and cinema. Today, cinema, television, and the media in general have undertaken several missions that have left a special impact in the political, economic, cultural, etc. fields. After globalization, this diplomatic or paradiplomatic actor can be more effective in the field of convergence. Due to the importance of this issue, in the present research, a case study of the impact of the para-diplomatic capacities of film and cinema between Iran and Serbia will be discussed.

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The importance of this activity is so great that today some rivals of the societies of the two countries use this tool and method to destroy culture, civilization and cultural discourse or to strengthen it between the countries. For this reason, the basic issue is how cinema and film can help to strengthen the cultural relations between the people of Iran and Serbia.

In response to the new mission of industrialization and the acculturalization of cinema and film, it should be stated that this important effect has numerous and concrete effects on the mutual recognition of more nations in various fields of culture, art, architecture, identity and value. Cultural activities of two nations are essential, especially in the field of tourism and promoting convergence.

Keywords: *Cultural Paradiplomacy, non-governmental activists, cinema and film, Iran and Serbia.*

INTRODUCTION

According to McLuhan in his book titled *Understanding the Media*, "Maybe if Archimedes was in today's world, he would have chosen the media because he said: "Show me a fulcrum in the world so that I can shake the world with it.""

Considering the speed with which we are faced with new media as a democratic means of communication, the prospect of media becoming the most essential part of our lives is not very far away. New media, which are considered soft cultural power, have created changes in intra-individual, interpersonal, group and collective processes and content.

In an age where a billion users are connected to each other through media such as movies, cinema, and Cyberspace such as Instagram, Facebook, etc., the ability of the media to be placed as an Archimedes' fulcrum is not far from the mind. Social media, especially film and cinema, refers to the means of interaction between people in which they create, share and exchange information and ideas. Their long-term psychological impact should be given a lot of attention from the point of view of the cultural managers of a society, because the media has the potential

to create communities, establish relationships with relatives in distant places, create jobs, and even influence the selection of managers such as presidents and the expansion of the convergence of nations or destruction. They have the relations of nations. In this way, it can act in the field of matching, agreement, or vice versa in the field of subtraction and opposition. According to Schiller, media operators can create and refine the message and shape behaviors and can easily reach the final stage of persuasion. Therefore, without a doubt, the success and power of the media, especially film and cinema, is a powerful tool in soft power.

Nowadays, the young generation can easily have their thoughts and behavior shaped through dealing with various media tools such as film, cinema, and the Internet, and even in various political and cultural fields, we strongly observe that groups opposing a government or system are able to shape their needs in the direction of their goals, which is against the relevant system and government. Perhaps it is because of this power of the media that the opponents of governments in the field of soft power have turned to the media, especially cinema and film, and on the other hand, in diplomatic relations in the field of soft power, one of the first results of diplomatic relations is to carry out joint media activities such as cinematic productions or film production.

The media, especially cinema and film productions, may have given the seal of approval to some aspects of Marcuse's book, *One-Dimensional Man*, with the reference that the media has gone so far as to be able to determine human entertainment and according to the consumption of certain goods or following a certain behavior to give us dignity and value. In the meantime, these actors, whether governmental or non-governmental media actors such as home television networks have performed very well. Sometimes countries make joint products such as documentaries and cultural films from other countries to strengthen relations and get to know each other better. This is a very suitable capacity for Iran and Serbia to benefit from the capacities of these non-governmental and paradiplomatic activists in the field of making documentaries from both countries or making competitions and even joint films.

For this reason, in this research, we intend to focus on the importance of strengthening joint media products between the two countries of Iran and Serbia in order to strengthen the convergence of nations. The method of conducting this research is descriptive and analytical.

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF PARADIPLOMACY

One of the characteristics of the contemporary era is extensive changes, the complexity of the concept of power, and ways to increase it. In this context, diplomacy has transformed into the thoughtful brain of national power in a way that has been combined with dozens of prefixes and suffixes. For example, one can refer to cases such as energy diplomacy, coercion diplomacy, scientific diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, techno-diplomacy, modern public diplomacy,[1] and environmental diplomacy, which indicate the expansion and development of this concept to keep up with the changes in the international arena. The creation of the term 'paradiplomacy' is also analyzable from this perspective Pour Hassan, and Khaleghinezhad,[2] The prefix 'para' has different meanings, and when combined with other words, it imposes a different meaning on them. Therefore, by adding this prefix to the word diplomacy, a new meaning has been attributed to the term diplomacy.

Paradiplomacy was initially introduced into the international system through the British Dominions (Canada, South Africa, and Australia), and the term 'paradiplomacy' was first coined by Canadian scholar Panayiotis Soldatos in the 1980s. The rise and prominence of paradiplomacy in academic and political circles, particularly in foreign policy, is owed to the phenomenon of globalization, which has led to the emergence of new actors in the international arena.[3]

The concept of paradiplomacy has been defined using various terms, including formal diplomacy, regional diplomacy, micro-diplomacy, multi-layered diplomacy, post-diplomacy, and others. The most comprehensive definition, perhaps, is provided by Grydlog, who sees paradiplomacy as a transnational institutional activity that involves foreign political entities. However, the revival and development of the concept of paradiplomacy is attributed to Duchacek, who used the term in his article "The International Face" to introduce formal diplomacy at the global and regional levels.[4] Alexander Kuznetsov's theory suggests that paradiplomacy refers to the ability of formal, local, regional, and

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[1] Nasser Pour Hasan (2011), "New Public Diplomacy and Comprehensive Defense", *Defense Strategy Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 33, 6.

[2] Nasser Pour Hasan and Maryam Khalighinejad (2016), *Paradiplomacy*, Sokhoran: Tehran, 20-22.

[3] Alexander Kuznetsov (2015), *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs*, New York: Routledge, 26-27.

[4] Maryam Khaleghinejad (2022), *Cross-border Paradiplomacy, Paradiplomatic Regionalism of the Countries in Iran's sphere Farhangif*, Qoumis Publications, Tehran, 12-14.

transnational entities to act as international actors. Kuznetsov argues that new actors seek to establish connections with other units outside their national borders, which can be achieved through individuals (ministers), institutions such as provinces and municipalities, and sometimes through actors such as multinational corporations. Paradiplomacy can be pursued in two ways: parallel to the goals of the central government or in contrast to the goals of the government, seeking political independence and separatism. The expansion of new units, especially in the field of regional trade, has blurred the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs, leading to a division of responsibilities between the government and local units. The role-playing of formal identities leads to an increase in national power, as their participation is aimed at pursuing specific international interests.[5] The government grants a series of powers to formal authorities in accordance with the constitution, which serves to deepen the diplomacy of the central government.

Paradiplomacy has consequences such as solving common and public problems, including communication, environmental, economic, job shortages, population, cultural prevalence, and so on. On the other hand, it has a significant impact on achieving democratic goals and is a positive trend for democracy. From this perspective, it can be defined at three levels:

1. In the economic sphere, the formal governments aim to develop international relations to attract foreign investment, international companies to the region, and gain new markets for exports. For example, the US and Australian governments pursue their economic interests through paradiplomacy.

2. The second level of paradiplomacy involves cultural, educational, technical, technological, and other dimensions. This level is broader and more extensive. The European Union Parliament's meetings for cooperation between North and South or Canada's cooperation with countries such as Senegal, Lebanon, and Vietnam are examples of the second layer of paradiplomacy.

3. The third level includes political interests and concerns. In this layer, paradiplomacy is inclined towards the apparent characteristics of the identity, ethics, and distinct behavioral traits of formal governments and central government projects at the international level. Here, formal

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[5] Lecours Andre (2008), *Political Issue Of Para Diplomacy Lessons From The Developed World*, Netherlands Institute Of International Relation Cling Deal, 11-12.

governments seek to develop certain relationships based on their national identity, norms, and national values.

One of the important issues regarding paradiplomacy is the combination of formal and informal elements. Robert Kaiser presents different types of paradiplomacy in this regard: 1) Cross-border regional paradiplomacy, which includes formal and informal communications between neighboring regions across national borders; 2) Extra-regional paradiplomacy, which involves cooperation with regions in foreign countries; 3) Global paradiplomacy, which includes political-functional relations with foreign central governments, international organizations, private sector, and other groups. Paradiplomacy means that in addition to the official diplomacy of the government, cities can also have a parallel and complementary diplomacy, which can be a diplomacy of exchange, discussions related to tourism, discussions related to business cooperation, and from the perspective of sisterhood, interaction between cities can take place. These interactions that exist with sister cities can be important and can provide a platform for economic development, attracting foreign investment, and even marketing tourism.[6]

The participation of formal identities in the international arena does not mean that autonomous entities can pursue policies independent of the broader constitutional framework of which they are a part, without regard for the territorial integrity of the existing state. This requires a commitment from both parties to maintain the territorial integrity of the existing government. For example, in the mid-1990s, the German state of Bavaria established an extensive foreign network in 22 countries, including China, India, Japan, the United States, South Africa, and Brazil, to facilitate easier communication between domestic industries and those located in these countries.[7]

Considering the fact that foreign relations are part of the jurisdiction of the central government, the participation of formal identities in the international arena is not problematic as long as the central government has the authority and control over the entire path of autonomous participation in the international arena. Autonomous entities have limited capacity to strengthen their policies in the international arena because the fundamental authority to make independent decisions in foreign policy

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[6] Alexander Kuznetsov (2015), *Theory and Practice of Paradiplomacy: Subnational Governments in International Affairs*, New York: Routledge, 108.

[7] Samuel McMillan Lucas (2008), "Subnational Foreign Policy Actors: How and Why Governors Participate in U.S. Foreign Policy", *Foreign Policy Analysis 4*, 227-253.

lies within the framework of the constitutional law of countries in the jurisdiction of the central government.[8]

SOFT POWER, CINEMA AND TELEVISION AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

The discussion regarding national soft power strategies and their relationship with global media points to a kind of need for new approaches in media studies and global communication, which can be called post-globalization. In this soft power, post-globalization has the ability to address the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches. The most influential definition of soft power is that provided by Harvard International Relations theorist Joseph S. Nye, who defined soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payment" and as the ability of "shaping the preferences of others".[9] In his first book on the subject, Nye argued that a country's soft power rests on three pillars:

1 – Culture (in places that are attractive to others)

2 – Political values (when these values match inside and outside the country)

3 – Foreign policies (when others consider this to be legitimate and have moral authority)

From the above three components, we find that soft power is related to cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy means the policy of a country to facilitate the export of a sample of its culture and cultural communication. In this way, there are various tools, one of which is the media, especially cinema and television. In other words, one of the newest functions of the media, especially cinema and television, in the era of post-globalization, is to take audio and visual media more than in the past, which will lead to some kind of communication and political action. The most widespread form of political communication is political advertising, which is carried out by the media, especially television and cinema. The history of political propaganda originates from ancient Roman peddlers and reaches thousands of modern mass media tools.

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[8] Deshiri Mohammadreza (2013), "Paradiplomacy in the era of globalization: a case study of urban diplomacy", *Globalization Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 13, 17.

[9] Joseph S. Nye (2015), *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs Books.

By passing through globalization and entering the post-globalization era, media have become a part of citizens' lives, and politics penetrates into their lives through mass media, which means that media has a clear diplomatic and political role both internally and externally. Mass media act as a means of transmitting information that affects them on an emotional or intellectual level. In this regard, with the emergence of non-governmental actors in cinema and film, its effects have increased. Cinema and film are the most widespread means of modern culture. Because of these opportunities and features, it becomes a suitable and useful tool among political technologies. Really, all movies have a set of ideas that affect people, but not all of them do so intentionally. Some of them implement the governmental order and promote the characters, values and behavior that is desirable for the government, and some of them are more independent and do not deal with such issues. As a symbol of culture and entertainment, film has an effect on the viewer, regardless of whether or not it is primarily intended as such.[10]

In summary, in different periods, different media have been used as different means of conveying messages and informing, and one of their fields of activity has been political in the service of governments, something that has been witnessed after globalization with a series of extensive and formidable changes. We are the function and political performance of cinemas, especially cinemas like Hollywood So, in the era of post-globalization, we can use the word political cinema for political purposes and state with certainty that cinema is used as a tool for diplomacy and politics, and in addition to state activists, cinema and film are used for the new tools and technologies of activists. Cinematic paradiplomacy has sometimes been more successful than cinema and film government actors in some countries.

HOW PARADIPLOMATIC CAPACITIES AFFECT THE CULTURAL RELATION BETWEEN IRAN AND SERBIA

Today, both Iran and Serbia are trying to deepen the relations between the two countries and their nations. So as to include the majority of national and international interests. In the meantime, one of the most important parts of it in the cultural field is to increase relations in the field of soft power. This axis has very wide dimensions, which is one of

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[10] Siamak Ghazipour et al. (2013), "Analyzing the critical dimensions of the postmodern city in world cinema", *Media and Culture Quarterly*, No. 2, 157-129.

the available and efficient tools of cinema. It has not been many decades that cinema has added a political message to its face. Of course, this does not mean that cinema did not have political goals and missions in the past, but in the era of globalization and post-globalization, this function has become much more prominent than in the past. That is why it is easy to call cinema political. From the distant past until now, cinema has at times been a strong arm for cultural and economic export policies, which became more obvious and colorful with the expansion of globalization and the facilitation of communication. Since now all countries emphasize soft power and its efficiency as much as they emphasize hard power, the importance of cinema in the political arena has increased.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which has a fundamental history in the field of cinema, has special abilities in this field. For example, we can see that in international and regional festivals, Iranian films have always been able to win the highest and best awards, or around the world some Iranian films have a special name and reputation. For example, in Serbia, some Iranian films are present in festivals or broadcast on Serbian television network and are welcomed by the people. Apart from the national and state cinema, there are some private institutions and private television channels in every country, the audience of which is sometimes larger than that of national televisions. This will help the two countries cooperate in the direction of cultural film through non-governmental thinkers.

As mentioned, Iran and Serbia have had cultural commonalities and common cultural values from the past, which are respected by both nations, which will be discussed below.

THE CULTURAL AND CIVILIZATIONAL COMMONALITIES OF IRAN AND SERBIA: THE BASIS FOR FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF RELATIONS

Culture is a familiar term that today has led to the influence of all aspects of human life, and we witness that various tools resulting from the age of information and communication have led to the introduction of different cultures miles away from the land of a nation. In this direction, what is important is the use of audio-visual tools to introduce and identify a culture, export new cultures and civilizations. Audio-visual communication tools such as television, radio, internet network have the ability to attract nations to different cultures and civilizations by

introducing cultural attractions to other nations. This is how it is said that culture can complement economic progress because by introducing culture, cultural dimensions are also spread, the most important of which are the capacities of tourism, handicrafts, etc. After the economic issue, another important issue is that in the current world, where the media has become a tool for the cultural destruction of a particular culture or civilization; therefore, the country of Iran, which is exposed to such challenges, can use this element as a way to counter some fake representations and present the real face of the Islamic Republic and Iranian civilization as well as deepening the relations between governments and nations with our friends like Serbia.

Between Iran and Serbia, the need is understood that in order to be culturally effective, culture, civilization, and cultural commonalities should be portrayed and expressed to the people of both lands.

From the point of view of political geography, Serbia has its own importance due to the sensitive and geopolitical conditions of the Balkan Peninsula: it is known as the connecting belt of Europe, Asia and Africa, the position of Serbia has been sensitive and complicated for a long time. Some historians, including Trajan Stojanović from Serbian historians, believe that the word Balkan has Persian roots and means house and high or high mountain, and entered the Turkish language from the Persian language and entered the Serbian language through the Turkish language. According to the theories presented by Mackinder and Mahan, two famous international theorists, from a historical point of view, due to the East-West communication route, this region has actually been one of the important central regions of historical events and events of the past three centuries, and Serbia, which is also the heart of the Balkans has been called the gateway to Europe and plays an important role. The Middle Ages is the era of the establishment of the national government in Serbia, and most of their culture is related to this period. During the 13th and 14th centuries, Serbia was considered among the most advanced regions and countries in Europe in terms of culture and industry.

During the rule of the Ottomans, a part of the people and residents of this country accepted Islam, and its effects are still visible in their culture, industry, social life, language, and their racial structure. Demographically, the majority of the population of Serbia is of Serbian descent, and important minorities such as Albanians, Hungarians, Bosniaks, Sigani, Croats, Slovaks, Bulgarians, Romanians, etc. also live there. Serbian culture has been greatly influenced by art, music and

architecture. On the other hand, the location of Serbia throughout history between powerful empires and countries such as Austria, Hungary, Ottoman, and before that, Rome and Byzantium has caused a great influence in the cultural sector.

The modern Serbian language is based on the foundations of the South Slavic languages. With the conquest of Serbia by the Ottoman Empire, many Turkish, Arabic and Persian words entered this language. In terms of religion, according to the Constitution of Serbia, freedom of religion and religion is recognized in this country. In Serbia, according to the latest statistics, about 86% of the population has the Orthodox religion, and the rest are Catholic Christians, Protestants, Jews, and Muslims. This country is a multi-religious country, and due to its strategic location, it is the meeting place of the great religions of Christianity and Islam, and the majority of people in the Senjak region are Muslims. There are different opinions about the history of Islam entering the Balkans and Serbia. The majority of Muslim settlements are in Senjak and Kosovo, followed by Belgrade, Niš, and Novi Sad. This region has been a meeting place of different peoples, religions and religions of the world, and this feature has had a direct impact on its social and ethnic structure. The Republic of Serbia is a heterogeneous and multi-ethnic country where many ethnic groups live. Culturally, there is ethnic and cultural diversity in this country, just like Iran. Since Serbia was under the rule of the Turks for about four centuries during the Ottoman Empire, a series of cultural values have been institutionalized in this country, and their traditions have been influenced by them, which are very important for the people there. As cultural norms and values Serbians like to spend time with their families and friends, and the view of individualism is not seen among them. They attach special importance to hospitality.[11]

Another cultural characteristic is interest in art: Serbs are very interested in art, hence there is a huge wave of painters, sculptors, composers and actors in this country. The language of this country is Serbian, which has dialectal similarities in some neighboring countries such as Croatia, Romania, Hungary, etc. They use two Serbian alphabets, Cyrillic and Latin for writing.

Before recent years, the people of this country used to wear traditional clothes a lot, which unfortunately is less common today, but still there are special trends for their traditional clothes. Serbs are also very

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[11] Azami Arezoo (2017), "The culture and manners of the witty people of Serbia", *Eavar*, Pazenzdeh Ardibehesht.

different from other European countries in terms of food and nutrition, their traditional food is very similar to that of Greece and they make many foods such as jelly, jam, sausage and pickles at home. In terms of food, baklava is one of the famous desserts of this region. Therefore, according to the things that have been said briefly about the cultural components of Serbians, firstly, they are very respectful towards their traditions, and secondly, they have still preserved the manners and customs of the past.[12]

In general, the most important cultural characteristics are the following: adherence to the family, having two official writing methods, a sense of humor, hospitality, friendly entertainment, importance of one's nationality, annual celebrations and special holidays based on cultural and religious tradition and etiquette, such as the Serbian National Theater, which was founded in 1861. The Belgrade International Theater Festival is the oldest theater festival in the world and is considered one of the five most important theater festivals in Europe. Serbs also use the New Year tree to celebrate the New Year and the birth of Christ.

The relations between Tehran and Belgrade were established in 1945 after World War II, which has had ups and downs and can be divided into four periods after the revolution: the first period from 1979 to 1987, in which we do not see any noticeable movement due to the view of Yugoslavia being communist and its military support for Baghdad during the Iran-Iraq war.

The second period from 1987 to 1992: this period is the period of growth and expansion of the relations between the two countries, especially in the form of the non-aligned movement, and the visit of the supreme leader in 1988 (February) is the peak of the relations between the two countries; at the same time, economic cooperation between Tehran and Belgrade and the development of political relations increased. During this period, trade relations were based on the exchange of oil for industrial and technical goods and services, and every year a joint economic commission was held in the capital of the two countries, planning for the future.

The third period lasted from 1992 to 2000. During this time, due to the beginning of the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina until the democrats came to power in Serbia, the relations declined to the business level, and as a result, the economic and cultural relations also declined.

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[12] *Ibid.*

The fourth period started in 2000, which led to further expansion of relations with Iran's declaration of support for democratic developments, and in 2001, these relations were strengthened by unilaterally sending an ambassador to Belgrade; finally, in 2002, Belgrade also sent its ambassador to Tehran.

Referring to the history of relations and cultural characteristics mentioned above, it is possible to mention the codification of some similar values between Iran and Serbia, which can have a similar temperament in the people. Perhaps this is the reason why the people of Serbia have an attitude towards Iran that is different from other European countries.

Undoubtedly, having specific cultural values and codes is considered a factor in strengthening relations and a sense of friendship towards each other, which needs to be portrayed by films and cinema for the people of both countries. People need a special place to revere their cultural norms. For example, adherence to the family is particularly important in Serbia, while in Iran it is considered one of the most important cultural values and even religious principles. And the hospitality that spreads throughout the territory of Islamic Iran is also one of the most important and respected cases in Serbia.

Another cultural commonality between this country and Iran is the ethnic diversity, which has caused the reconciliation of ethnicities alongside each other, while Iran has been mentioned as a country with a lot of ethnic diversity. Another factor is the role of religion and respect for religion, which exists in both countries, and even the rights of religious minorities have been respected, although the majority of Serbia is Orthodox and the majority of Iran is Shia. But the role and position of religion in society is another effective factor in bringing countries towards convergence.

Another example that is prominent in both countries is the interest in traditional clothes and traditional handicrafts, which are one of the most important sources of income and exports in Serbia and Iran. Therefore, in terms of handicrafts and the importance of handicrafts and traditional crafts, they have commonalities. Another common feature of these two countries is food and the way it is prepared. For example, some shared desserts such as baklava or other dishes such as dolme have many fans in both countries.

In general, according to statistics and observations, Serbia, especially southern Serbia, has more in common with Iran in terms of various cultural commonalities such as cooking, hospitality, type of clothing, etc., but this does not mean that other regions do not have commonalities.

In the course of the evolution of Iranian Islamic art in the Balkans, there are things worth thinking about. Dr. Boyana Radilovich, one of the employees of the Museum of Applied Arts, writes about this in an article titled "2500 years of Iranian art and culture": "Iranian art has been living in the eastern lands for thousands of years."

Of course, it should be known that Iranian art has penetrated Western Europe in military communications and commercial exchanges since the time of Cyrus, Seljuks and Sassanids, until the 19th century, and it has maintained its presence in the Balkans for a thousand years. Iranian art in the form of ceramics, metal objects, and carpets has been popular in these regions for a long time, and many handicrafts have been transferred to Europe in the past through Armenians and Turkish merchants. The Balkans also witnessed the peak of Iranian Islamic culture in the Middle Ages until the 19th century. In line with the cultural activities of the Friendship Association, books have been published under the following titles:

1. *Iran, light from Alborz*, in Serbian language in Belgrade;

2. *Persian words in the languages of former Yugoslav nations*, in Serbian language;

3. *Dictionary of Islam*, in Serbian language.

According to the mentioned cases regarding the culture of both countries, it was revealed that culturally, a series of macro-cultural codes and specific fundamental cultural values in both countries are valuable and respected in the daily life of people, which causes reactions in communication to be shown more gently by both countries. And this is an important factor for establishing commercial and economic relations, and one of the most important means of showing this is media, cinema and film. It is because of these features that Serbia can be considered as a bridge to establish economic relations with both Serbia itself and some other countries in this situation.[13]

In contrast to the existence of such trends, despite the great potential of the cinema of both countries, especially Iran, there is a lot of free space for productions with the intention and purpose of exporting culture and civilization between the two countries. One of these axes that has remained empty and suffered a vacuum is the representation of the culture of both countries for the youth, which has caused the youth to be alienated from each other's cultures due to their lack of familiarity

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[13] Anahita Jamshid Nejaad (2015), "Work and business culture in Serbia", *Economic World.*

with the models and celebrities and cultural and civilizational names of the countries, and their opponents' efforts to destroy the relations between the two countries. And in this context, paradiplomatic actors are very suitable actors to achieve this issue, which requires that the governments of both countries provide facilities and benefits to cinema and television, so that they can strengthen the cultural soft power and cultural relations of the two countries and create more convergence. In this way, the culture and cultural values of the two countries were shown to both nations more than in the past.

CONCLUSION

Due to the facilities and tools available in all fields of human life, non-governmental actors have become effective. For this reason, it is unjustifiable to hide their effects because cinema and film are one of the most obvious actors who have the ability to influence cultural communication and even governmental policies. One of the countries that can lead to a turning point in the cultural interaction with Iran is Serbia.

Referring to some tendencies of the people of the two countries and the announcement of the authorities of the two countries to have more cultural interaction with each other, we also see the requests of the ambassadors of Serbia and Iran for more cultural and economic interaction. Therefore, it is also obvious that this be done in the form of films, documentaries and joint cultural series to identify the civilization and culture of Iran and Serbia, including all cultural issues in social, religious, family, music, introversion, tourism, etc. The goal should be that the people and the civil society of the two countries develop a stronger interaction with each other and gain awareness about each other, which results in greater convergence and interaction, especially in the field of tourism and then economy.

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FILM AND RECONCILIATION: A CASE STUDY FROM THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Abstract

Systematic violence and reconciliation between and within groups are complex and continuous processes. Unfortunately, a number of movie and series adaptations regarding these issues create a distorted image of the problems societies face in their attempts to reconcile ('black and white' image of the perpetrators and victims, the almost magical catharsis of audience after listening to a lonely hero's monologue, etc.). With these problems in mind, this paper provides a concise overview of the social and psychological factors influencing reconciliation after violence and conflict, focusing on Apartheid in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). At the same time, the movie Country of My Skull will be used as an accurate illustration of scientific contributions of psychologists in creating a better future. In other words, this paper is a combination of theoretical understandings and scenes which capture various psychological factors that either facilitate or hinder mutual understanding, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Keywords: *reconciliation, cinematography, peace psychology.*

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INTRODUCTION

Cinematography was always attracted to the human ability to inflict pain on others. In that sense, a plethora of films as series (Hotel Rwanda, Schindler's List etc.) were created in order to vividly portray the evils of war, genocide, injustice, etc. Unfortunately, screen adaptations of these phenomena can be misguiding because the storyline of the film does not necessarily entail a comprehensive explanation of the context as well as socio-psychological processes underlying systematic violence. Because of that, screen adaptation carries a risk of oversimplification. However, cinematography is an influential societal channel (a medium for distribution of a group's beliefs and values) and, as such, its potential cannot be viewed as purely negative. In this paper, I'll examine the potential of cinematography to accurately introduce a person to various scientific fields. More precisely, I'll provide a case study of a movie called *Country of My Skull*[1] regarding its portrayal of the process of reconciliation from the perspective of peace psychology. With this broad goal in mind, the further text will illustrate the nature and dynamics of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a multifaceted process composed of four key aspects: truth, justice, regard and security.[2] The truth is defined as an exhaustive account of the violent past: support for established conflict narratives that provide only partial information about the suffering are detrimental for reconciliation as they focus only on the grievance of one side. Therefore, the joint search for the truth means that all sides are obliged to provide every detail about the conflict, not just stories about suffering at the hand of their adversary. Justice is the goal which can be reached in different forms: reparation for victims, punishment for the perpetrators, etc. The rationale behind all forms of justice is the need to 'right a wrong': persons and/or groups that suffered need to be helped and those that made them suffer need to answer for those actions. Regard provides a basis for all other aspects of reconciliations because it entails an acknowledgement of one's identity, suffering and humanity. To put it simply, having regard for its adversary means that society views members of the out-group as equal and, therefore, worthy of understanding. Lastly, security is the most concrete aspect of reconciliation because it implies a promise that no more harm will come from the out-group.

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[1] Another title commonly used for the film is *In My Country*.
[2] Kriesberg, L. (2004), "Comparing Reconciliation Actions within and between Countries", in: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 81-110.

Understandably, the four aspects of reconciliation can be achieved simultaneously and to varying degrees, using different means. At the same time, the complex nature of reconciliation means that a number of obstacles can be in the way of its full achievement. In this paper, the focus will be on a particular format for reconciliation – the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in RSA as well as different social and psychological factors that hinder or facilitate commission's work and, in turn, the process of reconciliation.

SETTING THE STAGE: CONTEXT BEHIND THE MOVIE PLOT

In its essence, *Country of My Skull* is a detailed account of the hardships which a divided society faces in the aftermath of its social reconstruction. More precisely, the dramatization of the TRC's work is focused on the latter part of the whole picture. In order to understand how difficult it was to achieve reconciliation in RSA, one must understand the vicious circle of polarisation which a divided society follows.

One must understand that society members' readiness to commit crimes and atrocities against the 'evil other' is a multifaceted process that goes through several stages.[3] First, polarisation among different social lines as well as difficult living conditions caused by possible international isolation creates a situation in which a person's basic needs (safety, health, etc.) are constantly threatened. Unfortunately, a divided society often creates a dysfunctional explanation of this harsh life: a scapegoat subgroup is provided, members endorse various forms of 'better world' ideology, etc. All these different strategies have a common goal: the in-group is glorified, while the out-group is delegitimised. At the same time, broader factors such as obedience to authority, monolithically defined culture (heterogeneity of society is denied), history of social division and unresolved historical grievances provide support for the above-mentioned antagonistic attitudes.

Second, first cases of intergroup violence appear. At first, these are more or less isolated examples, where perpetrators engage in both self-selection (persons who don't support violence distance themselves from the transgressors and/or organisation to which they belong or they are simply suspended) and reassessment of self-image (violence is

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[3] Staub, E. (1993), "The psychology of bystanders, perpetrators, and heroic helpers", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations 17* (3), 315-341.

framed as a necessary means for a greater cause, the perpetrator sees themself as somebody capable of inflicting harm if needed, and the victim as somebody who deserves and can be controlled by this violence). Through repetition of violence, perpetrators 'learn' from their actions: moral principles become inapplicable to victims, a person's psychological prohibitions are rapidly losing force and the violence, in extreme form, can become a goal in its own right.

Lastly, this dysfunctional re-socialisation loses its 'bottom-up' nature and becomes a systematic endeavour. Institutions accommodate themselves to the culture of violence, which the perpetrators see as support from their initial transgressions. Hierarchical organisations based on obedience and power, such as the police and the military, incorporate systematic harm as their third key attribute, while society as a whole normalises violence towards the outcasts. At the same time, evolution of violence is framed and supported by the mentioned dysfunctional attitudes and broader cultural factors.

This was the decades-long context in RSA. In other words, the movie dramatization which focuses on a personal struggle to understand the suffering and to resist the wish for revenge can have a complementary role in understanding how a divided society works and how it lives with its history of internal conflict. With this in mind, the next sections of the paper will focus on reconciliation efforts in RSA, as well as the film's scenes which capture different psychological obstacles to the normalisation of intergroup relations.

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

TRC is a method of reconciliation focused on eliminating various forms of denial and disinformation about the past. In other words, the emphasis is on providing full facts and making them public in order to fully acknowledge the violent past.[4] However, TRC is not meant to replace any legal institution or conduct retributive justice. It should be understood as a complementary method of reconciliation focused on systematic search for facts, creation of a public platform for victims to share their experiences and receive psychological support, stimulating public debate via extensive media coverage and defining reparations and

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[4] Bar-Tal, D., & Bennink, G. H. (2004), "The nature of reconciliation as an outcome and as a process", in: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (ed.), *From conflict resolution to reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 11-38.

institutional reforms in order to promote reconciliation and democracy in society.[5] In other words, TRC is focused on several key activities: witness testimonies, public briefings and the creation of an extensive report that would serve as an instrument against historical revisionism. Nevertheless, the TRC possesses several aspects of a legal organisation: it has a clearly defined mandate and power (i.e. which crimes and in what period are in the focus, what are commission's authorisations etc.).

To put it simply, the primary role of TRC is to enable victims to come to the fore, making their (until recently invisible) suffering public. At the same time, testimonies taken from perpetrators also serve as a source for acknowledgement of victims, because they have to explain their motives for the violence. Meanwhile, mass media coverage serves an effective tool against tendencies to forget or deny victims' pain. In other words, TRC is a platform that motivates a whole society to empathise with the victims.

The film adaptation of TRC's work is a good illustration of several key aspects: mass media coverage, support for victims who come to testify, pressure put on perpetrators regarding their motives as well as controversial formula called 'truth for amnesty' that is characteristic for TRS in RSA. More precisely, perpetrators were pardoned if they provided a full account of their crimes, proved that they were simply following orders and that they didn't have any personal gains from the violence. This formula was the subject of harsh criticism (in the movie and in reality) because many people believed that the perpetrators are simply evading any retributive justice. The issue of amnesty is a problem discussed earlier, regarding the authorisations of TRC and its relation to different channels of institutional justice. However, the movie doesn't cover this issue extensively, but provides a concrete argument for the formula: amnesty is individual and based upon the perpetrator's willingness to critically re-examine oneself and his/her victims. At the same time, the film's extensive coverage of TRC's moto "*THE TRUTH SHALL SET US FREE*" provides a vivid illustration of the moral basis of TRC in RSA. It is the *Ubuntu* philosophy, which enables society to transcend the vicious circle of violence where the victim becomes the perpetrator and vice versa. Through *Ubuntu*, focused is placed on mutual interdependence, acknowledgement of one's humanity and moving beyond social polarity ('us/them' or 'criminal/avenger'). The movie does

[5] Freeman, M., & Hayner, P. B. (2003), "Truth-telling", in: D. Bloomfield, T. Barnes & L. Huyse (eds.), *Reconciliation after violent conflict: A handbook*. International IDEA, 122-139.

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not systematically examine these phenomena, but the use of local cultural resources for reconciliation in addition to more-or-less universal legal institutions is in the focus of research on reconciliation.[6] Hence, the film adaptations can provide a concise overview of some of the issues regarding the work of TRC and the way through which different cultural, social and psychological factors combine in the process of reconciliation. With these insights in mind, the next sections of the paper will focus on TRC's role in reconciliation (and its cinematographic adaptation) from the perspective of several main roles members of a divided society have, given its history of violence: victims, perpetrators and bystanders.[7]

THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE

After decades-long silence, evasion, minimisation and 'semantic deformation', victims' suffering is acknowledged. Because of their testimonies, structures involved in violence cannot engage in denial: the pain has become a part of nation's official history.

Cinematography plays a significant role in portraying just how psychologically charged these testimonies are, because re-experiencing trauma through public speech is extremely hard for the victims. A number of examples are provided in the movie, as people often fall into desperation upon finally learning what happened to their loved ones and are in need of psychological help. At the same time, audience of the film adaptation can even experience personal grief when focusing on certain perpetrators who show no remorse for their crime, but are pardoned because of their minor role.

However, testifying in front of TRC has its immense benefits. Victim become empowered because they demand answers from the perpetrators and they judge whether the apology is sincere. Again, these demands are in line with TRC's main goal: providing closures, healing of trauma and transcending any revenge or 'quick solutions' in order to achieve a long-term reconstruction of society. In other words, through these testimonies, society finally acknowledges victim's pain and helps them to restore his/her self-respect and dignity. At the same time, society

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[6] Baines, E. K. (2007), "The haunting of Alice: Local approaches to justice and reconciliation in Northern Uganda", *The International Journal of Transitional Justice 1* (1), 91-114; Irani, G., & Funk, N. (1998), "Rituals of reconciliation: Arab-Islamic perspectives", *Arab Studies Quarterly 20* (4), 53-73.

[7] Staub, E. (2003), *The psychology of good and evil: Why children, adults, and groups help and harm others.* Cambridge University Press.

is transformed in such a way that would prevent the repetition of silence about similar crimes in the future. In the ideal case, perpetrators not only admit to their crimes, but publicly show remorse: apology is now a part of the public discourse.[8] Such an atonement contains shame and remorse, condemnation of one's behaviour as well as commitment to moral behaviour in the future.[9]

Having this in mind, it is clear why apology is defined as an integral part of reconciliation: in combination with forgiveness, sincere apology represents remorse for the negative past and willing to work for a more positive future. Again, the dramatization of such cases can provide a detailed representation of empathy and emotional catharsis present during testimonies. In other words, movie scenes can be understood as prototypical examples of different stages of atonement: apology (remorse for the act and promise never to repeat it), acceptance of apology (conviction that apology is authentic), asking for forgiveness (implies an appeal for acquittal) and forgiving (releasing the former perpetrator from his/her guilt).[10]

In conclusion, the victim's part in the TRC is as significant as it is complex. However, the dynamics of reconciliation can be fully understood only through examination of the remaining roles other members of society have. In the next section, focus will be on the opposite perspective: the perpetrator and the effect of this role on the TRC's work.

THE PERPETRATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Cinematography has an immense role in vividly conveying various mechanisms through which the perpetrators weaken social (external) control as well as their moral principles and create 'buffers' against self-condemnation. In other words, theoretical and empirical insights regarding the relativization of violence can be portrayed in such a way that a layman can begin to understand the plethora of ways through which the perpetrators become ready to commit crimes, as well as their 'arguments' for justification of inflicting pain on the victims.

There are several broad strategies of negating a crime. The first form is literal denial – denying that the crime even happened. If this is

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[8] Govier, T. (2003), "What is Acknowledgement and Why is it Important", in: C. Prager & T. Govier (eds.), *Dilemmas of reconciliation: Cases and concepts.* Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 65-91.

[9] Gofman, E. (1971), *Relations in public: Microstudies of the Public Order.* Basic Books.

[10] Galtung, J. (2001), "After violence, reconstruction, reconciliation, and resolution", in: M. Abu-Nimer (ed.), *Reconciliation, justice and coexistence: Theory and practice* Lexington books, 3-23.

not possible, the denial of the interpretation is used – the crime is redefined into socially acceptable frameworks (it is not excessive use of force, but the technique of enhanced interrogation, it was a fight against terrorism, etc.). In the end, if it is not possible to deny that the crime took place or that 'something else' happened, then the denial of implications begins – perpetrators start to minimise responsibility, negative consequences, etc.[11]

How do these stages of denial influence the reconciliation process? First of all, because of the TRC's work, literal denial is not possible. Suffering can no longer be hidden – the facade of 'normal everyday life', public secrets, collusion and 'patriotic institutions' has fallen. Therefore, the emphasis is transferred to the relativization of the meaning behind suffering, causes, consequences and responsibility. At the same time, the individualization of responsibility is maintained in the TRC's work: amnesty cannot be given to the hardened perpetrators, who even enjoyed inflicting suffering on the victims.

It is important to note here that the strategies of violence relativization is in line with the nature of social division. More precisely, RSA was institutionally divided along racial lines which means that system as a whole (legal institutions, security forces) had an active role in maintaining these demarcation lines. Therefore, the issue of validity in cinematographic portrayal of social division is analysed with regards to the institutionalised violence by structures with a clear hierarchy (military and police). For example, *Country of My Skull* accurately depicts differences in exonerating strategies used by perpetrators, depending on their position on the hierarchical ladder. For example, the very top of the structure justified itself by saying that the middle and lower levels did not understand the orders and did not have direct control over their execution. Those at the lowest level, ordinary policemen and soldiers, insisted that they were just 'cogs in the machine', that they simply obeyed the orders of their superiors and that everyone did it (insisting on obedience and conformity). On the other hand, the colonel, as the embodiment of the middle level of the hierarchy who understood the vague orders of his superiors and at the same time encouraged the lower levels to violence, does not have this possibility. Therefore, the film adaptation illustrates a number of more subtle techniques related to the relativization of interpretation and implication:

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[11] Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.

- violence as a necessity for the good of the state ('someone has to do the dirty work'),
- denial of the existence of victims (he emphasises that they were terrorists and communists whose goal was to destabilise society),
- accusing the accusers (he considers that the TRC's staff is compromised and that they are the embodiment of the malignant influences against which he fought),
- appeal to a higher loyalty (he is a patriot who served the state),
- insisting on historical (and therefore moral) relativism (he emphasises that what was called service to the state until yesterday is now called a crime, i.e. that he was a hero, but now he is a psychopath),
- insisting that everyone would behave in such a way if they found themselves in the same situation (justification though extreme situational determinism),
- depiction of the conflict as a 'zero-sum' fight[12] (every gain of the opponent is simultaneously 'our' loss).

Broadly speaking, the movie's vivid portrayal of various exonerating techniques used by the colonel are actually a part of the system of societal beliefs (society's reference system that provides meaning to the social reality). For example, previous research[13] illustrated that themes such as security, patriotism and delegitimization of the opponent can become tools through which a society understands the conflict and creates a symbolic prism for its justification and continuation. In accordance to these insights, the colonel insists on the dehumanisation of his opponents, that the survival of the entire society was at stake, that violence was aimed at defending against threats and that he was ready to make the greatest sacrifice for the state. In other words, colonel's self-exoneration should not be simply interpreted as the distorted opinion of a madman. Although he firmly believes in what he says, his reasoning should also be understood (at least in part) as a manifestation of culturally available resources through which group members frame their actions and adapt to the conflict situation.[14]

[12] Kriesberg, L. (1993), "Intractable conflicts", *Peace Review 5* (4), 417-421.
[13] Bar-Tal, D. (1998), "Societal beliefs in times of intractable conflict: The Israeli case", *International Journal of Conflict Management 9* (1), 22-50.
[14] Bar-Tal, D. (2000), "From intractable conflict through conflict resolution to reconciliation: Psychological analysis", *Political Psychology 21* (2), 351-365.; Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.

Although the *post hoc* rationalisations of crimes are portrayed in the movie, the question rises as to why the perpetrators came to that position in the first place (why were they able to commit so many acts of violence). In the film, the influence of three extremely powerful mechanisms of the normalisation of violence was pointed out. The first is routinization – committing a crime makes it easier to repeat it, to the point where it becomes a 'daily routine'.[15] Another mechanism are rhetorical means such as euphemisms and jargon (neutralisation, information extraction, waterboarding etc.). Thanks to them, the perpetrators manage to completely depersonalise the violent act ('I did it to her/him' becomes 'I did it') and to prevent the inclusion of valid social and moral principles in the evaluation of their behaviour.[16] Finally, the importance of active concealment within the institution itself should be mentioned. The members of the group (in the film, the security forces) behave as if nothing criminal is happening, the emphasis is on the uniformity of the group, information is assimilated into strategies of denial, there are tacit agreements about ignorance, while the members are 'bombarded' with socially desirable narratives – myths about the moral principles of the group, descriptions of prototypical members (idols, i.e. role models) etc. Hence, it is not surprising that, through the combination of different mechanisms of justification, an individual who was initially an opponent of violence becomes a person for whom inflicting suffering on victims becomes a daily routine.

Bearing in mind these conclusions, any accurate cinematographic adaptation of TRC's work must follow a number of broad guidelines:

• division is an endeavour in which society as a whole participates,

• the mere nature of institutions involved in violence can provide a basis for a person's justification,

• symbolic repertoire of the society can be manipulated for providing a socially acceptable framework for violence,

• perpetrators differ between themselves in the degree to which they support this dysfunctional framework.

Lastly, a divided society is not a 'black and white' picture composed of only the 'bad guys' and their victims. On the contrary, largest proportion of society is not involved directly in violence as people often

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[15] Kelman, H. C., & Hamilton, V. L. (1989), *Crimes of obedience: Toward a social psychology of authority and responsibility*, Yale University Press.

[16] Arendt, H. (1958), *The human condition*, The University of Chicago Press.

don't fully understand the situation and/or do not actually care because they didn't experience personal harm. With this in mind, it is important to understand the role of the bystander in a divided society.

THE BYSTANDER'S PERSPECTIVE

This is probably the most heterogeneous position in the conflict because people, for a variety of reasons, do not react to the violence that is taking place. Often, the public is not even aware of how and to what extent violence is maintained. People become a part of the so-called public secret – the state between full awareness of the victims' suffering and active participation in the cover-up.[17] However, complete unawareness of what was happening in situations of prolonged, institutionalised violence is very unlikely, so people try to justify their inaction in different ways.

First of all, some bystanders do not participate in violence, but tacitly support it, as several short frames from the movie speak vividly about this. Certain groups of wealthy whites do not participate in the TRC's work, they ignore the information it presents and, essentially, retain all forms of behaviour characteristic of their privileged position in a segregated society. On the other hand, when faced with the undoubted condemnation of their actions, they resort to various 'causal' explanations that are nothing more than a manifestation of the belief about a just world – what happens to you is what you deserve.[18] Simply put, their justifications are very similar to those given by the perpetrators, with the main difference being that passive supporters of violence are trying to justify their inaction.

Second, some bystanders oppose such a state of affairs, but they have done nothing because of the experience of loneliness (phrases such as 'It seems that only I am bothered by this' are common) and helplessness in the face of the power of institutionalised injustice. Again, most bystanders do not fully understand the nature and scope of violence, so the TRC's live broadcasts can pose a traumatic experience for them. The movie touches upon this through scenes of people turning off their radio because they were overwhelmed by victim's stories which were being broadcasted live.

Nevertheless, once the 'institutions of injustice' break down, a number of bystanders takes on a more active role in demanding punishment

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[17] Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.
[18] Lerner, M. J. (1980), *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*, Springer.

for perpetrators and justice for victims. Hence, these are the people who actively participate in the reconciliation process. This is how the main heroine of the film should be interpreted – she paid attention, she did not 'turn her head the other way' and she devotedly participated in discovering the truth. In that sense, another important contribution of *Country of My Skull* to the issue of popularisation of scientific knowledge is the heroine's struggle against the so-called excessive awareness[19] (a condition similar to the burnout syndrome). More precisely, being immersed in the stories of the victims carries with it the risk of living in the past – people who are overly aware of these wrongdoings cannot incorporate them into their life narrative, but instead recreate them anew in the present through an obsession with new painful information, the construction of an image of themselves as a victim and through the desire for revenge.

Again, *Ubuntu* philosophy, as a local cultural resource, appears as a solution in the movie. The purpose of the truth about the past is not revenge, but the restoration of humanity to both victims and perpetrators. In that sense, the heroine interprets the experiences of victims and perpetrators as an integral part of a wider community and of a comprehensive destiny – suffering, shame, grief and forgiveness are different manifestations of mutual dependence of people and their eternal orientation towards each other. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that some experts insist on the resocialization of perpetrators as a necessary step towards reconciliation and social reconstruction of society.[20]

In conclusion, a passive bystander is an indispensable part of a divided society. As long as the privileged minority can provide a socially acceptable context for prolonged division and as long as basic needs of the (mis)informed majority are not fully threatened, people who act against institutional violence are the exception, rather than the rule. Therefore, the reconciliation process needs to include as many members of a community as possible in order to eliminate the risk of indifference and oblivion, once the initial denial is eliminated.

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[19] Cohen, S. (2013), *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, John Wiley & Sons.
[20] Ajduković, D. (prir.) (2003), *Socijalna rekonstrukcija zajednice: Psihološki procesi, rješavanje sukoba i socijalna akcija*, Društvo za psihološku pomoć.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, there are a several key insights regarding the process of reconciliation and its cinematographic depiction that deserve closer attention.

First of all, truth about past injustice must be revealed, because it form a basis for respecting those who suffered in the past (appreciating their pain prevents them from suffering in the future due to social oblivion) and for the fight against revisionism. In other words, the general tendency is that people tend to have a positive image of themselves and in-group, in order to preserve their self-esteem.[21] In this regard, there are many attempts of historical revisionism by politicians, the education system, mass media and other 'identity managers', whose aim is to relativize negative historical facts for the sake of preserving the positive image of the nation.[22]

Second, truth is one of the basic factors of reconciliation. In other words, exclusive reliance on retributive justice or a simple cessation of armed conflict inevitably leads to its re-emergence. Truth, as a process of forming a common interpretation of the past and sharing it among members of all parties of the conflict, is a necessary part of the reconciliation process.[23]

In the end, the film points to one of the extremely powerful mechanisms for bringing the warring parties closer together. It is the existence of the so-called multiple or shared identity. People do not belong to just one group, but simultaneously share membership with others based on their ethnicity, religion, workplace etc. The possibility for warring parties to find a category that will encompass them all is one of the most important tools of reconciliation.[24] More precisely, construing a shared or inclusive identity emphasises the similarities between the members of the opposing parties and mitigates the stubborn insistence on differences. In that sense, the heroine of the film overcomes the malignant

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[21] Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C. (2004), "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict", in: M. J. Hatch & M. Schultz (Eds.) *Organizational identity: A reader*, Oxford University Press, 56-65.

[22] Mammone, A. (2006), "A daily revision of the past: Fascism, anti-Fascism, and memory in contemporary Italy", *Modern Italy 11* (2), 211-226.

[23] Kriesberg, L. (2004), "Comparing Reconciliation Actions within and between Countries", in: Y. Bar-Siman-Tov (Ed.), *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*. Oxford University Press, 81-110.

[24] Nadler, A., Malloy, T., & Fisher, J. D. (eds.) (2008), *The social psychology of intergroup reconciliation*, Oxford University Press.

racial division by identifying herself with her country, that is, together with all sides of the conflict.

Indeed, one can say that the strongest message of both the film and scientific literature is precisely the appeal to find something similar to the side with which we are in conflict with and to try to see them as equal. The heroine did it through love for the country in which she lives. Someone else will try the same thing in a different way. The author of this paper offers the following possibility: *we are all human*.

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CINEMA AS A TOOL OF COGNITIVE WARFARE: THE CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

Abstract

The article analyzes the essence and phenomenon the concept of cognitive warfare and considers its use against states that are trying to maintain their sovereignty in the modern system of international relations, among which the authors note Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, Syria, Belarus, Serbia. On the example of Republic of Serbia, the tools of cognitive warfare are analyzed, the main attention is paid to cinema as the main tool not only in the process of manipulating consciousness, but also in forming a special view of the events of the 1990s on the territory of Yugoslavia. The article provides an authors' analysis of the most famous films about interethnic conflicts on the territory of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and proves that the main message of cinema about the Yugoslav events is not the truthful coverage of historical events, but the formation of a deliberately negative attitude of the viewer both about Serbia and about Serbian people.

Keywords: *cinematography, propaganda, cognitive warfare, NGOs, Serbia, Yugoslavia.*

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INTRODUCTION

The modern world is characterized by a high degree of tension, which manifests itself not only in the 'hot' phase of military conflicts, but also in the field of information confrontation. Information warfare leads not only to short-term escalation of the situation, but also creates the foundation for long-term confrontation and tension between groups of people, states, and civilizations. The latter is based on a set of certain traits and symbols unique to them, and differences are a breeding ground for hostility, and therefore, conflicts between states belonging to different civilizations are inevitable. The main targets of the information wars of the collective West and double standards in reporting events and their analysis are states that are trying to defend their opinions and defend their sovereignty in the modern globalized world. Over the past thirty years since the end of the Cold War, the main targets of the information war have been Russia, Serbia, China, Libya, Syria, Iran, North Korea, Belarus, as well as the governments of states in which 'colored revolutions' were carried out.

As part of information wars, the collective West is actively waging cognitive warfare, the main goal of which is not the direct physical destruction of the enemy, but the introduction into the intellectual environment of both an individual country and the world community of false scientific theories, paradigms, concepts, strategies that influence through new – falsified – meanings and values on political development.[1] In our opinion, the first victim of cognitive warfare at the present stage of development of international relations was Serbia. Throughout the 1990s, a negative image of not only its government, but also the people as a whole was formed in various ways. Since, at that time, the Internet was not available to the general population, the propaganda machine of the collective West used such tools as television, printed articles (newspapers), and books. However, one of the tools that influences the formation of a worldview and attitude towards a particular historical event, according to the authors of the article, is cinema, which has a long-term mechanism of influence.

Thus, the purpose of the article is to analyze the methods and approaches that were used while shooting films about the events of the 1990s on the territory of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to form a negative image of the Republic of Serbia in the context of waging cognitive warfare against this state.

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[1] Е. Пономарева (2016), "Фальсификация истории Великой отечественной войны – технология трансформации сознания", *Обозреватель – Observer 5*, 7.

APPROACHES TO STUDYING THE CONCEPT
OF COGNITIVE WARFARE

The first man who made a certain contribution to the development of the concept of cognitive warfare, in our opinion, was Sun Tzu. In his treatise *The Art of War*, he defined that psychological warfare: "Decompose everything good that is in the camp of your enemy; involve its prominent representatives in criminal campaigns, undermine their prestige; incite quarrels and clashes among citizens of an enemy country; be generous with offers and gifts to purchase information and accomplices; do not skimp on money or promises at all, as they bring rich dividends".[2] Besides, he believed that "all warfare is based on deception". Prussian general and military theorist Carl von Clausewitz noted that the goal of war is to disarm the enemy at any cost; he advocates the unification of the diplomatic, military and all other spheres of government to achieve this goal. Elements of cognitive warfare were already seriously used during the First World War, when initially untrue facts were imposed on the troops of a particular state, which influenced their desire, or rather, lack thereof, to conduct military operations.

The Italian political thinker and strategist Niccolo Machiavelli advised rulers to "never attempt to conquer by force what can be conquered by deceit." One of the first striking examples of information confrontation with clear elements of cognitive influence is the information confrontation between the collective West and Russia; its initial phase dates back to the Russian-Georgian conflict, at the beginning of which the Western world blamed Russia.

With the beginning of the conflict in Donbass, Russia began to pay more attention to the problem of information warfare. NATO also places special emphasis on cognitive warfare. The Strategic Weapons Command website notes that "warfare has changed due to advanced technologies as well as global connectivity. More and more people are unable to distinguish true information from fake news, and improving understanding of the elements of cognitive warfare is a priority for NATO countries." Analyzing this aspect, it should be noted that this department is disingenuous, since it is NATO that prioritizes cognitive warfare, influencing the societies of those countries that they want to subjugate without military intervention (or in a combined approach: military/non-military).

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[2] Сунь-цзы (2022), *Искусство войны*, Москва: Издательство АСТ.

According to the department, cognitive warfare refers to "a mental action or process of understanding involving all aspects of mental function, including subconscious and emotional aspects, that influence a person's decision-making process." Cognitive warfare combines the capabilities of cyber, information, psychological and social engineering. These actions, carried out in synchrony with other influence tools, can influence attitudes and behavior, both individual and group. The Internet and social media are important tools that can inspire demonstrations and civil uprisings (Cognitive warfare, 2023).

The main goal of cognitive warfare is a long-term game. It was this aspect that became decisive in the context of the civil war in Ukraine, the regions of which were pumped with information that could divide society and then push it into a military conflict. We observed a similar situation on the eve of the "colored revolution" in Serbia, when the West set the task of overthrowing the legitimate president, and also today, when unprecedented pressure is being exerted on the Republic of Serbia in the context of Russophobic policies.

Cognitive influence and propaganda are to some extent similar in their goals, however, according to Francois de Cluzel, author of the report "Cognitive Warfare", the goal of propaganda is not to 'program' minds, but to influence attitudes and behavior, forcing people to take the right attitude, which may be to carry out a certain activity.

Cognitive warfare is methodically exploited as a component of a global strategy by adversaries to weaken, interfere, and destabilize target populations, institutions, and states in order to influence their choices in order to undermine the autonomy of their decisions and the sovereignty of their institutions. Such campaigns combine both real and distorted information (misinformation), exaggerated facts and fabricated news (disinformation).

What makes cognitive warfare different from propaganda is that everyone participates, mostly unintentionally, in processing information and generating knowledge. It's a subtle but significant difference. Whereas individuals passively submitted to propaganda, they now actively contribute to it (Cluzel, 2021).[3] If in the context of propaganda people perceived information and simply took a passive position in relation to this or that issue, after cognitive influence individuals themselves begin to actively believe and promote the necessary attitudes.

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[3] F. Cluzel (2021), *Cognitive warfare*, Innovation Hub.

ACTIVITIES OF SERBIAN NGOS IN THE CONTEXT OF COGNITIVE WARFARE AGAINST SERBIA

Cognitive warfare is widely used against the Serbian people. If the collective West waged a cognitive war around Serbia in the 1990s, today it is being waged in Serbia itself. Today, an information campaign is being actively carried out in Serbia regarding the lack of alternative to its Euro-Atlantic foreign policy course, especially against the backdrop of Russophobic rhetoric in the West and in the EU in particular. To do this, it is necessary to 'Europeanize' the thinking and views of the Serbs as much as possible, following the example of the Ukrainians. The main instrument in the implementation of this task are NGOs. From time to time, Serbian NGOs, which operate with Western funds, conduct campaigns in the context of the 'whitewashing' of NATO and its participation in the bombing of Serbia in 1999. Thus, the NGO "Center for Euro-Atlantic Studies" CEAS constantly holds "Belgrade Week" under the slogan "NATO is us". Key topics covered at the events include an analysis of the 'progress' made in Serbia's cooperation with NATO, Serbia's potential role in contributing to the 'stability and prosperity of the transatlantic community'. The center receives support from a number of non-profit organizations, including Open Society Foundation, National Endowment for Democracy, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, as well as from the European Commission, the diplomatic department of NATO, the OSCE, the embassies of Norway, the USA, and the Netherlands. Serbia is under serious pressure in the context of propaganda. Thus, the Center for Humanitarian Law, which is based in Belgrade, said that Serbian school textbooks biased the history of the state, portraying Serbs as the main victims of war crimes and ignoring other ethnic groups. Studies have allegedly shown that modern history lessons give the younger generation a one-sided view of the problem. In the Serbian case, the younger generation, which has not witnessed NATO's military aggression, can easily accept the Western version of those events, which in the future can lead to a fleeting and deep 'Europeanization' of Serbia.

The collective West spares no expense in this process. Thus, the European Commission plans to allocate about 5 million euros to finance the EU National Resource Center for civil society organizing in Serbia. The project provides formation of a controlled network of NGOs and the preparation of the country for accession to the EU. Specific activities under the EU's proposed plan to strengthen the influence of Serbian NGOs can be divided into three parts: training and coaching for

local civil society organizations; building an infrastructure for financing NGOs. One of the possible options is the creation of NGO hubs that will directly distribute funds received from the EU; Specific areas of interest have been identified in which Serbian NGOs will be financially supported. We are talking about the policy of competition development, consumer rights, agricultural and transport policy, problems of urbanization and rural development.[4]

The United States also provides funding to local NGOs. If we analyze the policies of USAID, this organization allocated the following funds: in 2001 – 99 million dollars (of which 43 million were for the development of democracy, 28 million for education); in 2002 – 89 million dollars (development of democracy 51, 18 – economic development, education fell to 7 and in subsequent years education funding only decreased); in 2003 – $95 million (65/25); in 2004 – $76 million (60/10); in 2005 – $68 million (41/19); 2016 – $33 million (8/2); 2017 – $22 million (6/4); 2018 – $19 million (8/2); in 2019 – $44 million (20/12); in 2020 – $41 million (17/6); in 2021 – $24 million (7/7); 2022 – $41 million (17/6).[5] As in case of Ukraine after the colored revolutions and the bringing of their supporters to power, Western funds sharply reduced the amount of assistance allocated for the development of the so-called third sector.

During the Yugoslavia conflicts, serious work was done to demonize the Serbian people. In 1992, American journalist Peter Brock processed 1,500 articles from newspapers and magazines published by various news agencies in the West and came to the conclusion that the ratio of publications against the Serbs to in their favor was 40:1.

Foreign Affairs journal published an article by David Gompert, former director of the European Division of the National Security Council, in which "he proposes to subject Serbia to isolation and poverty for years, if not decades, to keep it in quarantine until the virus that it carries within itself is purged. Serbs should be treated like lepers." English military expert James Gow believes that "Serbian nationalism is a hissing snake on the chest of the world community." And Richard Holbrooke called the Serbs "bloodthirsty bastards" and that Serbia and Montenegro did not receive global recognition because they were not civilized enough to be allowed into the world community. Jerusalem University philosopher Shlomo Avineri believes that after 1945, the Germans were able to return to the community of civilized nations not only because the

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[4] *Создать отряд сторонников: Евросоюз выделит 4,8 млн евро на сербские НКО* (2022, 18 июля).

[5] *Foreign assistance dashboard* (2023), foreignassistance.gov

Allied occupation gave them a democratic structure, but also because they were forced to acknowledge the horrors committed in their name against Jews and others, and that such a fate awaits the Serbs.[6]

Former State Secretary Albright played a special role in starting the conflict. As Sunday Times writes "Albright was the leader of the conspiracy. In an interview with the BBC, she, in company with Rubin and the leader of Albanian terrorist gangs, Tachi, admitted that the conspiracy against Yugoslavia was organized and carried out by them. The beginning of the conspiracy, as Tachi said, was the murder of four Serbian policemen organized by the conspirators in December 1998 in the village of Račak. And when the Serbian police responded by clearing the area in which the bandits were hiding, it was State Secretary Albright's turn to act. In the same interview, she said "that these events needed to be developed and revived."

An equally influential tool for demonizing the Serbian people are history textbooks in Croatia and BiH, which cover the causes and course of interethnic conflicts. In particular, "if we summarize the main content of Croatian textbooks, we can see that all the problems of the Croatian people come directly from the Serbs, who allegedly interrupted the thousand-year-old Croatian statehood in 1918. The Great Serbian hegemonic policy oppressed the Croats nationally, politically, culturally and economically like none before, and the proclamation of the Independent State of Croatia in 1941 was based on the aspirations of the Croatian people, and individual persecutions of the Serbian population in it were only a reaction to the previous Great Serbian policies, and also the emergence of rebels who could not come to terms with the creation of a Croatian state".[7]

In our opinion, nevertheless, one of the important tools that is used in the context of cognitive warfare and historical politics is cinema. In the 1990s, the phenomenon of cinema was actively used in the context of cognitive warfare. The phenomenon of cinema is studied mainly by representatives of cultural studies and art history. The interest of political scientists in this method of forming public opinion is quite low due to the lack of perception of cinema as an element of information warfare. To the average person, the main mission of cinema is entertainment. However, this is a misconception, which is what creators of films of a certain genre take advantage of.

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[6] Г. Энгельгардт (2000), *Воислав Коштуница: Сербы и Запад.*

[7] М. Бабич (2023), *Сербский вопрос на переломе эпох*, Воронеж: Центрально-черноземное книжное издательство.

Cinema has a greater advantage over traditional media in the context of information warfare, since television and cinema set normalized thoughts. Consequently, one of the simplest ways to process the most diverse segments of public opinion is to create a series of long-term information products united by a common theme and ideological guidelines.[8]

According to the German sociologist of mass culture Siegrif Kracauer, "cinema has two functions: to display the surrounding reality and to create a new one".[9] V. Lenin once argued that "of all the arts, cinema is the most important for us."

Cinematography, with clear programming, can be a fairly successful propaganda tool. It actively generates an idealized illusion of the world in the viewer's mind. The most important property of films, which allows them to be used as a means of propaganda, is their ability to influence people secretly, subconsciously. This is where emotional resonance is needed, since its first rule is: you need to influence a person on an emotional level, not on a conscious one.

Modern filmmakers, particularly the ones in Hollywood, are actively engaged in rewriting history. Cinematic lies are usually based on real events, but with a director's different interpretation. Thus, modern cinema uses in its approach the propaganda technology of J. Goebbels, according to whom "a lie repeated a thousand times becomes the truth". This technique is overwhelmingly used by politicians and journalists, influencing public consciousness. In this context, a certain attitude of society towards a particular event is formed, which can be beneficial to the authorities, the state, or a group of states. However, a news program or newspaper article has a short period of impact, since today's news becomes tomorrow's history, which society does not strive to remember. Therefore, in our opinion, one of the long-lasting approaches to influencing public consciousness and perception of historical events in the context of cognitive wars is cinema.

The vast majority of anti-Serbian films were released in the 1990s and were 'great help' for intensifying anti-Serbian rhetoric in the world media. The authors of the article analyzed a number of films retelling the events of military conflicts in the Yugoslavia area. Conventionally, we divided these films into two groups: 1. those filmed in the period between

[8] К. Базаев (2013), "Возможности кинематографа в реализации информационного противоборства", *Известия Саратовского университета. Серия Социология. Политология*, Т. 3 (2), 90.
[9] У. Артамонова (2020), "Американский кинематограф как инструмент публичной дипломатии США", *Анализ и прогноз, Журнал ИМЭМО РАН 2*, 110.

the collapse of the SFRY and Western aggression against Serbia in 1999; 2. those filmed after the aggression of the Western coalition in 1999.

The authors of the article selected the most famous films, namely:
First group:
1. Vukovar (1994);
2. Welcome to Sarajevo (1997);
3. Perfect Circle (1997);
4. Snipers (1998);

Second group:
1. Saving Harrison (2000);
2. It's Like I'm Not There (2007);
3. In the land of honey and blood (2011);
4. Halima's Path (2012);
5. Quo Vadis, Aida? (2020)

Within the framework of this article, there is no semantic load in the retelling of the content; we are interested in analyzing the subject composition of these films from the point of view of using them as a tool of cognitive influence.

Table 1. Films of the first group:

Archetype	Vukovar	Welcome to Sarajevo	Perfect Circle	Snipers
aggressor	collective image	Serbian army	Serbian army	Serbian army
victim	civilian population	Bosnian civilian population	Bosnian civilian population	Bosnian civilian population
defender	the population takes care of itself	an international team of journalists trying to bring information to the world about the situation in Bosnia	Bosnian civilian militias	Bosnian civilian militia
scene	Vukovar	Sarajevo	Sarajevo	Sarajevo
main character	Croatian woman married to a Serbian	team of journalists	a Bosnian who remained in Sarajevo and did not want to leave for fear of being shot because of his belonging to the Muslim faith	Bosnian, shooting champion, played for the Yugoslav national team, defending his family

main criminal	the guilt of the opposing armies is blurred, the emphasis is on criminal groups operating in wartime	collective image of a Serbian soldier	collective image of the Serbian army	Serbian, a shooting champion who became a sniper in the Serbian army and kills civilians
elements of enhancing cognitive influence	at the end of the film, drunk and happy Serbian soldiers are shown, looking more like representatives of a criminal gang than an army against the backdrop of a destroyed city	the film begins with footage of the execution of a Serbian wedding, however, the director deliberately does not indicate the nationality of the participants in the procession, the viewer may unwittingly think that they were shot by Serbian soldiers; documentary chronicle with footage of R. Mladić, who declares that they will only contribute to the withdrawal of the civilian population and immediately shows footage of killed civilians; documentary chronicle of George Bush, who declares that there is no point in discussing anything with Serbian terrorists	at the beginning and end of the film there are shots of the vast territory of cemeteries where civilians are buried	phrase – based on real events, during the film a real documentary chronicle with R. Karadzic is given to strengthen the viewer's negative opinion about the Serbs
production	SR Yugoslavia, Italy	USA, UK	France	Canada, UK, USA, Hungary

awards	Jerusalem International Film Festival – Mediterranean Film Award for Peace and Tolerance; Moscow International Film Festival – Audience Award; Best feature film at international film festivals in Newport Beach, Santa Barbara; St. Louis, Tromsø International Film Festival – Import Award	nominated for the Palme d'Or	Cannes: François Chalet Prize	Peabody Award
IMdb rating	7.1	6.7	8.1	7.1

Table 2. Films of the second group:

Archetype	Save Harrison	It's like I'm not there	In the land of honey and blood	Halima's Path	Quo Vadis, Aida?
aggressor	Serbian army	Serbian army	Serbian army	Serbian army	Serbian army
victim	civilian Croatian population	Bosnian civilian population	Bosnian civilian population	Bosnian civilian population	Bosnian civilian population
defender	Croatian army, seriously inferior to the Serbian	missing, shows the hopelessness of the civilian population	missing, shows the hopelessness of the civilian population	missing, shows the hopelessness of the civilian population	UN contingent, but absolutely helpless
scene	Croatian cities	Bosnia	Sarajevo	Bosnian village	Srebrenica
main character	a journalist's wife who went looking for her husband	Bosnian teacher	Bosnian woman	Bosnian woman searching for her husband and son who were shot	Bosnian woman, teacher, tries to save her husband and sons

main criminal	collective image of the Serbian army	Serbian soldiers	Serbian soldier who was in love with the main character before the outbreak of hostilities	with the Serbian asshole who shot the husband and son of the main character	with the Erbian army
elements of enhancing cognitive influence	documentary chronicle with S. Milosevic and his statements about clashes with the Croatian army, footage of the advance of the Serbian army through Croatian cities, Croatian refugees, senseless murders and violence against the civilian population by the Serbian army	phrase – based on real events, scenes are shown of the mass execution of the male population, Bosnian women are kept as sex slaves	scenes of mass executions of Bosnian men	phrase – based on real events, scene of Muslim men being shot by Serbian soldiers, scene of a cemetery with a huge number of graves	R. Mladić promises to provide a green corridor for civilians, but the final scene shows the moment with the loading of Bosnian men into trucks, followed by their removal and execution
production	France	Ireland, Sweden, Macedonia	USA	Croatia, Slovenia, BiH	BiH, Austria, Romania, Holland, Germany, Poland, France, Norway, Turkey
awards	San Sebastian Film Festival – Best Cinematography, CEC Award Award for Best Film, International Catholic Film Award	Golden Globe Award, Independent Spirit Award, three prizes at the Venice Film Festival	Won Sarajevo Film Festival, 23rd Producers Guild of America Awards, NAACP Image Awards	Grand Prix of the X Kazan International Muslim Film Festival	World Catholic Association for Communication Award "Best Film" from the European Film Academy, Brian of Nazareth Award (Venice Film Festival)
IMDb rating	7.0	7.2	4.7	8.0	8.0

CONCLUSION

In the above-mentioned films, the overwhelming majority of the protagonists-aggressors is a man (association with the Serbian army), the woman is the main victim (association with the civilian population, which is weak and does not have the ability to defend itself). Thus, the directors initially relay the message in the consciousness of the viewer that the civilian population did not have a chance to survive in a clash with armed soldiers, i.e. Serbia is shown in an initially more advantageous position compared to other republics of the SFRY, especially BiH. However, the Croatian side also took part in the war in BiH, as well as radical Islamists, from whom the Serbian population suffered. Thus, out of 56 Serbian villages in BiH, 54 were destroyed, however, this fact does not attract the attention of filmmakers.

Thus, we can conclude that the collective West and Serbian NGOs are using various methods to wage cognitive warfare against the Serbian people. One cannot but agree with the professor of Serbian literature Milo Lompar, who believes that "the idea of Serbian guilt for the collapse of Yugoslavia is cultivated in the Serbian public consciousness".[10] This thesis is confirmed by the films that were analyzed. Also, given the fact that a large number of films have been made specifically about the events in BiH, the idea of "genocide" of the Bosnian Muslim population by the Serbian army is being cultivated. Serbian NGOs, which operate with financial assistance from Western funds, are actively promoting the idea among Serbian youth about responsibility towards Bosnians, Croats and Kosovo Albanians so that subsequently the new generation of Serbs will calmly accept this imposed fact and recognize their responsibility officially.

In our opinion, cinema is the most powerful weapon of cognitive warfare, since it is more durable than newspaper articles and statements by politicians. Along with the education system and history lessons, it is possible to change the view of an entire generation on certain events, to provide a different interpretation, as happened in Ukraine.

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[10] М. Бабич (2023), *Сербский вопрос на переломе эпох*, Воронеж: Центрально-черноземное книжное издательство, 11.

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"KILL THE RUSSIAN... IN YOURSELF"[**] IMAGES OF DONBASS, RUSSIA, AND RUSSIANS IN MODERN UKRAINIAN CINEMA

Abstract

The article analyzes the ideological foundations of the policy of historical memory in Ukraine. Its political and spiritual roots are revealed: the Austrian (Austro-Hungarian) customers of the Ukrainian project. In post-Maidan Ukraine, cinema is the most important element in the "education" of younger generations. The polls of Ukrainian feature films on a "Russian" theme are shown and analyzed. The polls are anti-Russians (Russians are barbarians and enemies of civilization); and anti-Russia (Russians can be "good", Russia is always terrible and aggressive).

Keywords: *historiography, Kievan Rus, Galician Rus / Galicia, post-Maidan Ukraine, cinema, politics of historical memory, Euromaidan.*

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[**] The title of this article is not ours. This was the name of Vera Kuzmina's documentary film (full title: "Killing the Russian in Yourself. The Great Ukrainian Myth"), created by TVC in 2009.

MYTHOLOGY IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SCIENCE: ON THE IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE POLICY OF HISTORICAL MEMORY IN UKRAINE

From the first days of Ukraine gaining independence in December 1991, at the time of the collapse of the USSR, the process of forming the mythology of the independent Ukrainian state and the Ukrainian nation began. But this process gained especially high intensity after the victory of the so-called Euromaidan or "revolution of dignity". Let us note that in Serbian academic circles the study of the phenomenon of the new, post-Maidan Ukraine began very quickly. The basis of the official Ukrainian historiography, as well as the policy of historical memory of post-Soviet Ukraine, was the mythologized theory of the ancient "Ukraine-Rus" by Mykhailo Grushevsky. Grushevsky's theory postulates the existence of a Ukrainian people, distinct from the Russians, already in the middle of the 1st millennium. She interprets the history of Ancient Rus' as the history of Ukraine-Rus, although the ethnonym "Ukrainian" becomes known no earlier than the end of the 19th century. Old Russian and foreign (Byzantine, Arab, Khazar, Arab Western European) sources say nothing about the ancient Ukrainians and Ukraine and unanimously use the ethnonym Rus / Ros.

M. S. Grushevsky was a professor at Lvov University (the city of Lvov, the informal capital of Galicia, was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1772) in the 1890s. During the civil war in Russia, he was one of the leaders and main ideological inspirer of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the Ukrainian nationalist project. The customers of Grushevsky's works during his activity as a professor at Lvov University were the authorities of Austria-Hungary. It is no coincidence that many fellow historians, including those who personally knew Grushevsky, accused him of scientific charlatanism, extreme bias, juggling information from historical sources and the priority of political tasks over scientific ones. By analogy with the term folk history, Grushevsky's historiographical heritage can be characterized as politicized history. As modern authors rightly note, "Ukrainian nationalism needed an ideological justification for its activities, which would be based on a scientific and historical platform. Soon it was published in the works of an associate professor at Kiev University, a Russian citizen M.S. Grushevsky, invited by the Austrian authorities to teach at a department

opened especially for him at Lvov University. There he was provided with serious financial resources".[1]

All of the above did not prevent Grushevsky from receiving pardon from the Soviet government in the 1920s and making a brilliant scientific (and political) career in the USSR. He received the title of Academician of the USSR Academy of Sciences and excellent opportunities for the work of the scientific school he headed. Thus, in the early USSR, Grushevsky's nationalist and mythologized concept received official status, despite its anti-Russian and Ukrainian nationalist orientation. Subsequently, it was somewhat corrected and softened. In Soviet historiography and ethnography, the concept of the existence of albeit close, but still different nations (ethnic groups) prevailed. Thus the theory of "brotherly East Slavic peoples – Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians" was born. It continues to dominate modern Russian historical science, reflected in history textbooks.[2]

On the contrary, in Ukraine, after the victory of the Euromaidan in February 2014, the radicalism of assessments regarding the common roots and common history of Russians and Ukrainians only increased. And again, the authorities set the tone. According to modern researchers, it is no coincidence that the first legislative act of the new revolutionary authorities of Ukraine was the abolition of a relatively soft law on language (the so-called Kivalov-Kolesnichenko law). It made it possible to receive education in Russian and languages of national minorities.[3] The attack on the Russian language began simultaneously with the attack on the common history of Russians and Ukrainians (Little Russians, Galician and Ugric (Hungarian) Russians). And cinema plays an important role in this war.

To what extent has this revaluation of common roots and common history taken radical forms, and in what direction(s) is Ukrainian public consciousness moving? To answer these questions, let's look at several examples from the history of modern Ukrainian cinema. The chronological framework by which we selected the material is from 2014 to the present. The starting date was chosen for the reason that after the

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[1] М. Григорьев, В. Дейнего, А. Дюков, С. Засорин, А. Малькевич, С. Манько, В. Шаповалов (2023), "История Украины", *Международные отношения*, 205.

[2] See for example: А. Сахаров, В. Буганов (1995), *История России с древнейших времен до конца XVII века*, Учебник для 10 класса общеобразовательных учреждений, 277-279.

[3] See for example: Э. Попов (2020), "Русский язык и постсоветская Украина: история и современное состояние проблемы", *Язык и идентичность. Язык, литература и славянские идентичности в XVIII-XXI веках, Белград, Аспекты, 282-301.*

victory of the so-called Euromaidan (in the official Ukrainian interpretation – the "revolution of dignity") on February 21-22, 2014. A wave of response swept through the eastern and southern regions of the then Ukraine: the proclamation of people's republics (Kharkov, Odessa, etc.). This was a reaction to the radically anti-Russian in goals and Nazi in methods plans and actions of the regime that arose after the coup d'etat. It was organized by the United States and a number of European Union countries. However, only two republics managed to resist: Donetsk and Lugansk[4], as well as the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The war with the "separatists" of Donbass and Russia supporting them became the main theme of the social and cultural life of post-Maidan Ukraine. It could not but be reflected in cinema.

This article will use the method of comparative analysis of those assessments (concepts) that are used in modern Ukrainian cinema in relation to Russians and Russia. For convenience, let's take the extreme poles of these assessments and trace their competition and the degree of psychological impact on the audience.

"RUSSIAN SUBHUMANS"

This concept of the inferiority of Russians (Russians are sub-Slavs; Russians are subhuman) was borrowed by Ukrainian propaganda from the German (Nazi) "big brother". It is based on Adolf Hitler's idea of the inferior Slavic race, expressed in his book Mein Kampf. Ukrainian cinema was not a "pioneer" in exploiting this thesis. This principle of depicting Russians began to be used immediately after the collapse of the USSR in the cinema of the Baltic countries – dwarf states (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania). It built their policy of creating identity on openly Nazi Russophobia. Ukrainian filmmakers following this path of depicting Russians are simply using the experience and achievements of their predecessors – their Baltic colleagues. In turn, they adopted the theses of Nazi propaganda about the Slavic inferior race.

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[4] The author of this article is probably the first to attempt a scientific understanding of the experience of state building of the people's republics of Donbass and the reasons for their emergence. See: Э. Попов (2017), "Республики Донбасса: особенности политической жизни (на основе экспертных и социологических опросов в ДНР и ЛНР)", *Постсоветские государства: 25 лет независимого развития*, М., ИМЭМО РАН, Том первый, 96-103. Данная статья была дополнена и переведена на английский и вышла в сетевом журнале американской (США) левой (социалистической) оппозиции Greanville Post. См.: E. Popov (2017), "People's Republics: Summing Up the Donbass Socio-Political and Economic Experience", *Greanville Post*, May 8.

A specific example: the film "Shchedrik" (Russ. Щедрик), filmed in 2022 and becoming the fruit of a joint production between Ukraine and Poland. The film is being presented as historical. Allegedly, it is based on actually occurring events.

The film takes place in two time layers: on the eve and during the Second World War and at the end of the 1970s. The place and initial time of action – the city of Stanislavov (now Ivano-Frankovsk), January 1939. A house in the city center, in which three families live: a major in the Polish army, a Ukrainian (husband and wife, musicians in a restaurant) and a Jew. There is some tension early on due to the different ethnic and religious backgrounds of the families. But it soon disappears thanks to Schedrivka, a Christmas song sung by the young daughter of a Ukrainian couple. As a result: families of Poles, Jews and Ukrainians live in the complete idyll.

The frankly sweet story of life before the Nazi-Bolshevik occupation of Stanislavov and all of Galicia does not in any way correlate with historical facts. Or rather, it directly contradicts them. Ukrainians in the cities of Galicia (Western Ukraine) performed the roles of service personnel: janitors, watchmen, doormen, Ukrainian women – prostitutes. All the upper "floors" of the social hierarchy were occupied by Poles and Jews. Numerous sources noted uncompromising and mutual hatred within the triangle "Poles – Ukrainians – Jews". As a result of the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920, which ended with the Peace of Riga in 1921, Western Ukraine (Galicia and Volyn) was included in the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Poland). The Polish state pursued a strict policy of Polonization of the Galician (Russian/Ukrainian) population. It is not surprising that it was the Poles who became the first target of hatred of Ukrainian nationalism. The "Moscow Bolsheviks" and "Russian imperialists" became enemy No. 1 somewhat later as a result of the military-political processes of the late 1930s and 1940s.

Even before the attack of Nazi Germany on Poland on September 1, 1939, the Polish political police noted dangerous fermentation among the Western Ukrainian population and the preparation of fighting forces. "Tension among Ukrainians is growing day by day. Based on information received from Ukrainians, Ukrainians claim that in the spring of 1939, Ukraine will be founded here in the eastern lands. (...). Ukrainians are increasingly expressing hatred towards Poland and the Poles."[5]

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[5] Украинские националистические организации в годы Второй мировой войны (2012), Документы, В двух томах. М.: РОССПЭН, Т. 1, 34.

After the German invasion of Polish territory, combat detachments of Ukrainian nationalists strike at the Polish army. And the civilian population joyfully welcomes the Red Army units that have entered the eastern regions of Poland (the Liberation Campaign of the Red Army, which began on September 17, 1939, to liberate the lands of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus from Polish occupation).

There is none of this in the film. A complete idyll is shown (and frankly sweetly) in the relationships between three mutually hostile ethnoreligious groups of the population of Galicia: Catholic Poles, Uniate Ukrainians and Jews. This idyll is overshadowed by the entry of Red Army units and the "first Soviet occupation" of Western Ukraine.

Against the background of this idyll, Russians are shown grotesquely and even caricatured, represented by members of the NKVD political police and commanders of the Red Army. The latter show completely unmotivated and stupid aggression towards the local Pole just because he called the Russian officer "pan" (master). Although it is known that the instructions for the Red Army required extremely correct and polite treatment of the local population. Polish woman Wanda is arrested by NKVD agents. One of them steals a figurine from a table – typical behavior of a barbarian in a civilized environment. (Note: for such a crime, an NKVD employee would pay not just with dismissal, but with a prison term.) Barbarians are Russians. Civilization is Poles, Jews and, of course, Ukrainians. The Pole major is arrested and taken away in an unknown direction by NKVD agents. His wife Wanda brings the keys to their Ukrainian neighbors, where her little daughter is visiting. The Ukrainian woman does not reveal this fact. The girl stays with her along with her own daughter, and Wanda is also arrested. Later it turns out that she was sent to a camp in Siberia. Then the action moves to July 1941. German occupation. The Ukrainian family empathizes with the Jewish one. The Jew is summoned to the commandant's office. His wife goes with him. The Jewish children remain in the family of Ukrainians, Mikhail and Sofia. The Jewish parents did not return. Thus, a compassionate Ukrainian family adopted the daughters of Jews and Poles. Jews – adults and children – are being led through the streets of the city. A Ukrainian woman sings lullabies to Jewish children and a little Polish girl. Sofia and Mikhail know that the Germans arrest those who hide Jews, but they courageously decide not to extradite them. Sofia and Mikhail talk about hatred of "those Germans." The reason for hatred of the Germans looks unmotivated and unconvincing, in contrast to hatred of the

Russian "barbarians." The Germans are kind and polite, treat people correctly, and give children candy. At the Jewish seven-branched candlestick, the family celebrates the New Year, adopting each other's customs. A Jewish girl thanks the Ukrainians for saving her, Sofia declares: your holidays are not strangers to us. Then the family of a German officer moves into the house – a gallant, polite, cultured and very humane person. A German officer with stripes for wounding is discordant with Russian officers of the NKVD and the Red Army. And his little son develops his first feelings for the little Ukrainian Sofia. The filmmakers do not hesitate to exploit the win-win children's theme and try to evoke tears in the viewer with the theme of childhood suffering. Judging by the reviews of the film from the Ukrainian audience, this technique had an effect on some. But we think these are a completely inexperienced viewers. However, the film "Shchedrik" and similar films are probably intended for such an undemanding audience.

In parallel, the heroic activities of Mikhail are shown, who turns out to be an anti-fascist underground worker... He is also a member of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) – a party of Ukrainian Nazis in contact with the intelligence services of the Third Reich. [6] It is not entirely clear what the "anti-fascist" activities of the Ukrainian Nazi consisted of. But in the film, this hero dies without fear or reproach for his unbending hatred of the "enemy": the Germans shoot him. Obviously, this story was needed as a fact of proof to poorly educated generations of Ukrainians of the myth about the war that the OUN allegedly waged on two fronts: "against Stalin and Hitler."

On the contrary, not a word is said about the collaboration of the leaders and rank and file of the OUN (both factions of this party) with the Nazis. It is also silent about the policy of genocide against the Polish population of Western Ukraine. It was carried out by Ukrainian nationalists with the support of the German occupation authorities. On June 29, 1941, the Red Army leaves Lvov. Ukrainian authorities are instantly formed in the city, and pogrom actions against the Polish and Jewish population begin. And already on June 30, 1941, activists of the OUN (b) (Bandera, one of the OUN factions) proclaimed the Ukrainian State and close cooperation with the "Greater Germany of Adolf Hitler.": "The restored Ukrainian State will closely interact with the National Socialist Greater Germany. Under the leadership of its Leader Adolf Hitler, is

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[6] See: К. Шевченко, Э. Попов (2024), "Сотворение Украины и структурообразующая роль украинского национализма / нацизма", *Международная жизнь*, №1.

creating a new order in Europe and the world and helping the Ukrainian People to free themselves from Moscow occupation".[7] The film does not show the destruction of the Polish and Jewish population of Lvov by Ukrainian nationalists/Nazis from both factions of the OUN. These events were called the Lvov pogrom in historiography. In Lvov, the very next day after the Red Army abandoned the city. The Ukrainian People's Militia (a kind of territorial defense) was created from numerous volunteers. They worked under the control of Bandera. There is evidence of participation of German Einsatz commands in the pogroms and murders of Ukrainian employees. Along with Jews, Lvov Poles became victims of bullying and murder. Also, numerous "volunteers" from local residents took part in the beatings of Jews and Poles. Historians estimate the number of Jewish victims of the first (June 30 – July 2) and second (July 25) at 4-5 thousand people. The number of Polish victims is significantly lower in quantitative terms (several dozen people) but affects the circle of the Polish cultural and scientific elite. The attempts of the OUN (b) to position itself as the "third force" of the Second World War ("between Stalin and Hitler") do not stand up to criticism. The German occupation administration and the Ukrainian People's Militia acted in concert; there were no conflicts between them.[8]

It hardly needs to be said that the liberation of Stanislavov and all of Western Ukraine became salvation for the Polish and Jewish inhabitants who survived the meat grinder of genocide organized by the Ukrainian Nazis and, concurrently, Hitler's collaborators. Historians estimate the number of Polish victims of Ukrainian Nazis in Western Ukraine alone to be approximately 200 thousand people.

To complete the retelling of the film "Shchedrik," we will focus only on three significant episodes for our topic. Episode one: the murder by a Soviet officer with the star of the Hero of the USSR (sic) of a German boy – the son of that same humane German officer. As you might guess, poor Henry was adopted... Yes, yes, the same Sofia, now left alone without a husband to raise her own daughter and adopted Polish and Jewish girls. The murder is completely unmotivated. And it grossly contradicts historical realities. There are known cases when the Soviet

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[7] Степан Бандераи (1941), "Акт проголошення української держави", *Самостийна Украй-ина*, 10 июля.

[8] On the goals of the OUN-b in German-occupied Ukraine, the role of the Ukrainian People's Militia and the violence against the Jewish population of Lvov in July 1941, see: John-Paul Him-ka (2021), *Ukrainian Nationalists and the Holocaust: OUN and UPA's Participation in the Destruction of Ukrainian Jewry, 1941–1944*, 208-245.

military prosecutor's office sentenced Soviet military personnel to death for shooting SS punitive teams from death camps. Only one explanation is possible: the creators of the Ukrainian "masterpiece" wanted to repeat the success of Steven Spielberg in his film "Schindler's List" (the scene of the murder of a Jew trying escaping from an SS officer). But it didn't turn out to be a masterpiece: it turned out to be an artistically unconvincing and scientifically and historically deceitful.

Episode two: the same Soviet officer (a young and very attractive man), during the interrogation of Sofia, a lady of Balzac's age, and very far from the model of female attractiveness... rapes her. More precisely, he tries raping her. The scenes of violence are accompanied by some very remarkable dialogue. A Russian (Soviet) officer shouts at Sofia: "Speak Russian!" And when she answers she taught the children Ukrainian folk songs, he asks in surprise: "What, there is such a people – Ukrainian?" The filmmakers are not embarrassed by the fact that in the USSR there was a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (the second in terms of population and influence of the 15 republics of the USSR), that all teaching in the Ukrainian SSR was conducted in the Ukrainian language (including in the regions of Soviet Ukraine populated by Russians and forcibly incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR by Lenin's government).

The handsome officer begins raping the elderly Sofia. She hits him. The Russian officer is disgraced as a man. The symbolic act of humiliation/subjugation of Ukraine failed – that's what this scene was intended for.

Episode three: Voroshilovgrad (Lugansk), Ukrainian SSR (it turns out there is still a republic of Ukraine in the USSR!), December 1944. Sofia's little daughter, on the orders of the director of the orphanage, is sent to a colony for juvenile delinquents... for fulfilling that same generosity. And Wanda, liberated from Stalin's concentration camp, advises her to go "to her Poland." Which, by the way, was a country of "people's democracy" and received generous territorial gifts from Stalin – the lands of East Germany. As a historian, I'm interested: how many years in Stalin's camps would receive the director of an orphanage for just these words: "go to your Poland!"?

So, using the example of this film, we see in action several theses of the historical mythology being formed in Ukraine:

1. Russians are Asians, barbarians, rapists and murderers, not familiar with the benefits of European civilization. Therefore, they are secretly envious of all "cultured" and "civilized" peoples – Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews.

2. Before the arrival of these Russian barbarians, the peoples of Western Ukraine – Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians – lived in perfect harmony, to the point of sweetness. And they did not kill each other at all and did not pursue a policy of forced colonization and genocide of the Polish and Jewish population.

3. The Germans are only formally considered "bad". They are polite, cultured and civilized. But a question arises, the answer to which we do not find in the film: why do the main Ukrainian characters "hate" them? Perhaps only one explanation is possible: it is necessary to prove the Ukrainian Nazis and Hitler's servants from the OUN are anti-fascists.

4. Stalin's USSR totally denies the existence of the Ukrainian people (and the Ukrainian language, respectively). It is unclear how to connect this statement with the fact of the existence of the Ukrainian SSR consisting of 25 regions (the second largest and third largest union republic in terms of territory) and generous financial injections from the union budget.

5. As it should be in fairy tales, good defeats evil. Moreover, this victory, through the efforts of Ukrainian filmmakers, was translated into a sexual plane: the main villain (a Russian NKVD officer) was never able to take possession of an elderly Ukrainian woman with very (to use the American dictionary of political correctness) alternative female attractiveness.

The general conclusion: the film "Shchedrik" and others like it are a production of the lowest quality. But the film found its audience: an inexperienced, uneducated audience that knew little or nothing about the historical past and the realities of life in Soviet Ukraine. In short, the film is aimed at the consumer from the mass society described by Ortega y Gasset. And this is the largest target group for film consumers in the modern world.

Let's be fair to Ukrainian filmmakers, who lack honesty and even a minimum of talent: the shelves of Soviet film studios were full of products of almost the same low quality. First of all, the Kiev Film Studio named after A. Dovzhenko. Which, during the years of Soviet power, made bad and unconvincing films about the crimes of Bandera's followers, only to switch to the release of films about Bandera heroes immediately after the collapse of the USSR.

But, to the credit of Ukrainian cinema, there are examples of a different kind. Which do credit, if not to the honor of their creators, then at least to their talent.

As a rare example of talented cinema on such a sensitive topic, let's name the film "Cyborgs" with the subtitle: "Heroes Don't Die" (2017). The film opens with credits in Ukrainian, which tell about the Ukrainian military being under siege at the Donetsk airport.

One of the heroes ("cyborgs") speaks Russian. His speech is dubbed in Ukrainian. The pathetic speech of the Ukrainian military to television journalists: "We will not surrender the airport. All of Ukraine is behind us!" The airport, by the way, was handed over. The pathetic speech was continued by a TV journalist with a nondescript appearance.

The film contains clichés known since the time of classic American westerns: the noble White (Ukrainian) – the vile (and cruel) Indian (Russian). As befits a White (Ukrainian), he bears the burden of a White man. And he is not surprised by the meanness and cruelty of the enemy. Also, in accordance with the canons of the genre, guys in White Hats always defeat guys in Black Hats.

But it must be admitted that the film contains a very serious and partly sincere (albeit not fully completed) reflection. And this is the most interesting part of the film.

This is the part of the film that contains discussions about the motives of the film's protagonists (why are they here?). Especially, that fragment of the film in which the dialogue between Friend and Alien is shown.

Motivation of the heroes: "Those who kill our guys. Who violated our borders. Russians are geeks." The commander's question: "Are you aware there are Ukrainians among them?" Answer: "What Ukrainians they are! Ukrainians love Ukraine." "Why is it that the government, or the neighboring power, is not allowing us to live? (…) I listened to that nonsense about "brotherly peoples", when the fraternal people dictate what you should do." "We are fighting not only with Russians, but also with Kadyrov's men. With Ukrainians too. We should be here. And we should know our history, since we are here." They talk about Russians who take what belongs to others. Gogol, for example. "Gogol worked with them to exalt the incomprehensible Russian soul. And Gogol is not the only one who worked for a foreign power.

So, who are these cyborg heroes who don't die?

The film features six main protagonists. But for the purposes of our analysis, only three of them are important. So:

1. The commander of the unit, Serpen, is a Ukrainian nationalist and Galician, a cynic and a revolutionary in spirit. He speaks Ukrainian.

2. Zubov, a professional military man who speaks Russian. Emphatically apolitical.

3. The young volunteer Major – a musician and supporter of European values, who went to war in secret from his rich and influential parents. He recently started learning Ukrainian. He speaks Russian. It is important to emphasize: Serpen and Major are participants in the Euromaidan.

So, three characters and three motivations, three answers to the question: "Why am I here?" The motivation that unites all the protagonists of the film: "Those who kill our guys. Who violated our borders. Russians are geeks."

"Why is it that the government, or the neighboring power, is not allowing us to live? I listened to that nonsense about "brotherly peoples", when the fraternal people dictate what you should do."

The commander's question: "Are you aware there are Ukrainians among them?" Answer: "What Ukrainians they are! Ukrainians love Ukraine." "We are fighting not only with Russians, but also Kadyrov's men. With Ukrainians too. We should be here. And we should know our history, since we are here."

This is where the similarities end. Differences and even contradictions begin.

"Gogol worked with them to exalt the incomprehensible Russian soul. And Gogol is not the only one who worked for a foreign power." Please note: in Ukraine it is usually customary to appropriate for ourselves everything that has even the slightest relation to Ukraine. For example, the great designer of spacecraft, the man who launched into space the first artificial satellite of the Earth and the first aircraft with a person on board, Sergei Korolev, is counted as a Ukrainian by official Ukrainian propaganda on the sole basis that he was born on the territory of Little Russia (Zhitomir, Volyn province). The fact that the great Russian writer Nikolai Gogol, a descendant of an old Cossack family, was given to the "Muscovites" speaks of a certain courage and intellectual flexibility of the film's authors.

It is indicative that the creators of "Cyborgs" do not try to retouch the acute disagreements between various groups of Ukrainian patriots. Particularly interesting is the dialogue, which almost leads to a fight, between Serpny and Major.

Here's a fragment:

Major: "The global context (for the Russians – E. P.) was and is. But our Ukrainian context has disappeared, it doesn't exist. We have no myths, no heroes."

Serpen: "What about the Zaporozhye Cossacks?"

Major: "The Zaporozhye Cossacks are already clowns (...) But it's your nationalist community that cannot create anything normal. All this is medieval mothballs."

Serpen (indignantly): "What, what, what?! What about you, when everyone rushed to this mothball when it smelled fried? Shirts and banners were presented.[9] But because you realized that without this mothball you don't exist. Have you been speaking Ukrainian all your life?"

Major (embarrassed): "No."

Serpen: "I know it myself. When it became hard for you, you took your tongue as a weapon to tell everyone that you are Ukrainian."

Major: "You and I have different concepts of good and evil. I want to live in an open, cultural country. You want to create a national reserve."

Serpen: "You want to exchange one yoke for another. I'm talking about real independence, and you are tolerants (supporters of tolerance – E.P.). Open the borders, but don't cry later. At the hour of returning home there will be nowhere to return."

The dialogue remained illegal. Almost leading to a fight, he was interrupted by Zubov, who uttered (in Russian) a significant phrase: "We have destroyed so much of this Horde here that it will be enough for 300 years to come." Let's take a break and summarize the preliminary results.

Before us are three images of Ukrainianness: 1) Serpen – a classic "Svidomo" (correct) Ukrainian from Galicia, speaking Ukrainian and wearing an embroidered shirt (a peasant shirt with ethnographic elements), 2) Major – a "new Ukrainian", speaking mainly Russian (like the overwhelming population of Ukraine), dreaming of a "European Ukraine" and listening to some avant-garde jazz and 3) Zubov, a pure pragmatist, a man with an emphasized Russian surname and speaking Russian – and killing Russians in cold blood.

CONCLUSION

We acknowledge the intellectual courage of the filmmakers: to so openly acknowledge acute discrepancies and even contradictions is worthy of a certain respect. Of course, the creators of "Cyborgs" do not reach the complete honesty of the creators of the epic film "Beautiful Villages

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[9] Serpen is referring to the so-called embroidered shirts – peasant shirts with embroidered Little Russian ornaments, a symbol of belonging to Ukraine.

Burn Beautifully." But Srdjan Dragojević's film is a powerful war drama, while Cyborgs is just an action film with elements of a war drama.

However, what has been said is quite enough to see: in this unassuming at first glance militants, deep layers of the conflict in Ukraine emerge. Which is a conflict within the Russian people. And the fact that the most ruthless and cold-blooded killer and hater of Russians ("Hordes") turns out to be a man with Russian roots, bearing a Russian surname and speaking Russian speaks of the well-known veracity of the film. The author of this article has been studying modern Ukrainian nationalism for many years. And at the turn of the 2000s-2010s I came to the conclusion: the epicenter of Ukrainian nationalism is moving from the traditional Galician center ("Lvov – the Piedmont of Ukrainian nationalism") to the Russian language and culture of Kharkov (and, in general, the Russian East and South of Ukraine).[10] The material on the basis of which the film "Cyborgs" was prepared and made only confirmed – in the language of culture – the scientific conclusion of the author.

The film also contains a very interesting dialogue between Serpnya and a captured militiaman of the Donetsk People's Republic. Moreover, the "separatist" is shown as a courageous, proud opponent, a man with his own truth. This dialogue is one of the most interesting fragments of the film (along with the triallogue of Major, Serpnya and Zubov). Perhaps we are mistaken, but this scene reminded us of the scene of explanation in the cave of the main characters of the film "Beautiful Villages Burn Beautifully." It is possible the creators of the Ukrainian film were guided by the above-mentioned masterpiece of Srdjan Dragojević – one of the most honest and profound war dramas of world cinema. But still, the Ukrainian filmmakers lacked honesty: in the finale, the "separatist," nobly (or cynically?) released by Major and Serpnya, dies at the hands of his own. The laws of the propaganda militant prevailed. In the end, the war drama did not work out.

So, in "Cyborgs" the confrontation between Ukrainians and Russians, Ukraine and Russia is shown by fundamentally different artistic means than in the primitive craft "Shchedrik." It's probably no coincidence that "Cyborgs" became the leader in film distribution in Ukraine. It would be dishonest to deny its creators talent and civic integrity – however, up to a certain point. The creators of "Cyborgs" did not live up to the cinematic standard – the Serbian film "Beautiful Villages Burn

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[10] See: Э. Попов (2010), "Новые тенденции в современном украинском национализме", *Проблемы национальной стратегии*, №3; К. Шевченко, Э. Попов (2024), *op. cit.*

Beautifully" with its "idols of the cave." And to the literary heights of "Cossacks" and "Sevastopol Stories" by Leo Tolstoy, which show the truth on both sides of the barricades. But in the film there is no total and stupid primitivization of Russians as in the primitive "Shchedrik" and similar films. The images of Russians and Russia are fundamentally different. This is an enemy – and a deadly enemy. But the enemy is not primitive and is strong. I think we will not be mistaken in drawing the conclusion to which the creators of "Cyborgs" lead the viewer: Russians and Russia are Asia, which always strives to absorb what is alien. Not only to possess the body, but also to subdue the soul.

The space and concept of the film provide their answer to the question: why is it possible to be a Russian Ukrainian and fight against Russia? And hate Russia. Unlike "Shchedryk," the creators of "Cyborgs" do not demonize Russians (the example of the Ukrainian patriot Zubov) and do not idealize Ukrainians (on the "other" side, Ukrainians are fighting against cyborgs, and the "cyborgs" themselves admit the well-known inconsistency of the Ukrainian project). The question is transferred to a different plane: weak Ukrainians who have lost their identity – and beautiful Ukraine; strong, persistent and undoubtedly talented Russians – and the terrible "Asian" Russia. Russia is a kind of Carthage that must be crushed to the point of complete destruction. And to do this, among other things, with the hands of the Russians themselves.

The political doctrine of the new generation of Ukrainian nationalism (Nazism) is retold here in the language of cinema. Ukrainian Nazism, which speaks Russian.

Translated by Dajana Lazarević

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MODERN MOTION PISTURES AND TV SERIES AS TOOLS OF SOFT POWER

Abstract

The article highlights examples of the use of soft power in films and serial content using the example of the USA, Russia and some countries of the post-Soviet area. The author makes a conclusion that this usage is influenced by government regulations and efforts of subjects in the sphere of production and purchases of entertainment content. The combination of these factors results in the production of content that carries out the desired narratives.

Keywords: *entertainment content, TV, soft power, cinema, motion pictures, TV series.*

If by hard power we mean force or, as it is be called nowadays, 'kinetic' influence, then all methods of sociocultural influence – cinema, theater, literature, arts in general – should undoubtedly be classified as soft power. However, if we consider the methods and degrees of sociocultural impact on society,[1] it will become obvious that 'the degree of softness' of content are not the same.

In Russian on- and off-the-air TV broadcast programs since spring 2022 till spring 2023, a significant increase in socio-political broadcasting in comparison to entertainment broadcasting (both TV shows and series) has become obvious. It seems logical that at the acute moment of open confrontation between Russia and forces of the united West represented by Ukrainian proxies, the Russian audience was craving for detailed

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[1] Зоран Милошевић (2021), *Светост и дух времена*, Београд: Институт за политичке студије.

information and explanations of ongoing processes, which was brought out by information and analytic television programs which differed in directness and power of influence on the audience. We consider such types of sociocultural influence to be the hardest of the palette of soft power, to which various types of arts in general belong.

Starting from the spring of 2023 onwards, the broadcasting of socio-political content began to gradually move towards ratings preceding the start of the special military operation, giving more space in all types of broadcast to entertainment content and, in particular, feature and TV series content. Thus, at the conference "Media Space 2023: Trends and Transformations", Ksenia Boletskaya, Director of Business Relations at "Yandex", said: "If in 2021-2022 Russia fought for leadership with the United States – both countries produced about 30% of the most popular TV series, then already in March 2023, domestic (Russian) films occupied 43% of the top index. The share of American TV series dropped down to 22%. The third place is kept by Japanese content (14%), the fourth is Turkish (7.5%). South Korean TV series (3%) close the top five". According to unconfirmed data, the number of original Russian TV series released in 2023 is 241 projects.[1]

The content analysis of Russian feature films and TV series lies beyond the scope of this article, so we will only note that values and constants stated inside the content, which, while being quite various, still demonstrates the continuation of the trend that we described back in 2020.[2] In the present article, we will use some examples of feature films and series soft power.

Divergent impacts of arts on society were noted already by Plato in his dialogue *Republic*. Thus, in the third book, ambiguously, in the author's opinion, examples from the Homer's poetry are given:

"And what about this? Won't our youngsters need moderation?"

"Of course."

"Aren't these the most important elements of moderation for the multitude: being obedient to the rulers, and being themselves rulers of the pleasures of drink, sex, and eating?"

"They are, at least in my opinion."

"So I suppose we'll assert that it's fine to say the sort of thing Diomede says in Homer,

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[1] Igor Maltsev (2023), "The Frontline is At the Proper Spot", *Telegraph*, December 31.

[2] В. Л. Дубровин, С. Н. Комиссаров (2020), "Консервативный поворот прокатного российского кино − шаг к восстановлению ценностного континуума? (на примере лидеров российского проката 2015-2020)", *Гуманитарий Юга России*, Том 9, № 3, 216-231.

Friend, keep quiet, and obey my word
and what's connected with this.
Breathing might the Achaeans went.
In silence, afraid of their leaders,
and everything else of the sort."
"Yes, these things are fine."
"And what about this?
Heavy with wine, with eyes of a dog and heart of a deer.
And what comes right after, and all the rest of the youthful inso-
lence of private men to rulers that anyone has ever said in speech or in
poem are they fine things to say?"
"No, they are not fine".[3]

In the entire third book, Plato talks about the impact of Homer's
power of persuasion on the youth and on the soldiers, that is, on repre-
sentatives of society who have already been called or are about to be
called upon to defend the state, that is, to carry out that very 'kinetic'
confrontation, which is being expanded today on a scale that exceeds
the wildest fantasies of ancient thinkers.

Moving from Ancient Greece to modern times, we suggest us-
ing some examples to consider film and TV series feature content as a
tool of soft power.

American filmmakers should be considered trendsetters in this
sphere. Everyone knows the film franchise "Top Gun". (1986) and "Top
Gun: Maverick" (2022), which glorifies the American Air Force, Amer-
ican military-industrial complex (MIC) and American combat frater-
nity opposing international villains, as well as "Black Hawk Down"
(2001), in which the losses of American personnel and materiel in So-
malia (the story is based on real events) is praised as a heroic feat in the
fight against evil. These examples are obvious and straightforward. It is
much more unexpected to look at the famous romantic comedy "Pretty
Woman" (1990) as an instrument of soft power. If you carefully follow
not only the story of the happy love of a modern Cinderella and a hand-
some millionaire, you will notice the conflict around which the affair
of Edward Lewis (Richard Gere) goes on. In the picture Edward Lewis
is going to purchase and later sell off piece by piece the distressed com-
pany which belongs to a good-looking elderly gentleman, James Morse
(Ralph Bellamy), the company which builds destroyers for the US Na-
vy. In the negotiations scenes one can hear about the US Congressional

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[3] Plato (1968), *The Republic*, 389d-390a.

Appropriations Committee, about the Bill on the purchase of warships etc. Finally, Richard Gere's character, who has undergone his inner metamorphosis, tells Ralph Bellamy's character that he wants to cooperate with the latter in order to save the company. The elderly gentleman hugs the transformed business shark: "I'm proud of you, son!", and joyfully exclaims to the lawyers: "Mr. Lewis and I will make ships together, huge powerful ships!" Further on, the happy end with the protagonist returning to Cinderella/ the princess, case-hardens the connection between "warships – pride – love – happiness" in the minds of the audience. We have not conducted a study on how many viewers of "Pretty Woman" paid attention to the plot with the battleships, we admit that they were not numerous, but the film is still being demonstrated on different media screens with stable success as a perfect fairy tale about love – with a pronounced element of soft power, which, undoubtedly, affects its audience.

The series "The West Wing" (1999-2006, 7 seasons) shows the inside daily routine of the US presidential administration. The center of the story is not intrigue and behind-the-scenes struggle, but hard, day-to-day fruitful work for the benefit of the American people. The picture shows people of flesh and blood who sometimes make mistakes, but they always strive to correct them to put things right for an ordinary American voter, and for the United States as a whole. The memorable image of the man-of-the-people hardworking President performed by Martin Sheen and his team effectively and softly act to strengthen confidence in the US government system.

Since the Soviet period, Russia always energetically used cinema as an instrument of soft power (the issue of correlation between concepts of "soft power" and "propaganda" requires to be discussed additionally).

It was in the film "Alexander Nevsky" (1938) by Sergei Eisenstein that the audience heard "We have a saying: from your native land, die, but don't leave" and "Go and tell everyone in foreign lands that Rus' is alive! Let them come to visit us without fear, but if anyone comes to us with a sword, he will die by the sword! This is where the Russian land stands and will stand forever!".

Accordant message was declared by the Russian President Vladimir Putin during the meeting of the World Russian People's Council on November 23, 2023:

"The Russian world (Русский мир) contains all the generations of our ancestors and our descendants who will live on after us. The

Russian world includes Ancient Rus', the Muscovite Tsardom, the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, today's modern Russia, which is regaining, strengthening and increasing its sovereignty as a world power. The Russian world unites everyone who has spiritual bonds with our Motherland, who consider themselves native speakers of Russian, who are native to Russian history and culture regardless of their ethnical or religious affiliation.

Without Russians as an ethnic group, without the Russian people, there is not and cannot be the Russian world and Russia itself. This statement does not contain any claim to superiority, exclusivity, or chosenness. This is just a fact, as it is the fact that in our Constitution the status of the Russian language as the language of the state-forming people is definitely secured. Russian is more than ethnicity. This has always been the case, by the way, in the history of our country. This includes cultural, spiritual, historical identity. Being Russian mans, first of all, a responsibility. I repeat, there is a huge responsibility to preserve Russia, this is what true patriotism means. And being a Russian I want to say: only united, strong, sovereign Russia is capable to guarantee the future and unique development of both the Russian people and all other peoples who have lived and are living in our country for centuries, united by common historical destiny."

In the digest "Historical Consciousness of Russians: Assessments of the Past, Memory, Symbols"[4] edited by M. K. Gorshkov, based on sociological research, an unambiguous conclusion is made: "The main sources of historical information for representatives of almost all socio-demographic groups of the population are historical feature films and documentaries, television series, family archives, as well as the Internet (especially among young people)".[5] Speaking about the Internet, we should mention modern trends in media consumption, according to which, through the Internet, the audience often consumes feature content originally created for TV channels and/or online platforms.[6]

A huge body of artworks forming Russian beliefs and values was created during Soviet era portraying victories and triumphs of the Russian and Soviet people during numerous wars, especially during the

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[4] М. К. Горшкова (под ред.) (2022), *Историческое сознание россиян: оценки прошлого, память, символы (опыт социологического измерения)*, Институт социологии, Москва: Издательство Весь Мир, 248.

[5] *Ibid*, 242.

[6] Н. А. Васильев, В. Л. Дубровин (2023), "Изменения в медиапотреблении в современной России", *Знание, Понимание, Умение*, №. 3, 107-129.

Great Patriotic War (WWII for Western audience). As a striking example of the effective use of soft power, it is worth citing the documentary film "The Defeat of German Troops near Moscow" (1942) by directors I. Kopalin and L. Varlamov, which was the first Russian film to receive the Academy Award in the category "Best Documentary" in 1943.

A good example of the use of soft power to depict by artistic means the feat of Russian military and the Russian-Serbian combat brotherhood is the feature film co-produced by Russia and Serbia "The Balkan Line (Балканский рубеж)" (2019), based on the true story of the battle march of a unit of the Russian Airborne Forces to the Slatina Airfield in June 1999.

The development of confrontation between Russia and Ukraine starting with the Russian Spring of 2014 onwards, including the events of the period of the Special Military Operation (SMO), are gradually beginning to receive formalization through the means of cinematic language, although not as quickly as it was previously imagined. On one hand, highly rated feature films "Sunshine (Солнцепёк)" (dir. M. Brius, 2021) and "Donbass. Outskirts (Донбасс. Окраина)" (dir. R. Davletyarov, 2018) have been created in Russia. On the other hand, the thematically similar projects "Crimea (Крым)" (dir. A. Pimanov, 2017) and "Witness (Свидетель)" (dir. D. Dadunashvili, 2023) were not appreciated as high by the audience. Of course, creative interpretation of reality, especially the one so vital and painful, cannot be equally successful in every manifestation. Therefore, as in due time with regard to projects about the Great Patriotic War, we should expect an increase in the number and quality of feature films and TV series about SMO and Novorossiya.

On the other side of the Special Military Operation frontline, on the territory of Ukraine, the statement of one of the founders of the Ukrainian SSR, V. I. Lenin, about cinema as the most important of arts is also well remembered. And if during the Soviet period the image of a Ukrainian in feature films used to fit into the general multinational outline of the USSR policy – "Tractor Drivers (Трактористы)" (dir. I. Pyryev, 1939), "Only Old Men Go to Battle (В бой идут одни старики)" (dir. L. Bykov, 1974), then after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and Ukraine gaining independence, Ukrainian film and television content became the sphere for implanting different values of primarily anti-Russian sort.

We suggest reviewing the dynamics of the use of Ukrainian soft power during the post-Soviet period.[7] For example, let's consider the retrospective of works of Ukrainian director and producer Oles Yanchuk.

"Famine-33" (1991): the picture is based on the story "The Yellow Prince" by Vasil Barka. The plot depicts events of 1932-1933, "when the crimes of the Stalin-Bolshevik regime against the Ukrainian peasantry led to tragedy – total famine in Ukraine".

"Attentat: Autumn Murder in Munich" (1995), A film about the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the liquidation of Stepan Bandera by Bogdan Stashinsky in Munich.

"The Unbowed" (2000): the plot is based on the inglorious fate of the UPA commander Roman Shukhevych, the film's slogan is nationalistic: "Heroes never die".

"The Iron Hundred" (2004); Abstract from the Russian website Kinopoisk: "A hundred soldiers of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, led by Mikhail Duda-Gromenko, fearlessly fought first with the Bolsheviks, then with the fascists. It is clear that the forces were unequal, but the power of spirit and faith in the final victory propelled the indestructible "Iron Hundred," the remnants of which in 1947 carried out a heroic raid to the West, to Bavaria, which was then controlled by the American military administration" The website imdb.com states that "one hundred heroically fought the Bolsheviks and Nazis"; there is no mention of a heroic getaway to surrender to the mercy of American troops.

"Vladyka Andrey" (2008) – here both kinopoisk.ru and imdb.com repeat their annotations almost verbatim: "The film is based on the biography of Metropolitan of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church Andrey Sheptytsky, who resisted the repression of the totalitarian regimes of Stalin and Hitler and chose the path of serving God and people." Particulars about Sheptytsky at different points of time solemnly welcoming both Hitler and Stalin through the media as liberators from oppression is omitted from the brief information on the project.

"The Secret Diary of Symon Petlyura" (2018), a "documentary drama", as kinopoisk.ru characterizes this film, illustrates the period of Paris emigration of the chairman of the directory of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UNR) until his murder. Imdb.com adds: "an assassination

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[7] Е. Попов (2022), "Постмајданска Украјина: от култа нових историјских хероја до промене цивилизацијске метрицы", Зоран Милошевић (прир.), *Историја као инструмент геополитике*, Београд, Институт за политичке студије.

orchestrated in the Kremlin at the very beginning of the Soviet occupation of Ukraine".

Thus, considering the functioning of only one Ukrainian filmmaker, one is able to see a rather harmonious and consistent system of narrative construction which opposes the Russian Empire, the USSR and the Russian Federation against "historical Ukraine". Undoubtedly, such products have made and continue to make significant contribution to creation of anti-Russian Ukrainian identity.

In addition, we will outline another important direction in the projection of soft power, which is associated not so much with content, but with personalities. In the aforementioned film about Petlyura, the part of Mykhailo Grushevsky, chairman of the Ukrainian Central Rada, professor and academician, author of the "History of Ukraine-Rus'" and creator of the nationalist concept of a Ukrainian nation separate from the Russians, is performed by Bohdan Benyuk former member of the Ukranian Parliament and the Deputy Chairman of the ultranationalist party "Svoboda" responsible for relations with Ukrainians all over the world. Despite his anti-Russian political activities, the actor Benyuk recently took part in Russian cinema: as a Ukrainian engineer of the crew in the film "Kandahar" (2010), as the singer Leonid Utesov in the TV series "Liquidation" (2007). Comprehension of the value-ideological settings possibly embedded by the actor into the performance of his part requires separate activity - some content analysis in the first place, which will always be an after-the-fact action in relation to works that already saw the light of day.

Few more artworks by Ukrainian filmmakers. The "Cyborgs: Heroes Don't Die" (2017) picturizes a legend about Ukrainian military volunteers who hold back the pressure of Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) units, barricaded themselves at the Donetsk airport in 2014. The film demonstrates different types of Ukrainian nationalists – the spectrum from a native Ukrainian-speaking "Westerners" from the West of Ukraine to native Russian-speakers whose Russian parents at some point unexpectedly found themselves and their Russian regions voluntarily pushed into the Soviet Ukraine, who nowadays consider anti-Russianness to be the meaning of their existence.

The plot of the Ukrainian-Polish Christmas co-production "Shchedryk" (2022) set up during the WW II brings together three families: a Ukrainian, a Polish and a Jewish. Nasty Nazis and brutish Soviet security officers almost contemporaneously oppress all the families' members

who, on the contrary, help each other to escape. Keeping in mind the history of the Babi Yar tragedy and many others of the kind, the touching images of the rescue of Jews by Ukrainians look especially vivid. The leitmotif of the film is a song "Shchedrik", performing which a Ukrainian girl dreams of reconciling all the people around.

If we turn ourselves to depiction of Polish themes in Ukrainian cinema, then a recent motion picture "Dovbush" (2023), released in Ukrainian cinema theaters in August 2023, comes to mind. In it, the "Western Ukrainian Robin Hood" Oleksa Dovbush fights in the XVII century against Polish occupiers. The message of the movie – murder and destruction of Poles being the duty of any honest Ukrainian – caused keen susceptibility and sharp response in modern Poland[8] so we should keep in mind that soft power does affect audience in different ways.

A Polish picture "Volyn" (2016), which caused furious reaction on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian border and was dedicated to the Volyn massacre of 1943, in turn, depicted through the means of cinema the tragedy of Polish peasants and their families exterminated by Ukrainian nationalists. According to unverified data, the film "Volyn" is prohibited for cinema demonstration on the territory of Ukraine.

Compared to other post-Soviet countries, the Republic of Belarus is practically inactive in using soft power to promote the anti-Russian agenda. This is due to the strong alliance relations with the Russian Federation, as well as the fact that Belarusian cinema production capacities since gaining the country independence in 1991 are busy mainly with projects for Russian screens, leaving minimal space for local cinema, and the country population does not allow development of a full-fledged content industry for domestic consumption. Nevertheless, national motion pictures – national in every sense – are being filmed in the Republic of Belarus. The movie "Kupala" (2020) is perhaps the most striking recent example of such an artwork. A biopic about the life of the poet Yanka Kupala was supposed to make a significant contribution to nation-building – and not even to Belarusian, but to "Litvinian" – gently (and sometimes roughly) promoting the mythology of the Grand Principality of Lithuania as a truly Belarusian state as opposed to the alien, oppressive and totalitarian Russia. A detailed analysis of myths, distortions and outright mistakes of Kupala is contained in the article by K. V. Shevchenko "Cinema as an ideological hallucinogen. Meditations in

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[8] Мария Нестерова (2023), "Самый дорогой украинский фильм "Довбуш": красавица-невеста, империализм, поляки в бешенстве", *Telegraph*, September 2.

front of a toxic screen".[9] However, unlike the Ukrainian Government regulator in the sphere of film distribution, the Ministry of Culture of Belarus, after considering the film for wide release, decided not to allow the exhibition of the picture. We admit that there was a whole complex of reasons behind the refusal to release the film on wide screens, but the most important thing here is the result – the audience, if it wishes, can watch this story exclusively on YouTube.

The Republic of Kazakhstan also uses soft power of audiovisual products. An example is the series "Red Level" (2018, dir. by Valery Myznikov), which was created to order of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the KTK TV channel. The series depicts an investigation by officers of the National Security Committee (NSC) of Kazakhstan into a number of crimes that turn out to be linked to the chain of Islamists preparing a large-scale terrorist attack. The main idea of the picture is the unacceptability and inadmissibility of existence and participation in extremist Islamist groups, and the disastrous nature of such a path for its participants.

So, to summarize:

1. Soft power is present on different scale in almost all the motion pictures and TV series.

2. Each nation state, through local producers, to the extent possible, introduces currently relevant narratives into feature content. At the same time, the connection between the state and the 'creators' is mutual: not everything is imposed from above, a lot of things rise up from creative workers 'following the heart', after which they become accepted by the state.

3. It is necessary to continue studies of the use of soft power through feature content with the subsequent application of successful experience into the Russian practice to generate demands for Russian identity already at the stage of content creation.

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[9] Кирилл Шевченко (2023), "Кино как идеологический галлюциноген. Размышления у токсичного экрана", *Наука Вера Культура*, Октобер 21.

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IDEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF FILMMAKING

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ARCHAIC MOTIVES IN MODERN CINEMATOGRAPHY

Abstract

This paper deals with the topic of archaic moments in various aspects in modern cinema: based on the works of renowned psychologist C. G. Jung as well as modern experts such as A. F. Losev and M. Eliade, the author examines a wide range of modern films, with particular focus on the Hollywood films of the last several decades. Different genres of films portray different archaic stereotypes, with the action film portraying the archetypal hero, the melodrama portraying the nurturing wife and mother and the porn industry paralleling the cult orgies of the ancient times. Despite the similarities, it is shown that modern films, unlike ancient myths, reduce people to the role of absolute consumers.

Keywords: *modern cinematography, archaic motives, C. G. Jung, consumerism.*

CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY AND CINEMATOGRAPHY

Carl Gustav Jung once remarked that mythology can sing after death, like the severed head of Orpheus.[1] Indeed, among modern mythology experts, from A. F. Losev to M. Eliade, the claim that mythological consciousness is connected to the structural features of the human

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[1] К. Г. Юнг (1997), *Душа и миф.* Шесть архетипов, Киев-Москва, 15.

psyche and language is considered common today. It is also particularly connected with the presence of specific structures in the human subconscious: archetypes that determine our view of the world, i.e. why mythology is the basis for all other forms of culture – from art to philosophy. It is practically indelible from public consciousness. In other words, the strife of modern Western civilization toward creating a society based on purely rational foundations, whose view of the world would be desacralized and completely devoid of mythological features, is proven to be unfounded. Moreover, all attempts to completely build life according to the principles of rationality, abandoning thousands-of-years-old cultural heritage, which does not meet the criteria of scientism are doomed to failure. It only leads to the archaic, mythological layers of the human psyche taking their toll. Only now the myth does not become a universal reference factor between man and the world and a harmonizing factor of their relationship, but a destructive instance that justifies immorality and the lowest subconscious instincts. The most striking example of this is the appearance in quiet, orderly, emphatically methodical and rational, bourgeois National Socialist Germany – a purely irrational cultural phenomenon, in which mysticism and mythmaking were mixed. C. G. Jung believed German Nazism was the revenge of the Europeans for the exaggerated, crude and aggressive non-dialectical rationalism that was the basis of the values of the Enlightenment. Moreover, the same idea – about fascism as a natural result of the development of the Enlightenment paradigm – was put forward by other European scholars, for example, Adorno and Marcuse.

However, if the mythological background of Nazism is obvious, although I would not say that it has been adequately studied, the unveiling of the myth within the framework of liberal discourse seems to be somewhat suspect. And that, despite the fact that the same authoritative myth researchers, say – A. F. Losev, M. Eliade, have repeatedly stated that in the Western, democratic society there is a "niche" for myth, which for the average person in this society is a refuge from the total rationality of capitalism. It is mass culture: popular cinematography, commercials, various kinds of shows, television programs. Thus, Eliade talks about the mythological background of comic books, detective novels, car shows, emphasizing the myths of the super man, of the invincible policeman, etc., which grew out the "little man's" dream of becoming a hero, an extraordinary personality.[1] I would like to draw

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[1] See: М. Элиаде (2000), *Аспекты мифа*, М.: Академический Проект, 174-175.

attention to the mythological foundations of mass, popular cinema. At the same time, I do not intend to cross the boundaries of the etude. Therefore, of course, I do not pretend to the finality of the conclusions and the scientific presentation.

CINEMATOGRAPHY AND MYTHOLOGY

Only representatives of naive consciousness can believe movies simply "imitate" life. In fact, as experts in the field of semiotics say (primarily the Russian scientist Y. M. Lotman), film like any art has its own special language, a system of signs. Only a person who knows such a language can "decipher" the film and understand what its creators, screenwriter, director, cinematographers and actors, wanted to convey to the viewer.[2] The fact that a man of modern civilization does not think about the existence of a specific language of cinematography and that this statement itself can seem paradoxical to him, indicates only one thing: in the modern world, there are almost no people who do not understand this language. It is the ability to understand something as naturally as breathing that makes it go unnoticed. However, if we learned this language almost unconsciously, by immersing ourselves in the world of movies and television, then of course this does not mean we are dealing with a natural and self-explanatory code of communication. Y. M. Lotman tells how a girl from Siberia in the 1930s saw the comedy for the first time in Moscow: she was angry such "horrors" were openly shown – talking heads, severed arms and legs.[3] This is a reaction of "a natural man" to film, which perceives what is shown on the screen in a direct and immediate way. A person who knows the language of cinema without explanation will understand that the presence of only one head in the frame means that the filmmakers wanted to draw the audience's attention to this character. The image of the object acquires an additional meaning here. It turns into a sign: a "word" of the film language.

For all its invisibility, the language of cinema is very complex. Everything here has its own special meaning: the lighting of faces and figures, and the sequence of shots and the combination of music and images. Our topic does not include their detailed description. Those interested can view the work of Y. M. Lotman "Semiotics of cinematography and problems of cinematographic aesthetics" / "Семиотика кино и

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[2] See: Ю. М. Лотман (1973), *Семиотика кино и проблемы киноэстетики*, Таллин: Ээсти Раамат
[3] *Ibid*.

проблемы киноэстетики". This work introduces the problem of semiotic codes of cinematography. For us, only one comment of Y. M. Lotman is important here, about the connection between films and myth. It consists in the fact that both myth and cinema have an "intimate", i.e. "personal" view of things.

According to A. F. Losev, one of the main characteristic features of the myth imbues with personal intuitions and symbols. First of all, a myth is a personal story, with the help of which the encounter between man and the world takes place. Through myth, man opens himself up to the world. The world, in turn, talks about itself.[4] According to the appropriate definition of its creators, W. Paul and H. Wales, the film, "tells a story through the demonstration of moving images."[5] At the same time, I want to point out that film is interesting to us precisely because it presents a certain person's point of view. According to the plot of the film, it is the main character or characters, and in reality, of course, it is the filmmakers. We should also mention the phenomenon of the transformation of famous film actors into mythological figures described by Y. M. Lotman. I believe, it is directly related to the original mythological nature of the film language.[6] The same actor who plays different characters in different films unconsciously connects them into one artistic metatext. The viewer perceives these films as the story of one hero he loves. Moreover, it is easy to see that each film actor has his own role and he is easily identified with an archetype that goes back to the characters of mythology: the Warrior, the Seducer, the Ruler, etc. As a result, the mass consciousness begins to perceive them as pagan gods – with their own characters, adventures, special relationships with other gods (for example, S. Stallone and A. Schwarzenegger are clearly associated with the deities of war). The layman resolutely refuses to recognize someone similar to himself in the film actor. For him, the actor is a creature of another, film world. That world is transcendent, despite all its "earthly" features, which tabloid newspapers enjoy in full accordance with the "laws of the genre." As paradoxical as it may sound, he did roughly the same thing as Homer. Undoubtedly, this can be the topic of a separate study, but here I would like to draw attention to another aspect of the

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[4] See: А. Ф. Лосев (1990), *Диалектика мифа*, Киев: Библиотека Фонда содействия развитию психической культуры

[5] See: Ю. М. Лотман (1973), *Семиотика кино и проблемы киноэстетики*, Таллин: Ээсти Раамат, 316.

[6] *Ibid.*

"mythology of cinema": the presence in it of certain archaic mythological plots, depending on the genre.

It is interesting that in this case the main interest is not the works of prominent directors. Of course, these archetypes are also present there, but the focus here are commercial films that break through the creative individuality of the author. Precisely because of their low aesthetic value, mythological layers common to all and belonging to the "collective personality of humanity" come to the fore in them. But, of course, they are masked with the help of mass culture.

ARCHAIC MOTIFS IN CONTEMPORARY CINEMATOGRAPHY

Even an elementary analysis of a plot immediately shows that in the case of film in all its genres we encounter the "playing out" of various mythological plots connected with initiation. It is a test that re-births a person, makes him a different person who has the experience of communicating with a different, non-human reality. It brings him new, non-human abilities. Indeed, for example, the climax of any action movie is the rage of the main character, which gives him superhuman abilities: in this state, he alone destroys dozens and hundreds of armed enemies. Traditional culture also knows the phenomenon of "soldier madness". The initiation of famous berserkers is based on that. We are talking about Northern European[7] "men's alliances." Their members would bring themselves to a special furious state in which they would completely forget about self-preservation and go into battle naked or hiding behind animal skins. At the same time, they did not feel pain, did not know pity and ordinary human feelings. For example, they could pounce on an enemy and bite his throat. They believed that at that moment they were inhabited by the deity of war, as a rule, in correlation with the wolf. After such combat, the berserker was considered a dedicated man with special abilities that transcended profane experience.[8]

As we can see, the rage of the main characters of action films is very important. For example, the infamous John Rambo played by Stallone, essentially goes back to this archetype of individual military

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[7] This story is according to old Norse sources. Enraged berserker warriors were led by the god Odin himself and were identified with animals, most often a bear or even a wolf, whose skin they wore. (transl. note)

[8] М. Элиаде (2002), *Тайные общества: обряды инициации и посвящения*, Киев-Москва, 218-219.

initiation. It does not seem unnatural to the viewer that Rambo without apparent difficulties kills his enemies one by one. It is because the viewer unconsciously perceives him no longer as a person, although he is a professional soldier of a high class. The hero becomes an embodiment of the Ideal Warrior, a mythical character who defeats the infernal monster and establishes universal order. By the way, the names of some heroes almost openly point to, for example, the "Universal Soldier". Sometimes this typical plot is supplemented by the fact that the main character is also a dead man. He was "resurrected" by scientists in their laboratories, to turn him into an unstoppable "killing machine." Here we see a very accurate reproduction of the "logic of initiation." Because to become a wolf-warrior, able to go beyond the framework of profane human experience and merge with the mythological characters from the primordial, sacred time, the neophyte must first die symbolically. At the same time, as was indicated, every initiation presupposes a new birth through death. It is not strange that a person gets a different name after initiation.

On the contrary, melodrama is built around the relationship between mother and child. There is always a motif of love that overcomes all obstacles, the loss of a child and its acquisition (let's recall the Latin American television series: "The Rich Also Cry", "The Slave Isaura", "Land of Love", etc.). It is easy to see it is a repetition of the plot of typically female initiations that aim to reveal a specific, female spiritual experience and are associated with fertility cults and natural cycles. Moreover, one of the main characteristics of such initiations is they do not include myths about supernatural beings and the beginning of time, like male initiations. They are closed, so to speak, on the sacredness set in nature itself.[9] In melodramas we also encounter a similar situation: the whole plot is based on the personal relationships of several people, and the political, social, cultural context is simply "cut off." This characteristic of "soap opera" has almost become an anecdote, but its true meaning is usually not understood.

Finally, the pornographic film clearly reproduces the cult of the orgies. Indeed, in these films, the main characters are not actors at all, but organs of the "human bottom." There is also a construction of provisions in which all taboos arising from the social "alter-ego" are removed. Let's remember the comic elevation of the "human bottom", and the abolition of prohibitions are indispensable characteristics of the carnival.

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[9] М. Элиаде (2002), *Тайные общества: обряды инициации и посвящения*, Киев-Москва, 203.

Finally, we cannot but say a few words about the new phenomenon of mass culture, which has a distant connection to feature films – game shows. Most of them are also built on the exploitation of mythological archetypes, dating back as far as fairy tales. For example, the popular show on Russian television "Field of Wonders / Поле чудес" openly recreates with the help of mass culture the story of a treasure guarded by a wizard or a monster. The hero can claim only if he solves a few puzzles. In fact, the very name "Field of Wonders" aims to, so to speak, transport the viewer to a different and unusual mythical reality. We can only add to this that such fairy tales themselves are built on more archaic foundations – the features of the initiatory cult. A wizard or a monster here has pronounced monstrous qualities. They are thought of as beings belonging to another, previous cycle of the universe, which means that they are positioned as the beginnings of chaos in the current aeon. The hero's victory over him, in fact, means the birth of a new world, including the new birth of himself as a person with a higher ontological status.

In general, it should be noted that the very idea of wealth as the best prize, which is typical of these game shows, goes far beyond the ordinary propaganda of the capitalist value system, about which the Russian opposition media write so much. Let's take into account that in capitalist society money also has a special religious, sacred meaning and it goes back to Protestant ethics with its idea of wealth as a sign of soteriological choice. It immediately become clear that the possession of money here is unconsciously perceived as an increase in spiritual status. And now let's remember that spiritual growth is associated with overcoming obstacles. "Swimming in the sea of chaos" is nothing but one of the most important threads of initiation.

ANTI-TRADITION OF THE MASS CULT

However, one should not think that civic mass culture carries elements of the reconstruction of traditional consciousness and worldview. On the contrary, before us are parodies of initiations, and this once again confirms Guenon's characterization of capitalism as a society of anti-tradition. In other words, a degenerate and pathological society that, without realizing it, lives off the perversion and exploitation of the ancient, traditional social institution and ideological structure. Indeed, the plot of a film or a game show is obviously not about spiritual death and resurrection, which are the essence of every initiation. All the mentioned

parallels are nothing more than allusions caused by the mythological nature of film language and human psychology. At the same time, the viewer is generally positioned here as a passive person who only perceives what is happening but does not participate in it in any way. Moreover, at least on a rational level, the viewer is aware he is exposed to fiction and that the film actor is not a real person living through real difficulties. It is clear initiation presupposes something opposite: the active participation of the person himself and his sincere belief that what is happening does not have an allegorical, different meaning. But it is a sacred action taking place in reality, here and now. Finally, film and game shows, as if transferring a person to a different, "unusual" reality actually "keeps" him within the limits of that same mental universe of capitalism with its characteristic ideological principles of competition, individualism and the pursuit of wealth. These are films about the Vietnam War or a magical "Field of Wonders" where money is obtained very easily. On the contrary, initiation is aimed at conveying a superhuman, sacred reality to this world: to some edge of the forest or the bank of a river, where it can reveal the mystery of the creation of the universe. Moreover, mass culture at the same time not only completely binds man to the profane world of capitalism, but also nurtures specific worldview principles and behavioral reactions in it. As you can see, mass culture is not only an ugly product of this society. It is also its propaganda tool, aimed at consolidating and escalating the consumer mood and creating artificial needs. Through them, man loses his spiritual multidimensionality and increasingly becomes the object of manipulation by the controlling authorities of a "non-terrorist totalitarian" society, as Herbert Marcuse defines capitalism.

With some external similarity, traditional initiation and modern mass culture are completely opposite in their effect on man. The ancient man, who had undergone military initiation, had truly become a fearless warrior. The modern man who "swallows" war movies, as a rule, remains a notorious, controlled layman. He is often incapable of elementary self-defense, but with a remote consciousness that is easily enraged, developing ugly aggression. The ancient woman who passed through the typical female initiation was aware of her gender and the functions associated with it as a cosmic mystery and strove to conform to the archetypes of the ideal woman and mother. The modern housewife is a TV series fan who abandons housework for the fictional, clumsy

"life collisions" of Marianas and Marios. Finally, the ancient maenads,[10] who participated in the orgy cult discovered within themselves the mysterious element of fertility that pervades the entire Universe. They sought to merge in ecstasy with the universe of all living beings. And the modern layman is a fan of pornographic movies who harbors only complexes related to the sexual sphere. At the same time, closed in the world of virtual and fantasy, he risks generally losing the ability to engage in normal sexual behavior.

Thus, the myths set forth in modern mass culture have completely different functions than the myths of archaic societies. Frankly, they are not safe for humans. Resisting them is not only possible but also necessary. Otherwise, the transformation into a degenerate "absolute consumer" with a broken and controlled psyche is inevitable. And for this you must learn to decipher the "texts" of postmodern culture, in whatever form they appear: articles on economics, architectural endeavors for bank buildings or commercial films and popular television shows.

Translated by Dajana Lazarević

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[10] Maenads come from Greek myths, as companions of the god Dionysus. They made festivities in his honor, which necessarily ended with night orgies. Their activities are known today as "Bacchanalia" (after the Roman god Bacchus, the counterpart of Dionysus). (transl. note)

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SOCIAL DEVIATIONS AND DEVIATIONS OF SOCIALISM: CRITICAL CINEMATOGRAPHY OF THE YUGOSLAV BLACK WAVE

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate the connection between the Yugoslav black wave and social deviations, with the primary goal of considering the security perspective and security challenges of black wave cinematography in relation to Yugoslav society. It was pointed out that the phenomenon of the black wave in its socio-political perspective and function can be seen in three ways: 1) as a subversive attack on socialist Yugoslavia; 2) as an artistic document about the "dark side" of Yugoslav socialism; 3) as a state project of the Yugoslav authorities. It has been observed that the relationship between the black wave and social deviations represents a variable category that is conditioned by opting for one of the three offered perspectives. The same regularity was noted regarding the security situation related to black wave cinematography, where, depending on the chosen perspective, the black wave is shown as: 1) a subversive mission aimed at undermining socialist Yugoslavia; 2) valuable testimony about systemic deviations and systemic security challenges that were present in socialist Yugoslavia; 3) a fictitious or at least tolerated state

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project of the Yugoslav authorities, which was aimed at strengthening the socio-political and security situation in SFRY.

Keywords: *black wave, Yugoslav cinematography, film and politics, social deviations, security.*

THE BLACK WAVE IN A SOCIO-POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The Black Wave, understood in its totality of artistic, but also a series of socio-political implications, leaves room for different interpretations depending on contextual, ideological and numerous other factors. Arising in the 1960s and dying out already in the early 1970s, this segment of Yugoslav post-war cinema managed to leave a significant mark not only in the artistic field, but also on a much wider socio-political plan during its short existence. Among the basic characteristics of the black wave, it is usually mentioned (although not without challenge by some critics) its realism in an effort to portray the Yugoslav social reality without beautification and other distortions. Likewise, the pessimistic tone is also considered as one of the "trademarks" of black-wave films.

Another important feature of the black wave stems from this thematic and ambient determination: the focus on topics from the social margins, including various social problems and social disorders.[1] It is precisely this feature of the black wave makes it suitable for study from the point of view of its connection with the sphere of social deviations. The term social deviations usually refers to various phenomena whose common feature is a deviation from a certain social norm or standard in the domain of social functioning. In accordance with the above, but also respecting the specific needs of our research, by social deviation, we will refer to both those phenomena that are regularly mentioned under the mentioned term, as well as some phenomena that can be considered as social deviations in a broader sense. Accordingly, under social deviations we will include those components that are regularly included in the typologies of social deviations, such as criminality, alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, prostitution, vagrancy, idleness, begging, suicides

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[1] G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

and suicide attempts.[2] However, under the term social deviations we will mean a number of additional phenomena concerning various disorders with social implications. Poverty, unemployment, homelessness, other forms of social vulnerability, social and educational neglect, social problems related to dysfunctional families, as well as other dysfunctional micro-social and macro-social environments are just some of them. Likewise, social problems and disturbances in the functioning of the socio-political system as a whole or its constituent elements will be taken into account, with a special emphasis on government structures. Such social problems and disorders can be collectively defined as systemic deviations.[3] Finally, an important segment of social disorders that will be considered are "anti-systemic deviations",[4] which can be defined as different forms of endangering the state order and ruling regime, as well as other forms of endangering valid socio-political values.[5]

In accordance with the chosen direction of this research, one of the basic problems that we will try to study are the security aspects of the black wave, i.e. its relevance to the security situation in SFR Yugoslavia.[6] Analyzing the previous approaches to the study and understanding of the black wave, we can observe it threefold: 1) as a subversive, counter-revolutionary attack on the Yugoslav state and the values of Yugoslav society; 2) as a valuable artistic direction that faithfully portrayed the "dark side" of the reality of life in socialist Yugoslavia; 3) as a constructed, pseudo-subversive trend that actually had its foothold in the Yugoslav government. Respecting the needs of this research, in the following sections we will try to shed more light on each of the listed perspectives.[7]

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[2] M. Bošković, 2020; V. Jakovljević *et al.*, 1984; J. Špadijer-Džinić, 1988; I. Janković & V. Pešić, 1988. In domestic and Yugoslav literature, see also: Lj. Bavcon et al., 1969; M. Đurić, 1961; R. Lukić, 1976; V. Najman, 1985; M. Milosavljević, 2003; Z. Šeparović, 1981.

[3] I. Janković & V. Pešić, 1988.

[4] A. Matković, 2021a, 2022.

[5] For the concept and characteristics of social deviations, social disorganization, social problems and other related concepts in classical sociological, criminological, social pathology and social psychology literature, see e.g.: R. G. Brown, 1942; R. A. Cloward, 1959; M. A. Elliott & F. E. Merrill, 1950; E. M. Lemert, 1951a, 1951b; I. A. Berg & B. M. Bass, 1961; H. A. Bloch, 1952; B. Wootton, 1959; A. K. Cohen, 1959; R. K. Merton, 1957, 1961; E. H. Sutherland et al., 1992.

[6] On the basics and various general aspects of security studies, see e.g.: A. Collins, 2022; S. Mijalković & M. Popović, 2016; C. Peoples & N. Vaughan-Williams, 2020; V. Stajić, 2021; P. Vilijams, 2012. On national security, see C. R. Neu & C. Wolf, 1994; J. J. Romm, 1993; M. Sheehan, 2018; D. M. Snow, 2019.

[7] On the general relationship between art and social deviance, see A. Matković, 2017, 2022.

THE BLACK WAVE AS A SUBVERSIVE
ATTACK ON SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

In terms of the first perspective, it was the initial narrative that was created about the black wave in the late 1960s and early 1970s and which shortly afterwards led to repressive measures that effectively ended this phase of Yugoslav cinema. According to the common opinion, the official beginning of accusations against the black wave is taken to be a newspaper article from the newspaper *Borba* published in 1969,[8] in which a series of criticisms were made against the new tendencies within the so-called new (Yugoslav) film.[9] This text was followed by a series of similar defamations in the Yugoslav press, as well as in various forums of Yugoslav society, all of which followed a similar ideological pattern. According to this starting point, the black wave represented a subversive activity that aimed to undermine the post-war Yugoslav state and Yugoslav society, as well as to jeopardize the Yugoslav socialist order and its values. As part of this narrative, one could also encounter claims about the connection or stimulation of the black wave by foreign power centers opposed to socialism and communism (for example, through the praise that the foreign press and art critics directed at the account of Yugoslav black wave achievements, through the awarding of prestigious awards to black wave films and their authors, etc.). Based on the above, the position of the black wave can be interpreted from a security angle. Namely, according to this narrative, the black wave represented a significant security challenge for the Yugoslav state and Yugoslav society, with assumed foreign support and the potential to seriously threaten order within the SFRY. In addition to the presented political accusations, as part of this anti-black wave rhetoric, objections were also highlighted against the artistic quality of the films in question, including their complete disputing as artistically worthless.

Evaluating such ideas and thoughts, even though they have been mostly abandoned for decades and even though they have become extremely unpopular, for the sake of truth, it is necessary to allow for the possibility that at least one part of them could be based in reality to some extent. This, for example, refers to the possibility of a tendentious portrayal of socially deviant phenomena to a greater extent than they were actually present in Yugoslav society; then, to the possibility of

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[8] V. Jovičić, 1969.

[9] V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011; B. Zlatić, 2020.

planned selection of subversive themes as a strategy for greater success on the foreign (i.e. Western) market, to various objectively conceivable self-promotion attempts of individual authors, as well as to other hypothetical forms of causing a shock effect or calculative approach when making and marketing films. In any case, with the passage of time, the described anti-black wave starting points were almost completely abandoned. With the change in socio-political circumstances and the accompanying social climate, there were radical changes in the prevailing attitude toward this segment of Yugoslav cinematography. As part of such a new point of view, the protagonists of the events surrounding the black wave experienced rehabilitation and social recognition, while the black wave films received a new evaluation and energetic reaffirmation. All this led to the formation of a completely different picture regarding the black wave. Expressed graphically: from that time, the black wave was no longer seen as a 'black hole', but as a 'black gem' of Yugoslav cinema.

When it comes to socially deviant aspects within this paradigm, they can be expressed in two directions: as social deviations related to the black wave films themselves, as well as social deviations related to the creators of the black wave. In the extension, we will consider both of these starting points.

Regarding the first starting point (black wave films understood as deviant content), the key issue to be considered concerns the censorship of black wave productions. In this regard, it is important to distinguish between formally banned films and those films whose ban was informal, i. e. factual. The only work of the black wave (as well as the entire Yugoslav cinematography) that was officially banned was the omnibus film *Grad* from 1963.[10] The film in question was prohibited by the decision of the District Court in Sarajevo – a decision that was valid until 1990.[11] As for informal forms of prohibition, the known method of censorship was the so-called "bunkering", understood as *de facto* preventing the public showing of the disputed film. In the period between the early 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, dozens of films were hidden from the public eye using the bunkering method.[12] In this way, it was achieved that, in the words of R. Zelenović and M. Nikodijević (1995), they became "banned without a ban".

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[10] M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

[11] M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

[12] M. Nikodijević (1995) and V. Radosavljević (2019) point out that the total number of bunkered films was around 40.

To illustrate the functioning of this censorship mechanism, we can mention several examples. D. Makavey's *Parada*, shot in 1962, was not approved for release until several controversial shots were removed from it. Another Makavejev film, *W. R. - Misterije organizma* (1971), after many years of bunkering, was shown to the Yugoslav audience for the first time only in 1987. Ž. Pavlović's *Povratak* was filmed in 1966, but it was approved for screening only two years later, and only after the insertion of additional scenes and the opening part, which significantly changed the context of the film. Due to a politically problematic topic – namely, because of the topic of the Cominform – *Sveti Pesak* (1968) by M. Antić was also placed in the bunker. The same fate befell Antić's film *Doručak sa đavolom* (1971), which was bunkered due to critical scrutiny of the KPJ and the Yugoslav socialist authorities. Although Žilnik's *Rani radovi* (1969) was not formally and permanently banned in court, the film remained bunkered until 1982.[13]

In addition, as another informal and indirect form of suppressing the production and distribution/screening of black wave films, we can mention critical texts in the media and announcements of various social organizations. These texts were aimed both at contesting the artistic value of films and at criticizing their ideological dimension. In order to understand the scope of this form of stigmatization of the black wave, it is important to bear in mind the extraordinary impact that such critical texts had on the emergence and further development of the anti-black wave climate in Yugoslav society. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the alleged connection between certain texts and the state and party leadership as possible commissioners of their creation.[14] Finally, in addition to preventing the actual showing of films, it is necessary to mention the methods of sabotage by which the showing and viewership of certain films were tried to be reduced to the smallest possible extent. The following are mentioned as the methods by which this saboteur practice was carried out: one-time screenings of films solely for the sake of form satisfaction; broadcasting films in small or otherwise unsuitable halls, in a short period of time, in few or isolated settlements; release of films in the cinema's 'dead season' and the like.[15]

As for the second starting point (authors of the black wave understood as social deviants), it can be considered through the analysis of

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[13] G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011; P. Volk, 1986.

[14] M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

[15] M. Nikodijević, 1995.

the repression suffered by individual authors involved in the creation of 'black' films. Certainly, the most drastic sanctions were felt by director Lazar Stojanović, who was sentenced to two years in prison in 1973 for his graduate film *Plastični Isus*. This was the only case of a criminal conviction, and therefore the only case of a prison sentence imposed on a Yugoslav filmmaker due to his professional involvement. In addition to Stojanović, as a result of the *Plastični Isus* affair, other individuals connected with the creation of the aforementioned film also suffered certain sanctions. Namely, director Aleksandar Petrović – Stojanović's mentor – was expelled from the Belgrade Faculty of Dramatic Arts, after which he left the country and moved to Paris, while Tomislav Gotovac, as an actor in Plastic Jesus, also suffered certain forms of sabotage and mistreatment.[16]

Due to a foreign interview of Dušan Makavejev related to the turbulence surrounding the film *W. R. – Misterije organizma* and the active role played by SUBNOR in that process, members of this association of fighters filed a criminal complaint against him. Seeing Makavejev's statement as an insult to themselves, members of SUBNOR accused him of attacking the achievements of the national liberation struggle, but also the overall values of socialist Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav self-governing society.[17] Although Makavejev was not convicted in the criminal proceedings (which were suspended after only one hearing), he nevertheless suffered certain formal sanctions, since he was expelled from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia in February 1973.[18]

Another example of court proceedings in which an author of the Black Wave was involved (in truth, not as a defendant, but as a legal representative) is the trial regarding the film *Rani radovi* (1969) by Želimir Žilnik, under the charge that this film led to a serious violation of social and political morality.[19] A lawyer by training, Žilnik took an active part during the court proceedings, trying to refute the accusations, which ultimately bore fruit.[20] However, although it was not banned by the court, the controversial film remained in the "bunker" for years, while Žilnik also suffered personal sanctions: he was labelled an "anarcholiberal element" and was expelled from the League of Communists.[21]

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[16] D. Gulding, 2020; M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

[17] M. Nikodijević, 1995; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

[18] V. Radosavljević, 2019.

[19] B. Tirnanić, 2011.

[20] G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

[21] G. J. DeCuir, 2019; M. Nikodijević, 1995.

In addition to the filmmakers who suffered some form of formal sanctions, it should be noted that those authors who were exposed to repression in an unofficial, i. e. non-institutionalized form, were significantly ahead in number. Such repressions encompassed a wide range from the informal banning of the films of which they were the authors, through making it impossible or difficult to continue their professional career, up to various forms of personal disqualification and stigmatization.[22] As a result of such a newly created atmosphere, a part of the authors emigrated from Yugoslavia, thus acquiring a kind of (semi)dissident status.[23]

THE BLACK WAVE AS AN ARTISTIC DOCUMENT ABOUT THE "DARK SIDE" OF YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM

As for the second perspective, i. e. an understanding of the black wave as an artistically significant movement that reflects the reality of Yugoslav society, this is the prevailing opinion in artistic and general social circles today.[24] Beginning approximately in the 1980s and continuing until today, this orientation represents the point of view according to which, contrary to earlier interpretations, the black wave is perceived as a phenomenon that expresses its qualities both on the artistic and on the general social level. In the case of the second (i. e. regarding social level in general), according to the proponents of this perspective, it is particularly evident in the presentation of a series of undesirable (from the position of the then government) aspects of life in socialist Yugoslavia. Also, the general social qualities of the black wave are recognized in terms of the socio-political context in which the black wave filmmakers expressed their artistic ideas, especially bearing in mind the various repressions that were expressed against their films, and sometimes against the authors themselves.

Regarding the socially deviant aspects of the black wave that arise from this perspective, they primarily concern the depiction of deviant phenomena on the big screen, i. e. cinematographic treatment of various social deviations in Yugoslav society. In accordance with the above, below we will consider the portrayal of social deviations through the

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[22] G. J. DeCuir, 2019; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

[23] V. Radosavljević, 2019; see also: A. Matković, 2021b, 2022.

[24] G. J. DeCuir, 2019; D. Gulding, 2020; M. Nikodijević, 1995; A. Petrović, 1988; V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011; D. Unterkofler, 2012.

filmmaking of Puriša Đorđević, Živojin Pavlović, Aleksandar Petrović, Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Đorđe Kadijević, Miroslav Antic, Jovan Jovanović and Lazar Stojanović.

As part of his long and fruitful career, Mladomir Puriša Đorđević distinguished himself as a director and screenwriter of several famous black-wave films. Among them is a kind of cycle of four connected films: *Devojka* (1965), *San* (1966), *Jutro* (1967) and *Podne* (1968). As for the socially deviant aspects within them, we can single out the depictions of various socio-political problems in the context of the NOB and the establishment of the post-war government, as well as a critical review of the ideology of socialist Yugoslavia, with a touch of irony – which was a very controversial and daring move at the time. By the way, *Podne* is considered to be the first film that thematized the conflict between Broz and Stalin, that is, the break between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union.

Živojin Pavlović dealt with a number of socially deviant phenomena in his works. On the one hand, it is possible to observe numerous classic social deviations, such as different types of crime (crimes against property, violent crimes, sexual crimes) and specific criminal phenomena related to them (pimping, criminal association, criminal gangs, juvenile deliquency). This also includes other socially deviant phenomena in the narrower sense: alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, vagrancy, etc. On the other hand, it is possible to see examples of somewhat different social problems, such as: dysfunctional families, difficulties in resocialization and social adjustment of a person after serving prison sentences; problems of unemployment, homelessness, etc. Also, Pavlović deals with controversial social problems and disorders on the interpersonal level in the context of NOB. Films in which it is possible to recognize such themes are *Kapi, vode, ratnici* (1962), *Grad* (1963), *Povratak* (1966), *Buđenje pacova* (1967), *Kad budem mrtav i beo* (1968), *Zaseda* (1969), *Crveno klasje* (1970).

When we talk about Aleksandar Petrović's work, one of the main peculiarities of his style was the depiction of social deviations among certain marginalized social groups, especially among members of the Roma national minority. For example, the film *Skupljači perja* (1967) shows an extraordinary diversity of sociopathological phenomena: from different spheres of crime (property crimes, violent crimes, including domestic violence, violence against women, violence against children), through prostitution, vagrancy, begging, sexual deviations (incest, pedophilia), up to the problem of dysfunctional families, marginalization

and endangerment of certain communities, discrimination on the basis of nationality, general attitude towards national minorities, etc. Also, it is important to note Petrović's presentation of deviant phenomena not only in the urban (as more typical) environment, but also in the rural environment. In addition to *Skupljači perja*, Petrović's black-wave oeuvre includes the following films: *Dvoje* (1961), *Dani* (1963), *Tri* (1965), *Biće skoro propast sveta* (1968), *Majstor i Margarita* (1972).

In the films of Dušan Makavejev, it is also possible to recognize the depiction of various social deviations. These include, among others: violent crime (including family violence and inter-partner violence), property crime, alcoholism, as well as certain sexual deviations. It is precisely the sexual theme (and with it sexual deviance) that represents one of the most famous specificities of Makavejev's black wave work. Also, other social problems are mentioned in his opus, such as social vulnerability, poverty, poor living conditions, etc. Finally, there is also a critical attitude towards the Yugoslav socialist system, as well as towards socialism and communism in general. The mentioned phenomena are visible in the following films: *Parada* (1962), *Čovek nije tica* (1965), *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT* (1967), *Nevinost bez zaštite* (1968) i *W. R. - Misterije organizma* (1971), as Makavejev's most controversial work.

In the work of Želimir Žilnik, one of the founders of the docudrama genre, a wide range of social deviations are shown in documentary form. Among other things, these include juvenile delinquency in the broadest sense, property crime, violent crime, endangering public order and peace, (minor) prostitution, vagrancy, begging, alcoholism, and suicidal tendencies. Also, other social problems are present in Žilnik's opus, such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, dysfunctional families, inadequate actions of the police and other authorities, citizens' dissatisfaction with socio-political conditions, etc. The phenomena in question were shown in particular in the following docudrama productions: *Žurnal o omladini na selu zimi* (1967), *Nezaposleni ljudi* (1968), *Pioniri maleni, mi smo vojska prava, svakog dana ničemo ko zelena trava* (1968), *Lipanjska gibanja* (1969), *Crni film* (1971). However, the greatest social turbulence was caused by the feature-length film *Rani radovi* (1969), which is primarily devoted to the depiction of various socially undesirable phenomena in the very functioning of Yugoslav society and state.

Undeniably famous as a director, Đorđe Kadijević is not always mentioned as one of the authors of the black wave. Nevertheless, several

of his early films from the 1960s (*Praznik* from 1967 and *Pohod* from 1968) are considered achievements that correspond to this epoch of Yugoslav cinematography in terms of time and style (Kadijević & Ognjanović, 2017). These were films that depicted the Second World War and social conditions in the war-torn Yugoslav territory in a realistic manner – from the perspective of an 'ordinary man'. According to the above, the deviance they show could be subsumed under the systemic deviations associated with war events and the Yugoslav people's liberation struggle.

Although he certainly did not remain the best known filmmaker of the black wave era, Miroslav Antić also contributed to the diversity of social problems that this cinematography dealt with. The film *Sveti pesak* (1968) is important as one of the earliest examples of depicting the theme of Cominform, while in *Doručak sa đavolom* (1971) the focus was on social problems in Vojvodina during and immediately after the Second World War (abuses related to the compulsory purchase of agricultural products from peasants, the refusal of the locals to hand over their products to the authorities and the conflict with the representatives of the authorities, the dissatisfaction of the population with the newly established socialist government, etc.).

Author Jovan Jovanović contributed to the black wave with a pioneering and certainly very daring portrayal of some truly controversial phenomena on the screen. Such phenomena include, among others: the beginnings of youth drug addiction in Yugoslavia, the development of the Yugoslav criminal underworld, the beginning of cooperation between domestic security services and members of the criminal milieu, indications of domestic terrorist activities, suicidal tendencies among young people, etc. Also, in Jovanović's works there is a lot of direct criticism and parody of Yugoslav society and its values, holders of the political power and state structures. In addition, using film language, Jovanović also pointed to a number of other negative phenomena in the social life and functioning of the SFR Yugoslavia. Such deviations can be seen in the films: *Studentski grad* (1964), *Kolt 15 GAP* (1971), *Izrazito ja* (1969), and especially in the feature film *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža* (1971).

Despite the fact that he contributed to the black wave with only one feature film – his graduate work *Plastični Isus* from 1971 – Lazar Stojanović undoubtedly belongs to the most controversial authors of the black wave, while the aforementioned film is undoubtedly one of the most famous and problematic representatives of the black wave. In *Plastični Isus*, it is possible to single out various deviant phenomena (both

sociopathological and psychopathological). However, the mentioned film is best known for its anti-systemic connotations, especially regarding the parody of Josip Broz, as well as for alluding to the totalitarian nature of the Yugoslav regime.[25] Moreover, as we noted earlier,[26] due to its extremely provocative content, the film *Plastični Isus* can actually be viewed as a kind of anti-systemic deviation in its entirety.[27]

As noted, everything shown profiles the black wave as an important indicator and valuable testimony of the presence of systemic deviations and systemic security challenges that existed in socialist Yugoslavia. Seen from this angle, the black wave becomes a kind of collective historical document about the external and internal security problems that shook the Yugoslav society and the state from the beginning of the National Liberation Struggle, until the early 1970s – i. e. until the effective end of black wave cinematography.

THE BLACK WAVE AS A STATE PROJECT OF THE YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES

When it comes to the third perspective, recent years have seen the formation of a new tendency in which the black wave is presented as a kind of state project that had the support of the Yugoslav authorities. According to this approach, the subversive character of black wave cinematography is being contested, while at the same time, this cinematography is being attributed to completely different goals and purposes. Among such, supposedly real goals of the black wave, stands out the (alleged) intention of the black wave authors and the state commissions or approvers of black wave films to create an impression of a high degree of democracy in Yugoslav society and the liberality of Yugoslavia as a state to the world through the production of apparently critical films.[28] According to somewhat more moderate starting points, the black wave is treated as a phenomenon that had the indirect or at least tacit support of the authorities as long as the films did not touch on essential socio-political problems, but only on topics from the social.[29] In any case, within such narratives, it is possible to notice a series of bold claims (one can freely say – accusations) against a number of authors

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[25] V. Radosavljević, 2019; B. Tirnanić, 2011.

[26] A. Matković, 2021b.

[27] See also: Matković, 2021b, 2022.

[28] S. Cvetković, 2021.

[29] B. Zlatić, 2020.

who contributed to the black wave: ranging from moderate and mostly well-argued claims that some of them enjoyed significant support from the state and from the film companies, through complaints that they enjoyed various benefits, insinuations that they were close to the centers of socio-political power, up to open accusations that they worked for one of the services of the Yugoslav state apparatus.[30]

If such considerations were to be adopted, the conclusion would be imposed that the black wave did not, in fact, represent any security challenge for Yugoslavia, but quite the opposite – a skillful manoeuver by the state authorities aimed at strengthening the socio-political and security positions of the SFRY. Evaluating these starting points, it is possible to notice how part of them is truly based (at least partially) on factual statements. This refers, among other things, to the indisputable circumstances that the black wave films were financed from the state budget, as well as that they were produced and distributed by the state companies. It also refers to the allegations that many of the authors of the films in question enjoyed a significant social reputation and were involved in various prestigious professional, educational and other social institutions of the SFR Yugoslavia. Furthermore, for certain authors, it is possible to confirm the accuracy of the insinuations that (at least in some period of their career) they were close to certain centres of socio-political power in Yugoslavia (ranging from ordinary membership in the Communist Party, all the way to higher positions on party and social ladders).

Finally, for some persons involved in the process of creation of black-wave productions (primarily, film company managers), it is even possible to confirm the accuracy of the allegations that they cooperated in a certain form with the intelligence agencies of the Yugoslav state.[31] Viewed from another angle, although there are no exact data as evidence

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[30] B. Munjin, 2010; B. Zlatić, 2020.

[31] Certainly, the most striking example is the case of Ratko Dražević, a participant in the National Liberation War, an operative of the UDB and later the director of Avala Film. A controversial figure in many respects, and according to his statements, a person who had nothing to do with the field of cinematography before joining Avala film, Dražević is associated with various affairs, claims and anecdotes with the common denominator – cooperation with the state security service. Among numerous examples, it can be singled out that Dražević was the organizer of UDB's liquidation groups, but also a participant in a series of illegal activities for the benefit of the state – ranging from espionage to smuggling of goods. Also, Dražević's claim that he killed 2,000 people and slept with the same number of women is very illustrative. Although they probably did not have as colourful biographies as Dražević, there were undoubtedly controversial executives in other Yugoslav film companies as well (see V. Radosavljević, 2019).

for this, with a sufficient degree of probability one can also speculate on the possibility that the state really tolerated the black wave as part of a strategy to demonstrate its liberality and democracy to the international community.[32] However, it seems very unlikely that the Yugoslav government would support or favourably tolerate those excesses of the black wave that attacked the basic socio-political values of the Yugoslav socialist society. Accordingly, if some kind of tolerance of the authorities towards the black wave truly existed, in all probability it had to be limited only to the presentation of peripheral social problems within post-war Yugoslavia.

As for the authors of the films themselves, it can be accepted as certain that many of them (more precisely, almost all of them) had to make various creative concessions and agree to various compromises with representatives of the film industry, but also with the centres of party and political power. Namely, in the conditions of dependence of Yugoslav cinematography and general Yugoslav social circumstances, such a flexible approach and willingness to compromise were, in fact, basically the only way to secure permission for filming and the necessary financial resources. This circumstance was confirmed by some creators of the black wave themselves,[33] which is why it should not cause major dilemmas. On the other hand, all speculations against the film artists themselves (from the directors and screenwriters to the actors) which imply making serious personal accusations, and at the same time do not offer adequate evidence in support of such allegations, must be taken with the utmost caution. This refers both to speculations in (mainly popular) literature and to certain examples of accusations made by the protagonists of the black wave themselves, including mutual accusations between creators.[34]

Likewise, speculations according to which the entire black wave represented a kind of well-thought-out conspiracy at the state level that had the function of masking and encoding a series of ideas and projects related to the creation, existence and final disintegration of socialist Yugoslavia must be taken with caution.[35] Without disputing the possibility that some of the listed allegations are potentially true, it is necessary to keep in mind that without access to reliable evidence that would raise

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[32] This position is supported even by some authors of the black wave – see M. Nikodijevic, 1995.

[33] M. Nikodijevic, 1995.

[34] For examples of such accusations and mutual attacks, cf. B. Munjin, 2010; M. Nikodijevic, 1995; V. Radosavljević, 2019.

[35] B. Zlatić, 2020.

such claims to the level of facts, and not just speculation, it is not possible to consider them on a scientific level. Due to the above, all listed statements must, for now, be accepted exclusively as interesting, but scientifically unvalidated ideas. This is especially true if we bear in mind that such unvalidated statements can arise from very diverse motives: ranging from sincere scientific curiosity, over speculations of a popular/non-expert character, arbitrary commenting and handling of unsubstantiated data, all the way to knowingly stating untruths with the intention of defamation and disqualification of individual authors or their films. Due to all of the above, against the currently available factual situation, this perspective still does not allow for a more detailed analysis that would be based on objective and strictly scientific criteria.

DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL DEVIANT AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVES OF THE BLACK WAVE PHENOMENON

Taking into account all of the above, we can state that the black wave phenomenon in the most general perspective can be viewed in two ways: as a strictly artistic phenomenon, on the one hand, and as a broader social phenomenon, on the other. Among the social phenomena that were recorded on the film strip of black-wave productions, special emphasis was placed on those phenomena that can be characterized as socially deviant. This includes both social deviations in the narrow sense of the term, as well as a number of other social problems that we have labelled as social deviations in a broader sense. Comparing the social reaction to different deviant content, it can be noted that the depiction of social deviations with political connotations was subjected to the greatest repression. Such depictions included, among others: a critical and/or revisionist interpretation of Yugoslav history before the Second World War, the activities and achievements of the NOB, the functioning of the Yugoslav (and not only Yugoslav) socialist system, the Yugoslav authorities, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia – all the way to explicit and intentional political provocations with the aim of causing a shock-reaction.

Also, films that thematized the dissatisfaction of various categories of members of Yugoslav society (workers, students, youth, etc.) were exposed to censorship and other pressures as well – that is, films that thematized deviations that directly threatened the survival of the then ideology and the ruling regime. Finally, an important taboo topic of the black wave was the contents of sexual connotation, since some of the

biggest controversies of the black wave were connected precisely with the sexual contents in the film – true, primarily if such contents were combined with political implications. On the other hand, socially deviant phenomena in the narrower sense were much more tolerated since their film presentation, although certainly undesirable, was still prevented and sanctioned to a lesser extent. This points to the conclusion that the state and party structures primarily sought to suppress those film productions that threatened the basic ideological elements on which socialist Yugoslavia rested, including endangering optimistic visions of further progress and a bright future for the SFRY and its citizens. Contrary to the above, it is noticeable that cinematic social deviations in the narrower sense were less often under the attack of the Yugoslav power structures, apparently being evaluated as less subversive and therefore less dangerous for the ruling order and its ideology.

It can be seen that the relationship between the black wave and social deviations is a variable category that is conditioned by opting for one of the three offered perspectives: 1) the black wave as a subversive attack on socialist Yugoslavia; 2) the black wave as an artistic document about the weaknesses of Yugoslav socialism; 3) the black wave as a state project (or at least as a project under the control) of the Yugoslav authorities. The same regularity can be seen with regard to the security situation related to black wave cinematography where, depending on the chosen perspective, the black wave is shown as: 1) a subversive mission aimed at undermining socialist Yugoslavia; 2) a valuable testimony about systemic deviations and systemic security challenges that were present in socialist Yugoslavia; 3) an artificial or at least tolerated state project of the Yugoslav authorities, which was aimed at strengthening the socio-political and security situation in SFRY. Although the available data still do not allow a final assessment of each of the offered perspectives, the parallel consideration of these perspectives is very useful for understanding different aspects of the black wave phenomenon, and especially for insight into the multiple faces (and reverses) that this phenomenon apparently possessed. Summarizing everything presented, it can be observed that the relationship between the black wave and social deviations, as well as the relationship between the black wave and the sphere of security, are shown to be interactions of variable meaning that are conditioned by opting for one of three extremely different perspectives. All this leads to the conclusion about the multidimensionality

of the social deviance of the black wave phenomenon,[36] but also about the multidimensionality of its security-related positioning.

Understood exclusively as art, as a witness of the time in which it developed, as a harbinger of future geopolitical interventions on the Yugoslav terrain, as an indicator of various social deviations within the Yugoslav socialist society, or as a kind of deviation of Yugoslav socialism in itself, it is undeniable that the black wave arouses research curiosity and raises a number of questions that still await a satisfactory answer. Precisely in these circumstances lies the reason why the black wave can be considered one of the starting points that must not be neglected during comprehensive interdisciplinary studies of conditions on Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav soil. Certain steps have been taken, mainly in the domain of history and sociology, where the black wave (truthfully, still quite sporadically) is sometimes given the importance of a social factor with certain implications for the wider condition of the state and society.[37] On the other hand, the sciences that deal with the study of social deviations, as well as security sciences, cannot boast that they have so far recognized the importance of the black wave as an influential social factor. In the hope that this and previous[38] initial steps can serve as an incentive for further related studies, we once again emphasize the inextricable connection of social factors that shape the totality of a socio-political climate – including those factors that concern the artistic and wider cultural life. Confirmation for this is best provided by the phenomenon of the black wave, as a factor that, regardless of the chosen security and socially deviant point of view – or precisely because of such a diversity of possible viewpoints – undoubtedly had to play an important role in the overall socio-political scene of Yugoslavia and its successor states.

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[36] A. Matković, 2021b, 2022.

[37] S. Cvetković, 2011; S. Lazarević Radak, 2016; V. Neimarević, 2021; M. Pekić, 2018; R. Vučetić, 2012.

[38] A. Matković, 2021b, 2022.

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FEATURE FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES ON SOVIET HISTORY AS A MEANS OF CONSTRUCTING POLITICAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

Abstract

The author of the article evaluates the manifestations of the construction of political identity in modern fiction and documentary films about the Soviet period of Russian history. The methodological basis of the research is social constructivism, as well as qualitative discourse analysis and an axiological approach. The empirical basis of the article includes feature films and documentaries that released on the screen in 1992–2023. The author came to conclusions about the loss of the ideological integrity of the content of post-Soviet film production, about the increasing importance of the attractive and communicative functions of films. At the same time, since 2012, the state order for the formation of patriotic values and the construction of a positive historical identity of Russian citizens has been increasing, what is gradually changing the image of the Soviet past in the mass consciousness.

Keywords: *feature films, documentaries, Soviet history, contemporary Russia, political identity construction, means.*

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INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the research topic. Feature films and documentaries are an important means of forming political identity and reproducing historical memory. Despite the growing competition of new genres of visual and sound effects on consciousness (short videos, blogs), films and television films retain their influence on identity and collective memory due to their artistic properties. The influence of film production on political identity is also increasing due to the informatization of modern society, which has generated the effects of virtualization of reality. This is confirmed by public opinion polls.

The topic is especially relevant for the research of identity and historical memory in post-Soviet Russia. In our opinion, the topic has not been studied enough. Contradictory assessments of modern film production about Soviet history are manifested in scientific works.

The purpose of the article is to identify the manifestations of the construction of political identity in modern fiction and documentary films about the Soviet period of Russian history.

The methodological basis of the research is social constructivism, as well as an axiological approach and qualitative discourse analysis. Social constructivism provides an interpretation of identity as the result of purposeful formation, the fruit of the efforts of elites and specialists in shaping public opinion. Identity is mobile. It reflects the modern demand of the ruling groups, and not the objective historical reality. Political identity consists of a variety of interrelated social practices and symbols, images and myths. In this aspect, the works of P. Berger and T. Lukman,[1] F. Barth[2] are important. The axiological approach[3] is aimed at identifying the values of society and various social groups, forms of manifestation of values in political orientations and emotional perceptions of works of cinematography. Qualitative discourse analysis allows us to establish typical images and symbols used in public communication, stereotypes of perception of reality approved by society or

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[1] P. Berger, T. Lukman (1995), *Social construction of reality: A treatise on the sociology of knowledge*, Moscow: Medium.

[2] F. Barth (1969), *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*, Bergen: Universitetsforl.

[3] N. Kallos, O. Trasnea (1982), "Political Values: Their Status and Social Function", *International Political Science Review*, London, Vol. 3, № 2, 182-189.

significant social communities.[4] The works of P. Nora[5] and M. Halbwaks[6] on the essence of historical memory, A. Assman – on the methods of historical policy[7] have methodological significance. Applied methods of analyzing films as historical sources are argued by M. S. Zvonareva[8] and V. V. Smirnov.[9]

The empirical basis of the article includes Russian feature films and documentaries about the events of Soviet history, which were released on the screen in 1992–2023. Taking into account the significant volume of sources, we took for analysis the films with the largest viewing audience and recognizable in public opinion. Ratings published on Internet sites were used to identify them. The films are ranked according to the historical period described in them, as well as by genre (detective, romance, thriller, documentary investigation, biographical cinema). The author's greatest attention is focused on films about the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. The results of questionnaire and expert surveys, focus group studies are also cited.

The degree of elaboration of the scientific problem is insufficient. Sociologists began to explore the topic of historical memory and the sources of its construction in the mid-2000s (article by L. I. Afanasyeva and V. I. Merkushin).[10] Film critic N. A. Zorkaya examined the visual images of the Great Patriotic War.[11] Historian V. A. Khokhlov drew attention to new interpretations of the Great Patriotic War in the fantasy genre.[12] V. A. Dronov studied the issues of the authenticity of the image of the enemy in modern Russian films about the war.[13] O. V. Rodionova

[4] O. K. Pedersen (2009) *Discourse Analysis*, Copenhagen: International Center for Business and Politics Copenhagen Business School.

[5] P. Nora (1999), *France – memory*, St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg University Press.

[6] M. Halbwaks (2007), *The social framework of memory*, Moscow: New Publishing House.

[7] A. Assman (2014), *The Long Shadow of the Past: Memorial culture and historical politics*, Moscow: New Literary Review.

[8] M. S. Zvonareva (2019), "Documentary cinema as a historical source: features of analysis and interpretation", *Locus: people, society, cultures, meanings*, No. 3, 98-107.

[9] V. V. Smirnova (2019), "Documentary cinema in the system of mass communication: a source of formation of knowledge and ideas among the audience", *Communication: electronic scientific* journal, vol. 4, no. 1, 66-72.

[10] L. I. Afanasyeva, V. I. Merkushin (2005), "The Great Patriotic War in the historical memory of Russia", *Sociological research*, no. 11, 11–22.

[11] N. A. Zorkaya (2005), "Visual images of war", *Memory of the war 60 years later: Russia, Germany, Europe*. Moscow: New Literary Review, 736-753.

[12] V. A. Khokhlov (2010), "The Great Patriotic War in modern Russian cinema: continuation in the fantasy future", *New Historical Bulletin*, no. 1 (23), 67-74.

[13] V. A. Dronov (2015), "Historical and attributive authenticity of the image of the enemy in modern films about the Great Patriotic War", *Power*, vol. 21, no. 4, 182-186.

explored the image of the war from the perspective of reflecting historical memory and the way viewers identify themselves .[14] I. I. Kuznetsov emphasizes the contradictions between the patriotic and nihilistic perception of the Great Patriotic War in modern Russian cinema.[15] The impact of cinema on the formation of patriotic memory of Russians is highlighted by I. V. Griban and K. A. Antropov,[16] V. E. Anisimov, E. V. Gafiyatova and E. D. Kalinnikova.[17] So, a fairly developed tradition of research on post-Soviet cinema as a source of historical knowledge and values of Russians has been formed. At the same time, the political discourse of modern films about Soviet history is dynamically changing, as well as priority topics. This makes the problem poorly understood.

THE STUDY

After the collapse of the USSR, the attitude of Russian citizens towards the Soviet period of history has radically changed. It should be borne in mind that cardinal transformations took place in the context of the collapse of the traditional Soviet film distribution system. In the 1990s, many movie theaters were turned into commercial establishments. Collective viewing of films in halls of 500–1500 people was replaced by individual viewing on video recorders, then on computer screens, laptops, smartphones. The culture of discussing movies in school lessons, after family viewing, has disappeared. Computer games and clip-based thinking had an irreversible effect on film production changes, destroying the line between the real and virtual world, weakening the viewer's ability to think critically and perceive complex ideas. New genres of profit-oriented Russian fiction and documentary films have emerged: thrillers, erotic films, "scandalous" investigations and short videos created not by professional historians, but by dubious publicists. Until the

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[14] O. V. Rodionova (2017) "The image of the Great Patriotic War in cinematography as a reflection of cultural and historical memory and the mechanism of self-identification", *Culturology*, no. 1 (768), 146-167.

[15] I. I. Kuznetsov (2020), "Russian cinema about the Great Patriotic War: between historical narrative and political sabotage", *Genocide of peoples: the tragedy of the era of the Second World War* (round table – 09.25.2020), Moscow Pedagogical State University.

[16] I. V. Griban, K. A. Antropov (2020), "Cinema and memory: The Great Patriotic War in the mirror of modern Russian cinema", *West, East and Russia: Questions of universal history.* Yekaterinburg: Ural State Pedagogical University, Issue 23: Historical memory: genesis and problems of succession, 327–341.

[17] V. E. Anisimov, E. V. Gafiyatova, E. D. Kalinnikova, (2022), "Realization of the idea of patriotism in film discourse: on the example of Russian patriotic cinema", *Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Series: Theory of Language. Semiotics. Semantics*, vol. 13, no. 1, 96-124.

1990s, such genres were impossible in the USSR due to ideological and moral reasons.

In addition, feature films and documentaries of any time reflect the value system, aesthetics and typical images of the famous modern society, and not the "authentic" historical reality of a particular era shown on the screen. Filmmakers subconsciously transfer their life experience, a set of problems and attitudes to historical phenomena to the original plot. This was especially evident in the remakes of famous Soviet films – "And the dawns are quiet here...", "Quiet Don", "Chapaev", etc. It is natural that viewers approve of Soviet original films more than remakes.

In fact, Russian society now represents a completely different audience than it did 35–40 years ago. Most of the current viewers have undergone primary socialization already in conditions of political pluralism and uncertain ideological orientations. They are disappointed in any ideological projects and expect only entertainment from film productions. But the opposite trend is also evident. A significant part of the audience, tired of constant revelations and negative assessments of history, seeks to create in their minds a positive image of the past, based on the continuity of perception of the events of the imperial, Soviet and modern periods. Let us explain for foreign readers that in Soviet cinema the negative image of "tsarist Russia" was rigidly opposed to the idealized image of the USSR, and many key aspects of Russian history, for example, the Orthodox civilizational value system, were ridiculed or hushed up. Now new generations of Russian citizens can create their historical knowledge and attitudes to the past more freely than before the beginning of Perestroika, being in a more adequate system of ideological coordinates.

In the 1990s, the predominance in public opinion had a nihilistic, supercritical perception of the Soviet experience; it was supported by the ruling elites through the restructuring of educational programs, support for anti-Soviet content in the mass media. For example, these are the assessments of the Stalinist period of history in the feature films "Khrustalev, mashinu!" (directed by A. German, 1998), "The Thief" (directed by P. Chukhray, 1997) and "Tired of the Sun" (directed by N. Mikhalkov, 1994). In these films, the actions of 'a little human being' and a soulless, irrationally cruel totalitarian government; there is no positive hero or he is contradictory; there is no trust between people, and the heroes' hopes for happiness are deceived. There is no positive ideal, no purpose in life. It is obvious that such values of the filmmakers of the 1990s are

a projection of modern realities on the historical past. But viewers increasingly perceived such attitudes negatively, and viewers were tired of the monopoly of negative images of the past. As a result, a vacuum of positive values arose, which the directors tried to fill by glorifying the pre-revolutionary (imperial) period of history and creating biographical films about monarchs, generals, poets, the discoverer of Siberia Ermak, etc. Since the mid-1990s, there has been a reduction in the share of anti-Soviet content on Russian television. It is being replaced by retransmissions of Soviet historical films, however, with the exception of those in which the communist ideology was clearly expressed. There were few new films about the Great Patriotic War, and in them the emphasis was on existential experiences of the horror of war, rather than on overcoming fear, not on heroism for the sake of high social goals. In this series, only the films "June 22, exactly at 4 o'clock..." (directed by B. Galkin, 1992), "The General" (I. Nikolaev, 1992), "Angels of Death" (Yu. Ozerov, 1993), "I am a Russian soldier" (A. Malyukov, 1995), "Essay on Victory Day" (S. Ursulyak, 1998).

In the 2000s, the situation gradually began to change towards a positive perception of such aspects of Soviet history as the Victory in the Great Patriotic War, the friendship of peoples, the courage of soldiers, and the conduct of an independent foreign policy. A landmark event was the release of the feature film "In August of the 1944" (directed by M. Ptashuk), a fairly successful film adaptation of V. Bogomolov's novel. This detective film shows the feat of Soviet counterintelligence workers "SMERSH" during the liberation of Belarus and Poland from the Nazis. The characters of the film are shown with obvious sympathy, the director tried to preserve the context and tonality of the novel as much as possible, although he did not quite manage to squeeze the dynamic action into an hour and a half of screen time, he had to sacrifice showing the memories and experiences of the characters. In fact, this is the first positive image of Soviet security personnel in feature films in 15 years. It is no coincidence that the liberal-minded cultural critic Anna Talaver accused the creators of the films "In August of the 1944" and "The Star" of static images and categorical division of roles according to the "friend–enemy" scheme, saw in the reviewed film a dangerous sign of the revival of the "Soviet myth" about the war.[18] From our point

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[18] A. Talaver (2013), *The memory of the Great Patriotic War in post-Soviet cinema. Stages of understanding the past (from the 1990s to the 2000s)*: preprint WP 20/2013/06. Moscow: Publishing House of the Higher School of Economics, 28-29.

of view, we are talking about the revival of a healthy and more objective patriotism than in Soviet times; about pride in our people.

At the same time, the image of the Great Patriotic War in films and television films of the 2000s and 2010s underwent commercialization and virtualization. It is explained that as the contemporaries of the war pass away from life, the memory of the events of the past becomes more and more mediated, constructed. The films "We are from the Future" (directed by A. Malyukov, 2008), "The White Tiger" (directed by K. Shakhnazarov, 2012), the TV series "SMERSH" (started in 2007). Their plots are frankly fantastic, and the aesthetics are a mixture of the style of computer games and American action movies. Given that such films received government funding for production, let's assume that there is a certain political order to blur the "Soviet" discourse about the war. In our opinion, the tendency to dehumanize the plot and the style of its presentation is dangerous. The struggle of ideologies and principles of the world order is replaced in such films by the final battle of "hero No. 1" with "hero No. 2", in which the physically stronger wins. This trend is fraught with a dangerous substitution of orientations: for example, in the movie "The Priest" (2010, directed by V. Khotinenko) the main character is an Orthodox priest who collaborates with the Nazis, and Soviet prisoners of war are shown as uncomplaining and humiliated, they do not inspire sympathy.

The aesthetic aspect cannot be ignored either, since the choice of color, image shape, and music greatly affects the perception of works of art. If we compare the aesthetics of Soviet and modern films about the war, it is easy to notice the emphasis by current directors on the 'dirty' sides of life. From film to film, we are shown torn and dilapidated walls of houses, unshaven faces and sloppy clothes, poor living conditions (for example, in the TV series "Kill Stalin", "Forgotten", the film "Five Brides") – even in situations where the plot does not require it. On the contrary, the life and military affairs of the enemies are demonstrated in an embellished form, with obvious admiration (in the TV series "Red Chapel", "Zorge").

Undoubtedly, such signs of the times existed in historical reality. But in Soviet–era films, the viewer saw, first of all, the opposite – the faces of the positive characters glowing with happiness, energy and moral superiority. And this was not an idealization, not a 'varnishing' of reality, but an expression of the value principle of Soviet cinema: the spirituality of the characters is more important than the convenience of

clothes or the comfort of life. If we move away from empirical historical description towards civilizational analysis, then the aesthetics of the best Soviet films about the war (for example, "Cranes are Flying", "Ballad of a Soldier", "Officers", "And the Dawns are quiet here") latently reflected the Orthodox worldview. Heroes who selflessly die or suffer for their Motherland, overcoming fear and pain for the sake of national Victory, show the highest human values. They inspire empathy in the viewer, the desire to help them and be the same in reality. Alas, the heroes of countless modern films applying the aesthetics of a thriller or a computer game do not arouse compassion and pride, they are lifeless, even if they are depicted technically perfectly. After all, they express the values of another civilization – the Western one, which is absolutely alien to Russian society. Such values can only be imitated, they are meaningless.

At the same time, film broadcasting and television in the 2000s 'cleansed' the events of the Soviet past from communist ideology, bringing to the fore the perception of 'big' history through the eyes of the 'little man' with his daily pragmatic concerns. One of the main themes in the films of the 2000s remained the confrontation between man and the state. It was shown by the example of a conflict between a hero – a representative of the people and a member of the party and state authorities or a 'villain-chekist'. Positive features were given to heroes who defend their views, act independently and are not afraid to take risks (borrowing the image of the hero from Western, especially American cinema, is obvious). At the same time, characters who supported the values accepted in Soviet society and acted in accordance with the orders of their superiors were evaluated negatively, as A. A. Dupak rightly believes.[19] A series of documentaries covering the daily life of Soviet people in the 1950s and 80s became characteristic in this aspect: their work, rest, love, search for scarce goods, hobbies in music, sports, etc. The emphasis in such films was on the struggle between people's desire for freedom and bureaucracy, ideological rigidity of power. Covering the biographies of famous artists, singers and writers, the directors of documentaries of the 2000s emphasized the conflict of intellectuals with the authorities. The positive hero of these films was the 'silent majority' of ordinary people, who found loopholes for enrichment and self-expression, gradually making society and the state more free.

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[19] A. A. Dupak (2019), "The image of the Soviet man in Russian cinema: a sociological analysis", *Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Sociology*, vol. 12, issue 4, 385.

But there was another version of the liberal discourse: the glorification of dissident heroes who hate power, fighters for new phenomena in culture, art and fashion. In the TV series "Forgotten" (directed by V. Schegol'kov, 2011), the main character is a young lawyer who returned from the war with a disability, investigates brutal murders committed by Communist party officials. He cohabits with the local Komsomol chief, secretly despising her and the entire system of government. The only good memory for the hero remains a fleeting affair with a Frenchwoman at the front. This series is simply saturated with hatred of the Soviet system. The film "Dudes" (directed by V. Todorovsky, 2008) is also characteristic. In it, the bulk of the youth of the 1950s are presented as thoughtless "cogs" of a repressive machine headed by careerists. The positive hero is a student and a Komsomol member who is fond of jazz and becomes a 'stylyaga' – a carrier of a youth counterculture that imitated the Western way of life. In the finale of the film, the demonstration of young oppositionists from different times is emotionally praised. Similar ideas are expressed more restrainedly in the television series "Thaw" (2013, directed by V. Todorovsky). It is difficult to get rid of the impression that the political projection of such a discourse was the pro-Western attempts of the 'color revolution' in Russia in the winter of 2011–2012.

Since 2012, Russian cinema and television have been creating more and more films imbued with the ideas of patriotism and personal service to the common good. These are the films "Stalingrad", "The Battle for Sevastopol", "Upward Movement", "Legend No. 17", a series of documentaries about Soviet intelligence officers ("Legends of State Security") and national politics (the cycle "USSR. The Empire is on the contrary"). At the same time, modern historical cinema is still a space of ideological competition. The "allergy" to communist ideologies remains partly in force (for example, in the TV series "Red Mountains"). Television films are also characteristic, in which sharply negative assessments of the creators of Soviet society are given – "Lenin. Inevitability" and "Trotsky", the documentary series "Kronstadt 1921". There is a contradictory perception in public opinion of a number of films about the enemies of the Soviet state – K. Mannerheim, A. Vlasov, and the leaders of the White Movement. Simultaneously with the changes in the value orientations of filmmakers, the priority historical periods and plots chosen for making films are changing. It is known that since 2012 the theme of the Victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War became the "core" of the memory policy and historical policy of

the Russian Federation. This is natural, since Victory is the only event in the Russian history of the twentieth century that integrates the vast majority of citizens and mobilizes them to defend their Homeland.

A mass questionnaire survey conducted by employees of the Federal Research Sociological Center (FNSC) In 2020, the Russian Academy of Sciences (a proportional sample of 2,000 people) confirmed that it is the Victory that respondents are most proud of (67% of respondents), and then in descending order – great poets, writers and composers, the christianization of Rus, Yuri Gagarin's flight into space, liberation from the Mongol yoke, the October Revolution of 1917, the formation of the USSR, the proclamation of the Russian Empire, the abolition of serfdom in 1861, and the reunion of Crimea with Russia.[20] 73% of the respondents acknowledged their interest in Russian history. It is important that the respondents recognized as sources of historical representations: 44% – feature films, 40% – documentaries, 32% – family memory, 26% – Internet resources, 25% – fiction and only 21% – history textbooks. At the bottom of the rating are scientific literature, scientific programs and talk shows on TV, memoirs of historical figures (from 12% to 21%).[21] At the same time, 91% of respondents recognize themselves as patriots, there are no special age differences in the level of patriotism between young people and the elderly, as another questionnaire survey conducted by VCIOM in March 2023 shows (a sample of 1,600 people over the age of 18).[22]

It is characteristic that in the ranking of the 100 most successful feature films in terms of profit and attendance for 2004-2023 are "T-34", "Stalingrad", "Battle for Sevastopol", "Moving Up", "Legend No. 17", "Admiral", "Salyut-7", "9th Company", "Time of the first", "Kandahar". Thus, films directly covering the Soviet period of history make up at least 10% of the most commercially successful films of Russian production.[23] Almost all of them relay to the viewer the values of pride in their country, hard work, dedication, and mutual assistance.

The attitude of Russian citizens towards the coverage of the history of the Great Patriotic War in the mass media is characteristic. A survey organized by the Public Opinion Foundation in April 2023 (a proportional sample of 1,500 people) confirms that 86% of respondents

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[20] A. Chetverikova, Poll: what Russians consider symbols of the country and know about history.

[21] *Ibidem*

[22] Kaleidoskop Poll: More than 90% of Russians consider themselves patriots.

[23] Al'perina S. Kinopoisk presented the rating of "100 great films of the XXI century".

consider Victory Day a holiday. Most often, respondents experience feelings of pride for the country and people on this day (32% of responses), joy (20%). The perception of the holiday is contradictory: at the same time, 16% feel grief, sorrow, sadness; 12% – fear, horror; 9% – memory of dead relatives. At the same time, the absolute majority of respondents recognize the coverage of the Great Patriotic War in the mass media as truthful (75% of the responses). 58% recognize their knowledge of the events of the war as sufficient.[24] Thus, Russian society has developed a positive perception of the history of the Great Patriotic War and the tone of media coverage of its events. But such a perception does not yet have sufficiently strong rational grounds, which is caused by the predominance of mass culture as a channel for relaying historical memory.

CONCLUSION

The author came to conclusions about the loss of the ideological integrity of the content of post-Soviet film production, about the growing importance of the entertainment and communicative functions of films. Having experienced stress while trying to force the imposition of Western liberal values, now the majority of Russians are trying to find support in symbols of historical pride, to build their new political identity based on continuity and a positive perception of Soviet achievements. On the contrary, a significant part of Russian society, especially young people and residents of large cities, have a negative or skeptical attitude towards positive assessments of the Soviet heritage. The inconsistency of the perception of history, eclecticism is manifested in both fiction and documentary films. Among them, films about the Great Patriotic War prevail – a historical event that unites Russian citizens most of all and has positive ratings in public opinion. The periodization of the development of post-Soviet historical cinema in Russia is given according to the criterion of the ideological orientation of the prevailing content. We have identified three stages in the development of film production: the 1990s, 2000–2012 and from 2012 to the present. The first stage is characterized by a radical rejection of Soviet ideologies, coverage of previously forbidden topics (White Movement, opposition, collaborationism, dissidence, etc.). The second stage is marked by a gradual weakening of pro-Western liberal tendencies and an increase in patriotic assessments of history, but no longer on a Marxist, but on a conservative basis. Since

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[24] On the 78th anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War.

2012, the state order for strengthening patriotic values and constructing a positive historical identity of Russian citizens has been gradually increasing, which is gradually changing the image of the Soviet past in the mass consciousness.

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THE FILM INDUSTRY AS A POLITICAL PERSUASION TECHNOLOGY

Abstract

Informatization and digitalization of society lead to the emergence of new political technologies of persuasive communication. The authors propose to consider the political manipulation of mass consciousness during the organization of leisure. The topic touched upon in the article is of a complex interdisciplinary nature. According to the authors, the study of political technologies of persuasive communication in the film industry deserves attention not only from political scientists, sociologists, but also psychologists and educators.

Keywords: *film industry, communication, information impact, information war, information society, digital trace, political technologies.*

There is a complex relationship between world cinema and world politics. Politics is often compared to art. Among the many definitions, there are even those that identify these two phenomena. But politics as a phenomenon is often described in the works of art. Sometimes it is not done very well, but there are pictures that accurately capture a variety of aspects of politics: from the terrible things that people are capable of for the sake of power, to the beautiful, subtle and cunning moves of politicians that change the fate of the whole world.

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A number of film critics and political strategists have compiled a list of the best films about politics. Here is one that was mentioned by several experts: Wag the Dog 1997, House of Cards 2013, All the King's Men 1949/1971, A Man For All Seasons 1966, The Lion In Winter 1968, Primary Colors 1998.[1]

Global digitalization opens up a wide range of opportunities for managing public consciousness and behavior, which attracts the attention of political strategists. Modern information and communication platforms are becoming new tools of persuasive communication and are seen as leverage for manipulating society.

There are theories that demonstrate how one or another previously unacceptable idea can be introduced into society. These approaches are in agreement with the concept of the 'Overton Window', which consists in latent acceptance and approval by public opinion of previously unacceptable phenomena and actions.[2]

The implementation of the idea usually takes place in several stages:[3]

At first, the new idea is denied by traditional norms of morality and is negatively perceived by society. But numerous publications are beginning to appear in the media about the naturalness of this or that phenomenon, which causes what is called 'habituation' to thought.

Further, this idea begins to be considered as possible. International conferences are organized at which the imposed idea is explained as a natural phenomenon; various historical precedents are given as an example. A database of reviews and positive assessments of the proposed position accumulates in a person's mind.

Then the idea begins to be widely discussed, most of society gets used to it, and the people who live in harmony with the old idea are presented as intolerant. In some cases, the idea is popularized, new concepts and directions arise.

In the end, the ultimate consolidation of the idea takes place, including the legislative level. Opponents of the idea begin to be persecuted and pressured.

Television/cinema and social networks are the main forms of leisure for Russian citizens. The Levada Center study shows that 79% of Russian citizens watch films and TV series at least once a week. (For

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[1] M. Lolo (2013), *Cinema and world politics: Simulacra or reflection of reality.*

[2] V. Sorochenko (2002), *Encyclopedia of propaganda methods.*

[3] S. V. Volodenkov, S. N. Fedorchenko (2015) "Overton window - manipulative matrix of political management", *Observer*, №4 2015 (vol. 303), 83-93.

comparison: 2/3 of fellow citizens meet with friends at least once a week, 42 and 43% of survey participants visit friends or receive them).[4]

Visual images determine most of a person's reactions − he receives 90% of all information about the outside world through the organs of vision, therefore, visual means of persuasive communication are used for the most effective impact on consciousness.[5] [6] With their help, it is possible to form the necessary image of both a single politician and the political situation as a whole.

Political cinema has the utmost ability to influence public opinion, in fact, performing the function of political programming, as if explaining the world order from the right angle. For a wide range of ordinary people, the boundaries of perception of the 'necessary' reality are expanding, due to a special montage of reliable material and facts with fiction.

This method of material processing is commonly known as 'fact editing'.[7]

Often, films are perceived by viewers as a kind of integral system: the viewer, captured by the images on screen, experiences the fate of the protagonist as his own. A person ceases to be an observer of events, but becomes a participant in them; modern film production technologies have repeatedly strengthened this aspect. It is this opportunity that is used in political cinema, "when there is an ideologization of reality, the sacralization or overthrow of leaders, the glorification of individual events and persons, or there is an appeal to the base instincts and psychology of the masses, reliance on hard power or the struggle against the "common enemy"."[8]

The main methods of persuasion are various convincing arguments, causal constructions, scientific concepts, etc. But in the film industry, they also use spectacular and effective methods of transmitting information using associations, artificially created images, and so on.[9]

In addition to the visual effect, the filmmakers pay attention to the musical accompaniment, which helps to have an additional emotional impact on the subconscious and imagination of a person.[10]

[4] N. P. Ilyin (2017), "Persuasive communication", *News of the St. Petersburg State Agrarian University*, №4 2017 (vol. 49), 216-220.

[5] F. Jamison (2000), "Postmodernism and consumer society", *Logos*, № 4. 2000, 63-77.

[6] I. M. Dzyaloshinsky (2012) *Communication impact: targets, strategies, technologies*, Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 572.

[7] D. Vilensky, "On the issue of composition of contemporary political art", *Art Magazine*.

[8] L. Malkova, *Modernity as history: the implementation of myth in documentary films.*

[9] M. Martina (2023), *Political cinema as a means of forming a socio-political worldview.*

[10] V. Sorochenko (2002), *Encyclopedia of propaganda methods.*

Simple examples and comparative analysis of films allow us to identify one or another goal is being achieved, for example, a negative image of Russia in action movies or the popularization of army service in military opuses. A classic example of a stereotypical approach in cinema is the film *Armageddon* starring Bruce Willis, released in 1999, collecting, perhaps, all the stereotypes about Russia. During the docking of the American spacecraft to the Russian station, the American characters are met by a Russian cosmonaut, Lev Andropov, dressed in a hat with earflaps, of course, in a drunken state, and for the repair of complex equipment, 'our' protagonist uses a wrench.

Another historical fact: the United States was defeated in the Vietnam War. However, today a generation of Americans admiring the courage and bravery of heroes like Rambo has grown up. These films have become classics of world cinema, and the real story has faded into the background.

Not only does the film industry deserve attention, but TV series do as well. Social media has a direct impact on ordinary citizens; TV series are inserted into the real life of society. The description of political events is as close to reality as possible. Political leaders in the series are a role model for an ordinary person. And through the humor and charisma of the actors, the idea of the legality of all actions of the political elite is implanted in the population. Therefore the state, through movies and TV shows, says what is allowed and what is forbidden.

This approach, combined with the skill of the actor, forces the viewer to subconsciously agree with the arguments and actions of the character. The entertaining nature of the series, laid down at the very beginning, bypasses all possible types of protection and makes a person susceptible to relevant information flows.

Various political actors have learned to use mass culture as a tool of manipulation and are able to plant the necessary ideas and patterns of behavior.

Modern TV series even resemble a news release: both the series and the news will continue tomorrow, and events, as a rule, do not end; both the series and the news are systemic (they praise friends, condemn enemies); both the series and the news exaggerate or downplay the significance of what happened (earthquakes, fires, floods — they are far away, and the authorities are not responsible for them).[11]

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[11] V. Sorochenko (2002), *Encyclopedia of propaganda methods*.

Modern animation deserves special mention. Now there are more and more studies devoted to political animation and the influence of animation on the consciousness of a person, and especially a child. According to teachers, cartoons have a direct impact on the feelings of a child who subconsciously identifies with the cartoon characters. In this case, animation can be used as an educational tool or to form false ideas about the world among the younger generation.[12]

In Lolo M. (2013), persuasive communication technologies were considered as political technologies. The most effective methods of manipulation, which were noted in the table are (see Table 1):

Table 1. Methods of persuasion

Method of persuasion	Comment
Humor, irony, satire	The most common and, perhaps, one of the most effective methods of influence, allowing to consolidate stereotypes and ridicule objectionable political decisions
Visual accompaniment, false analogy, creation of associations	Visualization creates associative images that are retransmitted in specific situations
Music Effect	Providing additional emotional impact
The effect of presence	The illusion of reality, providing a strong emotional impact
Half-truth	The understatement, part of the 'unprofitable' information remains hidden from the broad public masses
Anonymous authority	The method of misleading, resorting to the opinion of: a source close to the situation / scientist / political scientist / expert. This gives solidity to the information, but often in such cases there is nothing and no one behind these "authorities"; a formal phrase

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[12] E. S. Shchuklina (2013), "The role of modern animation in raising a child", *Bulletin of Penza State University*, №4. 2013, 12-14.

Everyday story	Adaptation to negative information. The method is used to get used to any ideas or events
Distraction ('chattering', shifting accents)	Hiding real goals and solutions under visually attractive images
Falsification of historical events and creation of a 'hostile image'	Changing attitudes to the events of the past, shifting emphasis from the general to the particular, redistribution of the outcome of events, reproduction of historical myths, etc.
Repetition	Repeated presentation of information in different sources with a certain periodicity. Society is reminded of how to behave and how to react to specific events
Contrast	The most effective method that uses visualization to reinforce the news agenda (for example, the gloomy image of Russian cities in cinema)
Information wave	Active dissemination of the same type of information through all distribution channels. Cinema in this case is passive in nature, since its creation takes time.

TV and modern mass culture wean the viewer from critically perceiving information, the so-called 'political protection' (which allows a person to think rationally, analyze, distinguish political information from political science) at the time of watching a movie or TV series is powerless.

The modern education system and the teacher, in particular, are not able to withstand such a large-scale informational impact that children and young people are exposed to now.

It may be necessary to reconsider the teaching format, which will help to prevent and protect the modern generation from information aggression.

Every year the issue of protection from the information press becomes more relevant. Political technologies of persuasive communication are able to achieve their goals without the use of the 'force effect'. The danger is that the authors of political cinema can arbitrarily create the image they need, form a sense of justice and moral rightness of a

character, thus political cinema can be considered as a means of ideological struggle and a way of forming a new reality.[13]

As the researchers of political cinema note, cinema is "a flexible art form that quickly responds to the demands of society, the spiritual level of which does not matter much."[14] Cinema influences the emotional sphere of consciousness, forms clear images that later replace old attitudes. It can be said that cinema latently creates in the viewer's imagination an illusory picture of the world in a mythologized form.

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THE FILM "ALEXA DUNDIĆ" AS PART OF THE POLICY OF OVERCOMING THE CONFLICT OF THE FPR OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE USSR

Abstract

Based on newspaper captions, the text deals with the film "Aleksa Dundić" (Russian: Олеко Дундич) shot in 1958 in co-production of the FPRY and the USSR. The author wants to point out how and to what extent the political reason of the moment in the relations between the two countries was paramount for its creation.

Keywords: *film, politics, Yugoslavia, USSR, Aleksa Dundić.*

Yugoslavia's relations with the Soviet Union experienced a radical turn after 1948. After the death of Stalin, an attempt was made to reconcile the ideological and practical political positions with Tito's meetings with Khrushchev in 1955 and 1956. However, throughout the existence of two essentially close regimes, they were in extraordinary contradiction regarding the way of building socialism and their position in international relations. Belgrade insisted on something the West called "national communism."[1]

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[1] There is an abundance of literature on this, from which I will highlight: Fingar, C. Thomas. 1999. Yugoslavia. From „National Communism" to national collapse. US Intelligence Communiti estimative protucts on Yugoslavia, 1948-1999. Washington: National Intelligence Council; Bogetić, Dragan. 2006. Nova strategija Jugoslovenske spoljne politike 1956-1961. Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Bogetić, Dragan. 2000. Jugoslavija i Zapad 1952-1955. Jugoslovensko približavanje NATO-u. Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Dimić, Ljubodrag.

It is known that film has been a powerful means of influence, because it strongly affects the consciousness, emotions and imagination of the viewer. This was noticed early on. From the original, according to many, bizarre "scientific invention" the film was suitable for fair attractions. For example, Edison considered it without seeing any new aesthetic form in it. But eventually film gradually turned into art, but also a powerful tool for influencing and shaping consciousness. All those who treated the film simply as a way to make theatrical performances more accessible to a wider audience were also wrong. That is why filming began early in different interiors and exteriors.[2] Even more wrong were those who believed the invention of film would destroy theater. Many predicted the end of painting with the invention of photography at the same time at the end of the 19th century.[3]

One of the earliest revolutionary steps in film is related to the American director David W. Griffith (1875-1948), who laid the foundations for film as a new art. At the same time, Griffith showed his ambition to express his political views in the monumental film "The Birth of a Nation" from 1915. This film dealt with the war between the northern and southern states of the USA in 1861-1865.[4] Of course, war films have remained an unavoidable subject of numerous more or less successful film productions to this day.

The feature film "Aleksa Dundić" (Олеко Дундич) premiered in 1958 and was a production of two film companies, one from Belgrade and the other from Moscow. Actors and other artists from both countries took part in it, and it was filmed in Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. Premieres were held in both countries. The film is basically conceived as a revolutionary biography of Aleksa Dundić. However, "Aleksa Dundić" is not just a biography, but a war film about the events in Russia from 1917 to 1920. The life of this person has been an enigma for a long time.

1999. „Jugoslovensko-sovjetski odnosi 1953-1956", u *Jugoslovensko-sovjetski sukob 1948*, ur. Petar Kačavenda, 279-293. Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju; Петровић, Ненад Ж. Војна сарадња Југославије са Совјетским Савезом 1953-1964. године. Поглед из Београда, Београд: Институт за стратегијска истраживања. Мићуновић, Veljko. 1984. Moskovske godine 1956/58. Drugo izdanje. Beograd: Jugoslovenska revija.

[2] David Parkinson (2014), *Istorija filma*, Beograd: Dereta, 7-21. Edison did not patent his invention of the "kinetoscope" because he felt nothing would come of it. This misjudgment cost him dearly, so the Limière brothers overtook him in the invention with the first public projection of "moving pictures" on December 28, 1895, in Paris. (Parkinson 2014, 15)

[3] The prediction that radio will be destroyed by the introduction of television turned out to be wrong. Today we see cinema screenings are in crisis, that there are no visitors except for the rare elderly, that the cinemas are mostly empty while the theaters are full.

[4] David Parkinson (2014), *Istorija filma*, Beograd: Dereta, 22-26.

His real name is Tomo, but his name is Aleksa (known in Soviet literature as Oleko and Ivan). He was born in the village of Grabovac near Imotski (now Croatia, then Austria-Hungary) in 1896 or 1897 and died near Rovno in Ukraine on July 8, 1920. As a twelve-year-old, he went living with his relatives in South America, working as a cattle driver in Argentina and Brazil.

Returning to his homeland with the outbreak of the World War, he was mobilized in the army of the Dual Monarchy. In May 1916, he was captured in Russia and then joined the Serbian Volunteer Corps. After the February Revolution, he joined the Red Army. He was appointed commander at the headquarters of Semyon Budjoni's First Cavalry Division. He participated in numerous battles in which he was wounded. He was awarded the Order of the Red Banner. He became one of the epic figures of the Russian Revolution and Civil War. After the end of the war, his name was inscribed on the walls of the Kremlin together with other heroes of the revolution. A monument was erected to him in Rovno.[5]

"Aleksa Dundić" should be seen not only as a work of art but also as a tool within the new policy of rapprochement between two states and two similar regimes. Especially, after the years of conflict caused by Informburo resolutions in 1948 and 1949. It should be brought into the context of the time after the exchanged visits of Nikita Khrushchev and Josip Broz in 1955 and 1956. After a break of several years, cultural, educational and artistic ties were renewed, but with mutual suspicion of the other's intentions, especially from the Yugoslav side. It was constantly concerned about preserving "its own path in building socialism", which is why it feared "hegemonic" influences from the East. In the midst of preparations for the film, major social and political unrest took place in Hungary in October and November 1956, which may have slowed down, but still did not prevent the realization of the film.

Post-war Yugoslavia was distinguished by a very rich film production. A large number of plays and documentaries were recorded. Many of them achieved enviable success at international festivals. The first foreign co-production was the film Bloody Road (Blodveinen), which was made together with a partner from Norway and directed jointly by Radoš Novaković and Kåre Bergstrøm in 1955. The plot of the film is about the escape of captured Yugoslav partisans from a camp in Norway.[6]

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[5] *Српска енциклопедија* (2021) том III, књига 2, 721. Нови Сад-Београд: Матица српска, САНУ, Завод за уџбенике, 721.

[6] Among the local actors, Yugoslav theater and film stars participated: Mihailo Bata Paskaljević,

Then, in 1956, the Franco-Italian-West German film "Mihail Strogov", based on Jules Verne's novel of the same name, was shot in Košutnjak. Although it was a foreign production without local actors, it is worth mentioning as the first experience in shooting foreign films in our studios and not by chance with partners from a nominally "alien" capitalist world.[7] This was all an indicator of the cultural and business turn to the West. Therefore, the venture with "Aleksa Dundić" can be considered as a kind of "balancing" towards the East.

PRESS WRITING ABOUT THE PREPARATION AND RECORDING

The first hint about the film appeared in "Politika" on September 26, 1956.[8] It has been announced that the film will be directed by the famous Soviet artist Leonid Lukov and will feature actors from both countries. The script will also be the result of joint work. After this, there was complete silence about this venture – during which time the screenwriters wrote and harmonized the script – until the spring of the following year. Then Borba informed the public on May 30, 1957, that a co-production contract had been signed with Avala Film. The screenwriters were listed as M. Katz, L. Lukov (also director) and Antonije Isaković. An actor was still being sought for the main role of Aleksa Dundić. The film was expected to be completed by the end of the year.[9] However, the shooting did not start as announced and the press speculated who would be the main protagonist. Rade Marković was singled out as the most serious candidate and Branko Pleša as his rival in the film, officer Pavel Hodžić. It was pointed out that the film is being prepared as part of the celebration of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution.

Ivan Jonas, Milan Milošević, Antun Nalis and Milivoje Živanović. (The film and information about it can be seen on the YouTube channel.)

[7] Information about the film can be found on the YouTube channel. Later, during the 1960s and 1970s, Košutnjak and the Jadran film studio in Zagreb were places where a large number of foreign and co-produced Yugoslav films with foreign partners were filmed. Thus, in 1962, in Zagreb, Orson Welles directed "The Process" based on Franz Kafka's novel with Hollywood star Antony Perkins, famous in those years for his role in Hitchcock's "Psycho."

[8] "Studio Gorki and Avala film are shooting a film about Aleksa Dundić." (I am grateful to the Archives of the Yugoslav Cinematheque for this and other press clippings from the Yugoslav press on the subject of this film. They gave examples to me from their rich collection. – Author)

[9] "The shooting of the film "Aleksa Dundić" will begin on June 15."

It fell on November 7 of that year.[10] As we will see, due to the delay in the realization, the film arrived in cinemas later.

Although the beginning of filming was announced for the middle of June, the work did not start until the beginning of July. The director from Moscow stayed in Belgrade, chose actors for test shoots and toured the grounds around the capital. It turned out that there were several candidates for the main role: Branko Pleša, Rade Marković, Predrag Pepi Laković and Ljuba Bogdanović. The director chose Pleša. The Russian protagonists Piletskaya, Konyukhova and Soloviev also arrived. Mass scenes of battles that historically take place in Ukraine were filmed in Glogonj and on the Pancevački rit.[11] Finally, when filming began on July 11 on the grounds in Banat, the news about it attracted the attention of several print media throughout Yugoslavia. It was emphasized that hundreds of extras participate in the mass scenes, which should depict the battles of the "reds" and "whites" in the steppes. Over 500 soldiers of the cavalry units of the Yugoslav People's Army were engaged for these needs. The role of Dundić's rival Hodžić was entrusted to Milan Puzić.[12]

With the end of filming in Yugoslavia, it moved to the USSR. There the work continued in exteriors in Crimea and Kherson, as well as in Moscow film studios.[13]

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[10] "Aleksa Dundić: Hero of the October Revolution", *Večer*, Maribor, June 17, 1957. The text is accompanied by a photo of Rade Marković. (It will turn out that Marković will not participate in this film and that Pleša took the lead role.)

[11] „Лав са срцем детета. Ускоро почиње снимање филма `Алекса Дундић`", *Младост*, Београд 3. јул 1957.

[12] „Почело снимање филма `Алекса Дундић`", *Политика*, Београд 12. јул 1957; „Снима се...", *Борба*, Београд 14. јул 1957; „Пре неколико дана почело је снимање Југословенско-совјетског копродукционог филма `Алекса Дундић`", *Панчевац*, Панчево 20. јул 1957; С. Селенић, „Са снимања филма `Алекса Дундић`. Био је то лав са срцем малог детета", *Борба*, 30. јул 1957. (Касније познати драмски писац и професор у извештају са снимања препричава да му је Љуба Тадић рекао како је на снимању пао са коња „комплетног идиота".); И. Б., „Снима се `Алекса Дундић`", *Политика*, Београд 30. јул 1957; Blaženka Stejić, „Vjeran lik Alekse Dundića", *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo 1. avgust 1957; П. Ђуричић, „Јединице ЈНА на снимању филма Алекса Дундић. Два доба на једном полигону", *Народна армија*, Београд 15. август 1957.

[13] „Успомена на великог човјека. Екипа `Алексе Дундића` завршила снимање у Панчеву и одлази у SSSR", *Globus*, Zagreb 31. avgust 1957; „`Алекса Дундић` на Криму", *Политика*, Београд 8. октобар 1957; „Prva Jugoslovansko-sovjetska koprodukcija. Aleksa Dundić", *Slovenski poročevalec*, Ljubljana 21. oktobar 1957; „Завршено снимање филма `Алекса Дундић`", *Црвена звезда*, Београд 18. март 1958; „Снимајући у Москви", *Борба*, Београд 15. април 1958.

CRITICAL REVIEWS OF THE FILM IN THE PRESS

A feature-length film shot in color (which was still rare and expensive at the time), and especially a war theme with lots of mass scenes and spectacular shots of cavalry charging through the plain, with lots of pyrotechnics and shooting, had to attract the attention of both the audience and the critics. Of course, the very context that the film was designed as a contribution to the October jubilee. A suitable person was found who connects the history of two nations and also ideologically beyond any doubt. It was a participant in the civil war on the side of socialism was clearly ideological. The main actor, then a rising star, Branko Pleša, spoke about this most directly.[14] Speaking about the film, he did not hide that political and ideological moment: "It is precisely because of this (that Dundić was one of thirty thousand "our people" in the forces of the Bolsheviks – N. P.) that our task is doubly difficult." We were reminded of that by Vice President Kardelj's greeting[15] during the celebration of the 40th anniversary in October, when the name of Aleksa Dundić was mentioned alongside the names of the legendary heroes of the Revolution ... That's why the film about Dundić will be a monument to our hero on the screen. Not a monument to the iron-concrete hero, but to Aleksa Dundić the man."[16]

Finally, the film was belatedly premiered at the Festival of Yugoslav Feature Films in Pula.[17] Apart from Pleša and Puzić, our actors in the film featured Ljuba Tadić, Stojan Aranđelović, Dragomir Felba, Zoran Benderić and Viktor Starčić in the episodic role of a Serbian general. Among the Soviet actors, Tatyana Pileckaya and Tatyana Konyukhova had bigger roles. After that, a ceremonial premiere was held in the

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[14] Branimir Vjenceslav Pleša (Kiseljak, Bosnia and Herzegovina 1926 – Belgrade 2001), studied acting in Zagreb and Belgrade. He had his first professional engagement at the Croatian National Theater in the 1945/46 season. Since its foundation in 1947, he had been a member of the Yugoslav Drama Theater in Belgrade. Achieved a number of outstanding roles in theater, film and television. He also directed theatre, television and film.

[15] Edvard Kardelj (Ljubljana 1910-1979) was then the vice-president of the Federal Executive Council, i.e. the Federal Government.

[16] „Бранко Плеша у Београду. `Да није било рата Дундић би био глумац`", *Борба*, Београд 11. децембар 1957. (The opinion about Dundić from the subtitle was given by Budjoni. It refers to the fact that Dundić resorted to, otherwise prohibited by the Hague Convention, disguising himself in the uniforms of the rival party. It enabled him to infiltrate the enemy's rear and perform spectacular actions. Some of those actions, of course with Hollywood exaggerations, found a place in the film.)

[17] Љ. Радичевић, „Од свега по мало-од свачег по нешто. Филм `Алекса Дундић` успела ко-продукција", *Вечерње новости*, Београд 23. јул 1958.

Uran cinema in Moscow, which was attended by the FPRY ambassador Veljko Mićunović and the staff of the embassy.[18] From the premiere in Pula and then with the release of the film in a regular cinema screening, a series of texts followed that either merely noted the beginning of the screening or showed it critically.[19] The fact that there was no formal premiere in Belgrade – where the Soviet ambassador and other dignitaries would have attended as the equivalent of the Moscow premiere – indicates the Yugoslav side wanted to downplay the importance of the film. They feared it would create the impression of overly great closeness to Moscow, which was constantly avoided.

Even though the film was a state project of foreign policy importance and as such imbued with the ideology of communism and socialist revolution, in the vast majority of newspaper reviews it was rated poorly, sometimes more moderately. Based on the watched film that can be found on the YouTube channel, we believe that these criticisms were appropriate. They ranged from the fact that the film is technically (directorially) well done, but the viewer does not get an answer to the basic question: who was Aleksa Dundić? No personality was visible from the heroized character.[20] This claim was completely contrary to what Pleša stated in his interview with "Borba." Criticism was unrelenting: the film is more like a western than a biography of a revolutionary. "But the way Dundić is portrayed here – a rider under whom three horses die during one battle and he remains almost unharmed; a gallant cavalier who easily penetrates the White Guards' ball; an adventurer who kidnaps the general of the interventionist army in the blink of an eye – that's Dundić to us. He looks more like a hero of cowboy movies than a serious revolutionary of the Red Army."[21]

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[18] „Премијера филма `Алекса Дундић` у Москви", *Политика*, 27. септембар 1958. In his memoirs, Mićunović does not mention the premiere of the film. In those days, he was preparing to return to Yugoslavia after two years spent in Moscow. (Mićunović, Veljko. 1984. Moskovske godine 1956/58. Drugo izdanje. Beograd: Jugoslovenska revija.)

[19] Newspapers from smaller towns also noted the beginning of the show in their areas: *Панчевац*, Панчево 15. септембар 1958; *Наша реч*, Лесковац 31. јануар 1959; *Напред*, Ваљево 28. фебруар 1959; *Народне новине*, Ниш 15. новембар 1958.

[20] S. G., „V kinu nam kažejo", *Slovenski poročevalec*, Ljubljana 3. novembar 1958. The author writes that already the premiere audience in Pula as well as the critics welcomed the film with some restraint. („nekoliko zadržano").

[21] М. К., „Алекса Дундић", *Дневник*, Нови Сад 11. децембар 1958. The film is similarly characterized in the review V. K., „Aleksa Dundić", *Glas Slavonije*, Osijek 21. decembar 1958. (We cannot escape the impression that this film was an early hint of the partisan roles of Bata Živojinović and Ljubiša Samardžić. Basically building a character in the manner of Hollywood spectacular unrealistic characters e.g. James Bond 007.)

The remark was also that the role of the interventionist forces of the Entente remains a mystery to the average viewer and that the rival side ("whites") is depicted in a caricature. "Why the distorted individuality of the opponents, intoned with elements of caricature? ... "Aleksa Dundić" is not a masterpiece: it is at the level of similar Soviet works that demonstrate one style."[22] The director made a typical action film that does not deal with the psychology of the main character. But the scenes of the "invulnerable" hero contribute to a simplified view of Dundić.[23] There is melodrama and pathos in the film, the character of Dundić is given superficially, but the mass scenes are excellently filmed.[24] The character of Dundić was conceived romantically and not as a revolutionary: "Whether this was done for commercial or other reasons is not clear. But there is no doubt that the emphasized romanticism certainly interferes with the portrayal of a strong October figure."[25]

It is significant the strongest criticism came from "Borba", the central paper of the Socialist Union of the Working People of Yugoslavia. It states the film is a "revolutionary western": "This means that in it psychology has given way to action and realistic dramatic analysis to romantic pathos."[26] In the central Zagreb newspaper, it was also noted that: "Before the viewer's eyes, a wide variety of mostly spectacular scenes in color line up. From battles to gypsy dances, from aristocratic balls to love lyrics, from comic details to tragic death, this film spins before us like a somewhat strange kaleidoscope. But through all this, through the dynamics of the revolutionary ferment and through the director's effort to make the film as vivid as possible, it feels a bit like a rosy cliché."[27]

CONCLUSION

We have nothing to add to everything stated in the evaluation of the film by the domestic press. The question remains whether such unfavorable writings were instructed by the political structures of the time. They may have in the meantime concluded they "stumbled" into a dangerous fraternization with Moscow, or that it was really the freely

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[22] Коста Васиљковић, „Пустоловна хероика", *Студент*, Београд 16. децембар 1958.

[23] „Bioskopi prikazuju… Legenda o revolucionaru", *Oslobođenje*, Sarajevo 21. januar 1959.

[24] Ђ. В. „Алекса Дундић", *Црвена звезда*, Београд 16. децембар 1958.

[25] M. J., „Filmovi koje gledamo. `Aleksa Dundić`", *Slobodna Dalmacija*, Split 22. maj 1959.

[26] М. Милошевић, „Културни живот. Романтична прича о хероју", *Борба*, Београд 10. децембар 1958.

[27] „`Aleksa Dundić`. Uspjela koprodukcija", *Vjesnik*, Zagreb 14. novembar 1958.

expressed opinion of film critics. Also, we do not know how the Soviet press covered the film because we were unable to consult the sources there. In any case, during the period of the Second Yugoslavia – except for a short period from 1945 to 1948 – there were extremely few co-production films between the two countries, and far more with partners from various Western countries. Also, there were few films from the Soviet Union in the regular cinema repertoire. Films from the USA, Germany, Italy, France dominated… The Yugoslav public at the time was dominated by the belief that a system in which there are no basic civil liberties cannot produce any worthwhile artistic achievements. Films behind the "Iron Curtain" were viewed as propaganda projects, as unrealistic "paint coats." It was forgotten that even through films that openly show various social anomalies that affected (and are affecting) the countries of capitalism, propaganda also spreads in its own way. If nothing else, propaganda that "everything is possible" there and that these are "free societies."

NOTE: We note with regret that due to the work carried out in the Diplomatic Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia, it was impossible for us to view the documents from the archive of the then State Secretariat for Foreign Affairs of the FPRY. In it (as we know from earlier research on other topics) there are reports from the Embassy in Moscow regarding this film and its political background. This work remains to be completed later with that data when it becomes accessible.

Translated by Dajana Lazarević

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE FILM "THEY LIVE"

Abstract

This paper is an anthropological analysis of John Carpenter's famous film They Live. The film allows many interpretations, but here we have focused on the criticism of a despiritualized, materialistic world in which the basic moral distinction between good and evil has been lost, which is why man, society, culture, and nature are on the path of degradation. The director also warned the viewers that a return to traditional religion, specifically Christianity, is the only way to escape the ruin towards which the world is headed, governed by the unbridled material interests of capitalists.

Our approach here is interpretive; the method is to interpret the elements of the film as symbols that we read in the context appropriate for our purpose, and the goal is to present to the readers an anthropological interpretation of the film as a symbolic representation of the detour on which humanity strayed while developing materialistic ideas as the basis of modernist secularism and a way to return to the path of healthy progress.

Keywords: *They Live, John Carpenter, anthropological analysis, unrestrained capitalism, deviations of secular humanism, return to Christianity.*

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INTRODUCTION

The feature film They Live is a famous work by director John Carpenter, released in 1988. Carpenter is famous for horror movies, but this movie does not belong to that genre. Here, the author used an element of science fiction – the presence of aliens on Earth – to address a very realistic social issue. However, there are other reasons this film stands out among other films in Carpenter's oeuvre. It also stands out among Hollywood films in general. People still talk about They Live, more than forty years later, because of its timeless and even growing topicality. Carpenter himself explained this increasing agreement between the film and reality in an interview by classifying the film in a genre to which it does not formally belong: "You have to understand something: it's a documentary, it's not science fiction". As a clarification of the designation documentary, he specified that the film talks about "unbridled capitalism".[1]

They Live was created at a time when Great Britain and the USA themselves adopted the socio-economic ideology of the free market – unrestrained capitalism – after several experiments in other countries showed the tragic effects of its application.[2] In his film, Carpenter showed a society completely subordinated to that order. We compared his futuristic vision with some of the latest directions of development within capitalist society – surveillance capitalism and transhumanism. We shall see that Carpenter's vision corresponds to these phenomena in surprising ways, as if he were describing them, even though they could not have been predicted at the time the film was created. We conclude that the symbols used in the film represent the essence of neoliberal ideology so that they naturally correspond even to the phenomena that emerged after the film.

Carpenter did not stop at the depressing vision of a society subordinated to the interests of unbridled capitalists. Throughout the film, there are reminders of Christianity as a religion of salvation. We concluded that he saw a way out of materialistic nonsense, either in Christianity itself, the supreme religion of salvation, or in a principled return to traditional spirituality – whatever it is in each specific society.

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[1] Jordan Zakarin (2015), "John Carpenter Looks Back on 'They Live': 'It is Not Science Fiction. It is a Documentary'", *Yahoo Entertainm*ent, October 9.

[2] Naomi Klein (2008), *Doktrina šoka: Uspon kapitalizma katastrofe*, Zagreb: V.B.Z. d.o.o.

Our approach here is interpretative; the method used is interpreting film story elements as symbols that we put in contexts appropriate for our goal, and the goal is to show that They Live is a representation of the detour on which humanity went astray while developing materialistic ideas as the basis of modernist secularism. The film depicts a world in which man has lost his soul, society has lost its moral values, and culture has lost its communicative meaning. Nevertheless, it is also a call for a return to authentic man, society, and culture, all of which implies a spiritual dimension.

GENRE TRANSFORMATION: FROM ACTION AND SCI-FI TO DOCUMENTARY

In his earlier interviews, John Carpenter talked about the movie They Live as an action genre, emphasizing the struggle of a lonely homeless man against a powerful organization. He did not emphasize the socio-political message in the foreground, even less the cultural-anthropological one, because the process of globalization of neoliberal order had not yet advanced enough to confirm the full visionary significance of the film. He presented the political aspect as specific to the USA, as a critique of the domestic economic policy under President Ronald Reagan.

However, it was already clear then that the film is not only about the situation in the USA, thanks to the science fiction element. Researchers have already noted that filmmakers often set the plots of alien-themed films in the USA, as Americans are considered "legitimate representatives of Earthlings and interpreters of the common interests of the entire human species".[3] This was one of how Hollywood production supported the rise of the US into a global empire long before that direction of world development became apparent.

The film respects, in a formal sense, the rule of the sci-fi genre that aliens necessarily come to an American city and do whatever they set out to do, be it good or bad for the people. However, in contrast to all other films about aliens that attempt to depict these creatures as unfamiliar entities, the film They Live clearly utilizes the concept of an alien purely as a symbol of a man transformed into an inhuman being

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[3] Владимир Рибић, (2010), "Свемир као амерички империјални простор", Бојан Жикић (прир.) *Наш свет, други светови. Антропологија, научна фантастика и културни идентитети*, Београд: Српски генеалошки центар и Одељење за етнологију и антропологију Филозофског факултета у Београду, 158.

by extreme materialism, who appears to be from another planet. The design of their faces, which we will discuss later, speaks of the dying of humanity in people who subordinate themselves and everything around them to their material interests.

In later interviews, the director no longer mentions either the action or sci-fi aspect of the film, but describes They Live as a documentary whose relevance is growing. We do not know if Carpenter was surprised by the inspiration with which he made a film of such visionary power and symbolic depth. Near the film's end, a precise prophecy was even uttered: specifically, the year 2025 is mentioned as the deadline by which aliens are expected to dominate the Earth completely. In any case, new meanings of film are revealed before us as we observe the trends of global development. The symbolism of the film They Live is increasingly turning into reality, while the film, in terms of genre, is truly becoming more and more documentary.

Here, we will pay attention to the latest phenomena in the lap of unbridled capitalism that were not even conceived at the time of the filming of They Live, but which he nevertheless predicted. This is proof that in his film Carpenter captured the very essence of the destructive impact of capitalism on man and society. As it is more and more exposed in reality through the imperial progress of the market in all parts of the world and areas of life, so the film takes on an increasingly documentary, realistic quality.

CONTENT OF THE FILM

The action of the film is set in a big city in the USA and the following circumstances: the world has been taken over by aliens, whose faces look like rotting corpses, beneath which a metal skull with mechanical eyes can be seen. They live by parasitizing various planets throughout the universe, depleting their resources and abandoning them when they have devastated them. Aliens are integrated into human society in positions of power. They also have their private world located underground, where they have built a system of vast tunnels and rooms. There, they can disappear from the surface of the Earth at the moment when they need, and to move freely, hold meetings, and talk openly. We are also shown the launch site for their teleportation through space, without effort or spacecraft.

To keep their presence and activities hidden from humans, aliens keep humans in a hypnotized state through meaningless, empty values of consumer society and subliminal messages suggesting submission. A signal is being broadcast from the building of the central national television that disables people from seeing the real state of affairs and from thinking critically. To bewitched people, the hideous faces of the aliens appear as ordinary human faces. They do not even see that every image or text in advertisements, in the press, and on traffic signs represents a colorful lie behind which is hidden a decisive command to people to be submissive and to carry out their consumer tasks dutifully. Liberation would occur when people see the truth, but the signal broadcast prevents that.

A group of scientists accidentally discovered the signal, and a resistance movement emerged. Still, the fight is pretty futile. Firstly, because the truth about the presence of extraterrestrials sounds incredible, and secondly, because the truth makes people physically ill due to its interference with the misleading signal. That is why the people nervously and impatiently turn away from rebels, and with relief return to the deception to which they have become accustomed as a normal state of mind. The resistance movement produces special dark glasses through which the true state of affairs can be seen as a black-and-white reality, but they are intended as an auxiliary tool for those who have already believed in the truth. People who have seen the truth are divided into those who fight for everyone to come to their senses and those who treacherously collaborate with the aliens for the privileges they receive in that tragic colonial system.

THE STORY

Throughout the entire film, we follow the main character, who is in every scene. He is a simple man looking for a wage job. He believes in the American Dream, which says that with honest work, you can achieve decent living conditions and perhaps the opportunity to acquire something more than necessary. The hero's last name is Nada, which means "nothing" or "anything" in Spanish and Portuguese. He is, therefore, a modest somebody with an optimistic attitude that his destiny depends on his two hands and a little luck. Nada occasionally encounters the actions of the resistance movement trying to present the truth to people. He does not understand what it is about, but he is interested, so he starts

researching as soon as he gets the chance. The local church serves as the headquarters of the resistance movement, where Nada gets his first pieces of information and, most importantly, a pair of glasses.

Everything that Nada learns gradually and fragmentarily gains full meaning – for him and the film's viewers – when he uses the glasses. Instantly, he saw the shocking truth, and all the knowledge he had received until then without understanding and with doubt now became a solid picture of reality. With great effort, Nada manages to persuade a colleague and friend to put on glasses, after which he is no longer alone with his knowledge of the truth. The two decide to reach the center where the stun signal is emitted and disable the broadcast. They complete the task but at the cost of their lives. Nada dies with a smile, however, as the fatal antenna explodes and people across America suddenly see the truth clearly: the hideous faces of the aliens among them and messages from all around suggesting them to give up their free will. In the final shot, Nada gives the camera his middle finger with his last strength.

TWO IMAGES OF MAN IN EXTREME CAPITALISM

What Carpenter saw immediately when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher subordinated their states to the needs of unbridled capitalism became increasingly clear to the moviegoers as the neoliberal order conquered the world from those two political centers. Humanity is breaking down into two castes, which tend to become different anthropological species – but both equally tragic. On the one hand, there are powerful owners of almost everything, with no living human soul in them. On the other hand, there are ordinary people, whose whole being and life are in slavery to the market. Both are in the grip of extreme materialism as a worldview. They Live vividly depicts the situation where humanity is subjected to the free market regime. The ruling group is completely dehumanized due to its orientation solely towards increasing its wealth. They treat people and nature without any understanding, compassion, or respect – just as if they came from another planet to which they can go when they have ruined everything on Earth. Ordinary people, on the other hand, are also prevented from leading a life in which all human potential would be manifested. The masters of the market wage war against all values and institutions that interfere with the absolute dominance of their material interests. The war is waged through perfidious techniques of psychological manipulation, which Carpenter

portrayed in the film as the influence of the mass media, considering that at the time of the film's creation, digital reality and the corresponding information society had not yet been developed.

The special quality of the film is its visionary ability regarding the further development of capitalist society towards total control and man towards complete transformation into another being. With the digitalization process, which covers more and more areas of life, the conditions have been created to place the world imperceptibly under the absolute control of unbridled capitalists. Much of the latest scientific and essay literature deals with the various details and aspects of this process. Here, we will pay attention to the two most dramatic flows of this development: the planned development of society in the direction of the so-called digital concentration camp and transhumanism as a planned evolution of man in the direction of his union with machines, which in time should take over from man the leading role in the world. We can recognize both in the film They Live. However, at the time of its creation, it was not possible to predict these specific phenomena, considering that the necessary conditions for their planning and realization did not yet exist.

SURVEILLANCE CAPITALISM

The amalgam of digital opportunities and capitalist ambitions introduced capitalism into a new development phase of information capitalism.[4] The massification of the Internet and the accelerated progress of artificial intelligence, however, represent an irresistible temptation for the most powerful people in digital reality to turn the existing neoliberal capitalism astray even more than the market ideology itself. In recent times, it has been shown that the development of IT techniques and technologies, which led to the development of the IT society, is the condition that was needed for everything to move towards the establishment of global totalitarianism.

Instead of rational capitalism, which is bound to a relationship of reciprocity with citizens through democratic institutions,[5] a group of Google insiders began abusing the company's specific capabilities to collect and process knowledge about every Internet user. Taking advantage of the absence of any democratic regulation in the digital realm, Google

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[4] Šošana Zubof (2020), *Doba nadzornog kapitalizma: Borba za budućnost čoveka na novom rubu moći*, Beograd: Clio, 40.

[5] *Ibid*, 65.

has established and enforced its own rules that allow it to advance its "ability to guess and read the thoughts, feelings, intentions, and interests of individuals and groups, whether or not the observed person knows it and approves, thereby gaining privileged secret access to behavioral data",[6] and thus a large measure of control over the digitally networked world. This is neither a spontaneous nor a necessary phenomenon within the information era or information capitalism (100),[7] but rather a deliberate deviation, which its researcher Shoshana Zuboff called *the project of commercial surveillance* or *surveillance capitalism*.[8]

Data about people's behavior, but also those collected by Google's specific services and projects, such as Earth or Street View, become the raw material for the production of "highly profitable algorithmic products" that are sold to clients interested in knowing our future behavior.[9] Although digital reality was supposed to be a new dimension of the existing democratic order, which improved it so that everyone could have unlimited communication and access to an immeasurable amount of information, there was a "perversion of the digital dream" .[10] In this new digital nightmare, "information and connectivity are paid for by behavioral data" over the collection and use of which people have no control, not even in the form of copyright.[11] The processing of collected data is directed toward the production of forecasting tools and the modification of human behavior to remove human free will as much as possible, given that it is a factor that hinders the reliability of predictions.[12]

Instead of collecting information about users only to improve the services – what Zuboff calls "the cycle of behavioral value reinvestment" – it is used for this only to a small extent, while the main business of digital firms is to sell insights into our most intimate inner lives, so to anticipate our future decisions as successfully as possible.[13] The relationship of reciprocity between digital companies and Internet users has been broken without the users being aware of what is happening. While we think we are users and clients on the Internet, we are, in fact, a mine of

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[6] *Ibid*, 95.

[7] *Ibid*, 100.

[8] *Ibid*, 21.

[9] *Ibid*, 79.

[10] *Ibid*, 18.

[11] *Ibid*, 67.

[12] *Ibid*, 19.

[13] *Ibid*, 83.

raw materials whose processing and sale of "derivatives"[14] benefit only participants in the "markets of future behavior".[15] People are not even a product, not even when our behavior is "shaped for the needs of others" through "the creation and development of means of behavior modification".[16] Even then, it is only about improving the quality of the raw material to ensure the "integrity of data and control".[17]

There are no democratic institutions in the digital world. Neoliberalism repeats itself in the digital reality after imposing itself in this analogue one through a market over which no democratic institution has control. Digital reality, like the free market, is a realm of total lawlessness, where powerful players do only what is in their interest without any control. Capitalism that is not balanced by democratic institutions produces enormous and growing social inequality. But, in all previous forms of capitalism, inequality was external, expressed by the amount of money. The absolute novelty of surveillance capitalism, in addition to the means it uses, is that it attacks the last thing that makes people equal, which is the inner freedom of each person to make decisions. The consumer society has already greatly threatened man's freedom of will through the violence carried out by the mass media and subliminal messages. However, it was only with the massification of digital techniques and technologies that the conditions were created for the complete disempowerment of each individual.

Surveillance capitalism stands on a huge and growing difference in knowledge, which transforms to power and authority.[18] "The surveillance capitalists know everything about us, but we do not know how they do it. They gain enormous new knowledge from us, but it is not intended for us. They predict our future for someone else's sake and not for our interest".[19] Basic inequality is no longer found in external, material conditions, nor is it expressed in money. "Surveillance capitalism is characterized by an unprecedented disproportionality in terms of knowledge and the power derived from that knowledge", writes Shoshana Zuboff. These are the conditions for the establishment of a totalitarian society. The natural tendency of surveillance capitalism is to carry

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[14] *Ibid*, 97.

[15] *Ibid*, 21.

[16] *Ibid*, 19.

[17] *Ibid*, 81.

[18] *Ibid*, 14.

[19] *Ibid*, 22.

out the "transformation of the market into a project of total certainty",[20] which for everyone else will mean living "in a world 'with no way out'".[21]

It has already been noted that "capitalism inevitably transforms into imperialism and colonialism. These are the legal stages it goes through".[22] Surveillance capitalism is developing precisely on the colonization of a completely new area, which until now has not been recognized as a source of free raw materials. It is the area of a man's privacy, his personality, which is controlled in order to exhaust a newly discovered resource, the processing and sale of which brings money but also an unprecedented measure of power and authority to imperialists. Zuboff writes: "Just as industrial civilization developed at the expense of nature, which could leave us without planet Earth, so the information civilization, shaped by surveillance capitalism and its newly acquired instrumental power, will develop at the expense of human nature. It could cost us our humanity. [...] If industrial capitalism seriously endangered nature, what kind of damage will surveillance capitalism do to human nature?"[23]

John Carpenter showed the main characteristics of a totalitarian society that grew under the auspices of unrestrained capitalism more than thirty-five years ago. In They Live we see masses of people whose thinking and behavior are under complete alien control, to a much greater extent than television and the press were able to produce. The degree of enslavement shown in the film corresponds to that described by Sh. Zuboff. We also see that it is a one-way relationship, just as Zuboff presented the situation in surveillance capitalism: the aliens have complete knowledge, power, and authority, and people know absolutely nothing about the situation they are in, about the aliens and their activities, about the mechanisms of enslavement, about the structure of society and the values that rule in it. They cannot even understand the very mechanism of government and the means used by the ruling caste if they know about them.

The film depicts a world of total surveillance. However, when it was filmed, neither the Internet, cameras, drones, phones, watches and other devices with artificial intelligence were in widespread use. However, in the film, we see armed drones controlling every corner of the city and shooting at every suspicious movement, while the police relentlessly

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[20] *Ibid*, 31.

[21] *Ibid*, 32.

[22] Борис Над (2021), "Гангстери капитализма: Како је Америка постала најмоћнија (нео) колонијална сила, 1. део", *Печат – лист слободне Србије*, број 684.

[23] Šošana Zubof (2020), *op. cit.*, Beograd: Clio, 22, 31.

defend the existing order. The aliens have their exclusive communication network – both a network of underground tunnels and multipurpose wristwatches that keep them connected while among humans.

Thanks to neoliberal capitalism, "economic and social inequalities have returned to pre-industrial, feudal patterns, but we the people have not", writes Shoshana Zuboff. "We are not illiterate peasants, serfs or slaves. [...] We know that we deserve dignity and the opportunity for a better life".[24] They Live shows socially, existentially, and psychologically degraded people who are held in that position by force by the authorities. Carpenter clearly emphasizes the importance of knowledge about the state of society for preserving freedom "by the ideals of individual autonomy and the preservation of the deepest values of a democratic society".[25] In this sense, the film reminds us that in the neoliberal market order, people are kept in submission by denying them knowledge and insights, but also a right to democratic action. As much as this is true for the world in which psychic manipulation is carried out through the media, it is even more true for the abuse of power in the digital world described by Shoshana Zuboff because it penetrates the very soul of man and also tends to outsmart and disempower all democratic institutions.

In the information society, the largest number of people do not have even the most general idea about digital technologies. It is an area close to anyone who is not aducated and skilled for it. In such conditions no glasses of truth help, and any struggle can only take the weak form of an individual boycott. This is how the film depicts the struggle of the few individuals who can see. It was painstaking and futile until Nada solved the matter on a systemic level. Shoshana Zuboff does not propose a crude bombing of Silicon Valley to stop the project of total surveillance but rather an intelligent attack by a democratic society on "aspects of the operation of surveillance capitalists that must be challenged and removed to stop and defeat that market form".[26] For the question of mass resistance that can be provided in the conditions of a totalitarian society to preserve inner freedom, Carpenter turns to spiritual reality. This will be discussed here in the chapter on the spiritual meaning of the film.

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[24] *Ibid*, 57.

[25] *Ibid*, 34.

[26] *Ibid.*

TRANSHUMANISM

Just as Shoshana Zuboff studied the deviation of the neoliberal market into surveillance capitalism, Olga Chetverikova shed light on the development of a materialistic image of man: from secular humanism, which removed the soul and spirit from man, to transhumanism and further to posthumanism.[27] Both deviations – surveillance capitalism and transhumanism – gained their full momentum with the development of digital techniques and technologies. The film They Live cannot, therefore, be only a moral critique of unbridled capitalism. It also points to the inhumane nature of secular humanism as a materialistic view of man, which goes hand in hand with unbridled capitalism and its materialistic approach to existence.

Transhumanism is a further development of secular humanism, where man overcomes the natural limitations of his body and mind through association with superior machines. "That is why transhumanism", Chetverikova writes, "is simultaneously the last stage of humanism and its self-destruction".[28]

Interpretation of the film They Live in a transhumanist key is increasing its documentary quality. So far, we have said that Carpenter chose aliens as a symbol of capitalists to emphasize their distance from humanity. However, in the light of transhumanist ideas, the aliens in the film look even less as a symbol and even more as a realistic representation of the ruling caste, in whose favor the most transhumanist ideas are developed. By the fact that the aliens have their exclusive world in the underground and that they can move effortlessly through the entire universe, while humans are limited only to their classical place of residence, Carpenter, using space symbolism, showed us the total effects of transhumanism, as trans-socialism too, so to speak, because the connection of the personal being with technical products leads to the formation of two completely different anthropological species that can no longer even belong to the same society, to the same world.

"Both exclusiveness and elitism are the most powerful ideas that are driving the world's most powerful people today", remarked Chetverikova,[29] who investigated the ideology of transhumanism from the point

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[27] Олга Четверикова (2013), "Диктатура "просвещённых": дух и циљеви трансхуманизма", *Руская народная линия*.

[28] Олга Четверикова (2021), "О моралу у науци, трансхуманизму и постчовеку", *Сродство йо избору*, 15. септембар.

[29] *Ibid*.

of view of traditional Christian anthropology. She defines this ideological movement as "eugenic fascism, which is based on the biological caste system: superhumans on the one hand and human resources, biomass, man for use or digital digit – on the other".[30] They Live shows this huge gap, with the important note that in the film the two species overlap in a social sense in a one-way manner: aliens essentially participate in the life of human society. In contrast, humans do not participate in alien society in any way except with a few traitors. It also describes the situation in surveillance capitalism – the state of unequal access to and disproportional distribution of knowledge, control, and power.

Interestingly, the global society in the film is inverted from any historical hierarchical society. As a rule, belonging to a higher class comes with greater beauty of soul and body. It was marked as nobility. The aliens in the film do not have any personal qualities that we would call beautiful or noble. On the contrary, Carpenter portrayed them as total scumbags, psychologically and physically, which further highlighted the fact that their power and authority are based only on their material supremacy and not on any personal qualities. Also, with nobility comes greatness. In the film, on the contrary, the world of aliens is located underground, and the high social positions they occupy in human society are held by fraud and abuse of technical superiroty. With this symbolism, the director suggests that world power is aspired to by people from the underground, with a worthless, petty-bourgeois and corrupted spirit that wants only at any cost wealth, power, and authority.

We can also successfully interpret the visual design of the aliens in a transhumanist key. They are depicted as a combination of cyborgs and zombies: metal skulls with mechanical eyes, which can be seen under rotted faces, show us what the longevity and immortality of transhumanists will look like, realized in the mechanical union of machine and spiritless body. Carpenter's choice to call the ruling caste exactly aliens, rather than cyborgs and zombies, also fits the transhumanist agenda. This ideology seeks to overcome all physical limitations and givens, including man's attachment to the Earth: the declaration of the transhumanist movement points out as one of the tasks "overcoming [...] our limitation to planet Earth". Transhumanism is, in fact, only a transitional phase towards posthumanism, in which people and the human world will be just the insignificant past of some machine-intelligent beings who will

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[30] Олга Четверикова (2020), "Трансхуманизам – идеологија новог светског поретка", *Српско-руско удружење Православна породица*, 30. јануар.

quite easily become travelers through space since they will not be limited by biological factors.

This introduces us to the spiritual meaning of the film by underlining the following meaning: where, on the one hand, the soul is subordinated to material interests, and on the other hand, the body is revived and immortalized by a machine, there can be no talk of a whole man as a unity of spirit, soul, and body, as the Christian understanding of man was given by the Apostle Paul (1. Thess. 5, 23),[31] and therefore, no liberation from materialistic totalitarianism.

THE SPIRITUAL MEANING OF THE FILM

The film They Live can be interpreted in a spiritual key as a criticism of the godless man and the consequences of godlessness exhibited in social order, system of values, and man. Numerous and unequivocal associations with Christianity as a religion of salvation appear in the film. We will start with the name of the main character, Nada. We said what it means in Spanish and what sense it has in the social interpretation of the film. We do not know if Carpenter was familiar with the meaning of the word *nada* in Slavic languages, where it means *hope*. Coincidence or not, the Slavic viewer goes directly to the Christian interpretation of the film through the hero's name. Because Nada is the bearer of hope for the salvation of humanity from the dictatorship of demonic beings, and he fulfills that hope at the end of the film.

Another Christian element in the film is the aliens themselves, who, as we just said, can be understood as Christian demons, for two reasons. First, in the Christian literature on UFO phenomena, encounters with extraterrestrials and UFO sightings are undividedly interpreted as demonic phenomena, as "a new outpouring of demonic deceptions on humanity". Even "UFO researchers themselves concluded that the phenomena they studied were essentially identical to the phenomena labeled as demonic".[32] This should be kept in mind when we wonder why Carpenter chose his villains to be aliens and not zombies, cyborgs, or other fantastical creatures. Another reason to interpret Carpenter's aliens as demons is the characteristics he assigned to them, characteristic

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[31] Епископ Николај (2016), "Азбука истине", *Сабрана дела Епископа Николаја у 13 књига*, Књига 8, Шабац: Манастир Светог Николаја – Соко, 424-433.

[32] Јеромонах Серафим Роуз (2015), *Православље и религија будућности*, Манастир Успења Пресвете Богородице – Подмаине, 147.

of Christian descriptions of demons:[33] they are ugly and merciless; they have their world underground; they keep the secularized human world in terror invisibly; in their true form they are invisible, but they are visible in the form of the humans; they keep people in mental slavery through psychological violence; they encourage people to turn towards material reality, thereby distracting them from the authentic inner life of the soul.

A third strong association with Christianity as a religion of salvation is that Carpenter located the headquarters of the resistance movement in a church building. The Lord founded the church as a community that equips people in this world to resist demonic influence, for a fight that is waged "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places", as the apostle Paul explained (Eph. 6, 12).

Related to this is the fact that Carpenter appointed a blind priest as the leader of the alien resistance movement, thus showing the importance of relying on spiritual vision, seeing the hidden essence behind deceptive physical forms. The priest, as a spiritual man, is blind to misleading advertisements and the subliminal messages behind them, but he sees the truth. On the other hand, people outside the church, immersed in the sensual world, are blind to the spiritual essence of their life situation. That is why they do not believe what the priest tells them, nor can they listen to the truth. At the same time, they are influenced by a misleading signal. Just like in reality: the victims of consumerist materialistic ideology are disinterested and even hostile to the message of the church about the salvation of the soul. Therefore, the film They Live is an interpretation of the Lord's words from the Gospel of John (8:32): "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" – with the important note that later in the same Gospel the Lord said that He is the truth (14:6).

Knowledge of the truth means not only direct intuitive insight but also theoretical knowledge. Carpenter attributed the impulse to alien resistance to science: a group of scientists accidentally discovered the emission of a hypnotic signal, and a resistance movement was organized around that discovery. However, the main role in the resistance is played by the church. In the secularized world, people are directed towards the exclusive evaluation of rational knowledge, which is used

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[33] Владимир Димитријевић и Јован Србуљ (прир.) (2007), *Избави нас од лукаваго: Православље и магија*, Друго, допуњено издање, Београд: Православна мисионарска школа при храму Александра Невског.

by science, with the complete devaluing of knowledge through belief in God, His word, and His action in this world. Carpenter sends a message that science can discover some truth but that the church is the only place where results can be achieved in the fight for freedom, truth, and life.

A significant moment for the Christian interpretation of the film takes place in the conversation between Nada and his collaborator on the task, in which the two try to answer questions about the terrible creatures they saw through the glasses: who they are, where they came from and how long they have been among people. Nada briefly presents a childhood memory of his father, who had suddenly become inexplicably evil, to the extent that he even endangered the child's life. To that, Nada's partner replyed: "Maybe they have always been with us, those things out there. Maybe they love it, seeing us hate each other, watching us kill each other, feeding on our cold fuckin' hearts." This conversation cannot be understood in a social, economic, or ecological key. Only in the spiritual key does it become clear: aliens represent demons who cunningly dehumanize people and parasitize human depravity. Because neither the hypnotic signal nor the subliminal messages, or the depletion of Earth's resources affect people so that they become evil. The dialogue directs us towards a Christian interpretation of the film and, therefore, further beyond the film, towards a Christian perception of the neoliberal order as a complete perversion of a society based on Christian values and beliefs.

In terms of the latter, Carpenter proved himself to be a visionary. Starting with the COVID period, Christian apocalyptic rhetoric suddenly appeared in the media, which had never been seen before in the secular world. Everywhere, people began to talk about satanists, the cabala, the coming of the antichrist, the battle of Armageddon, the mark of the beast, the end of the world, and the world's elite steeped in occultism. In the situation of a forced pandemic, where the secular approach failed to explain to people the meaning of the totalitarian order to which the whole world was suddenly subjected,[34] the spiritual discourse was instantly reintroduced into public speech after being absent for a couple of centuries.

It is precisely this necessity of a spiritual approach that Carpenter hinted at in the dialogue above, from where it extends to the entire film and further to reality. We can interpret Carpenter's aliens in the

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[34] Љубомир Кљакић (2022), "Велика поларизација: Социологија Sars 2 Covid 19 капитализма", *Национални инШерес*, Година XVII vol. 41 Број 1/2022, 9-44.

way that the world financial oligarchy is often understood today – as inspired by the occult and thus introduces a demonic spirit into its affairs, which further affects all of humanity.[35] Bishop Nikolay pointed out that a person's spiritual orientation sets the tone for his life and actions: "Whose spirit you are filled with, you are one with him: if with the Spirit of God – you are one with God, if with the spirit of evil, you are one with the infernal adversary of God and the Father of yours".[36] The idea of permeating existence's spiritual and physical planes is returning to today's reality. It is not a new or unusual idea. It is present in all societies of all times – except in modern secular society, which is an anomaly in this regard. The movie They Live shows that a secular, materialistic view of the world has led to the perversion of man and society and that the only real way to fight is to return to a spiritual point of view as natural to human beings.

Finally, Nada's peaceful and almost joyful death during the destruction of the fatal antenna unequivocally reminds us of the Lord's sacrifice for the salvation of the world. Christians are expected not to hesitate to follow the example of the Lord's suffering when they find themselves in such a situation. That is why we have reason to understand the film's ending as Carpenter's interpretation of the Lord's words from the Gospel of John (15, 13), which read: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends".

In addition to this direct similarity with Christ's sacrifice, we also see a parallel with the Old Testament. Before Nada went into action, the blind priest preached the truth but did not have much success. We understood this as a reminiscence to the Old Testament prophets, who spoke about salvation even though they did not see the Savior and whose words contemporaries were usually not interested in, but on the contrary. Salvation came to everyone only through the act that destroyed the power of evil over people.

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[35] Зоран Милошевић (2019), *Окултизам и политика: О улози аристократије (која се надахњивала Библијом) и елите (која се надахњује кабалом) у друштву*, Шабац: Центар академске речи.

[36] Епископ Николај (2016), *op. cit.*, 425.

A LITTLE SOMETHING ABOUT THE FORMAL STRUCTURE AND A CONCLUSION

There would be much more to say about the film They Live. For example, its narrative form corresponds to the structure of a folk story – a fairy tale or a myth. Several researscehrs dealt with the structure of the traditional story, such as Vladimir Propp, Joseph Campbell, and Claude Lévi-Strauss, to name only the most prominent ones. There should be no doubt that this also contributed to the timeless relevance of the film since the characteristic universal structure, here used by John Carpenter, is recognized at the archetypal level of mind.

Also, we can interpret each element in the film in several ways and unlock its meaning using several keys: social, moral, existential, economic, spiritual, ecological, psychological, ideological, and ontological. The symbols that appear in the film are ambiguous, so each of them and the entire film can be placed in multiple interpretive contexts. Here, for example, we paid more attention to the ambiguity of aliens.

The dynamic element in the film is the timeless categories in which people of Christian culture polarize the basic opposition between good and evil. Thus, the film emphasizes the differences between truth and delusion, freedom and violence, bravery and heartlessness, insight and deception, struggle and conformity, loyalty and betrayal, effort and parasitism, honesty and concealment. The moral qualification of abstract pairs of opposites is also projected onto the outside world: polarization between humans and aliens, the resistance movement and traitors, the earth and the underworld, our world on Earth and the wilderness of outer space. Thanks to that, They Live is a strong message about the supreme importance of simple moral categories of good and evil.

We can generaly interpret the film as a pair of special glasses through which we can see the simple black-and-white truth about the post-Christian world, in which there is no reliable spiritual leadership of faith in God, who is all good and merciful, and so no ability to distinguish between good and evil. The rejection of faith is at the root of perversions such as unbridled capitalism, with its disastrous impact on man, society, nature, and culture. We will quote here, as very appropriate, the words of Vladeta Jerotić:

"Discerning and recognizing spirits is one of a true Christian man's first and indispensable gifts. What the invisible radars of hearing are on the tips of a bat's wings, even more, sensitive spiritual radars must

be nurtured in the heart and mind of the Christian in the midst of blind and dazzled humanity today. Who today is not aware of the invisible war of spirits inside us and outside us [...] he easily becomes prey to visible spirits of malice through false authorities, seductive achievements of civilization, and wrong teachings, which numb the bodily senses of man, thus leading his soul to ruin".[37]

The documentary potential of the film They Live has yet to be fully fulfilled. The demonized unbridled capitalists have not yet achieved unlimited power over the world. However, the penetration of neoliberal market ideology into digital reality, on the one hand, and the appearance of apocalyptic terminology in the broadest public discourse, on the other hand, show that we are very close to the realization of dystopia and that an increasing number of people are aware of it. Carpenter has showed that the only stronghold for resistance to the post-Christian degradation of man and the whole world is traditional faith, morality, values, and an integral understanding of man, which considers his spiritual side.

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[37] Владета Јеротић (2020), "Телевизија и људски дух", *Пријатељ Божји*.

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THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL ASPECT IN THE CINEMATOGRAPHY OF THE USSR AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ON THE EXAMPLE OF FILMS ABOUT WAR

Abstract

The author explores the political and ideological aspect of films about the created in the USSR and the Russian Federation. It is explored on the basis of a survey conducted in Sochi, individual respondents from other regions of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. The purpose of the article is to clarify the audience's attitude towards films about war and their political and ideological content. When writing the article, the methods of questioning, analysis and synthesis, comparative, survey, statistical and film-art hermeneutics were used. It is concluded that in the cinematography of the USSR, films about war performed the function of patriotic, political and ideological education of the population, but in the Russian Federation they are deprived of an ideological basis.

Keywords: *Soviet cinema, Russian cinema, films about war, politics, ideology, film-art hermeneutics.*

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema is an effective mass art. As a rule, it is associated with politics and ideology and is an instrument for ensuring the interests of state power. With the help of cinema, a large part of the population is quickly informed. Their attitude towards politicians and political parties, and state regimes is formed. Studying films about war is relevant because they influence relations between peoples and generations of citizens in one state, form norms of behavior and values. Soon, they become the subject of scientific and political discourse to identify historical truth. The propaganda and ideological content of films about war were not and are not excluded under any regime. In the modern world, there is a threat of destruction of the unified historical consciousness of the population of a state with the help of cinema. It leads to the weakening of peoples and states, facilitating the transformation of their territory into raw material appendages or markets for low-grade products of foreign countries. I. E. Mishchenko notes that at the beginning of the 21st century, "...the understanding of the events of the mid-20th century, in particular the Second World War, as a situation in which Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union must share historical and political responsibility for its outbreak; the countries of Europe – personal and, to some extent, civil responsibility for complicity in the crimes of the Nazi regime; the United States – to take upon itself the "burden of the victors" and the banner of the leaders of the new world" became relevant.[1] The problem of countering such trends, as well as the desire to objectively present the events of the Second World War, actualize the issue of the struggle for historical truth. It should be noted that in the USSR they attached great importance to the role of communists in public life. They showed the attractiveness and heroism of fighters for Soviet power even in comedy films. Masquerading as comedy films, some Soviet films conveyed great political and ideological information and carried out the political education of the masses. For example, the Soviet film comedy "Wedding in Malinovka" is a work of genius. It shows the moral and political superiority of people who fight for Soviet power, for justice and a bright future.

The degree of knowledge of films about the Great Patriotic War. It cannot be said that the analysis of films about the Great Patriotic War has not yet been the subject of special research by political scientists.

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[1] И. Е. Мищенко (2020), "Современное кино о войне: опыт сравнительного анализа европейских и российских кинофильмов", *Культура и цивилизация*, Том 10, № 6А, 67.

This was usually done by cultural scientists and art historians. Writing books and articles, making films about war is a responsible undertaking.

Research methodology. Research methods in the study of cinema can be: general (hermeneutic); general scientific (systemic, comparative); and specific scientific (historical, statistical, surveys, observations). The author conducted a survey of 799 students and teachers of the Sochi branch of Russian State University of Justice (the Ministry of Justice of Russia). Citizens of other regions of the Russian Federation and foreign countries (Republic of Belarus) also participated in the survey. The data obtained during the survey were analyzed to identify the influence of films about the Great Patriotic War on the ideological and political views of viewers, on people's behavior, to remove social contradictions.

The Victory Day of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War was celebrated for the first time in the USSR in 1965. After it, an active process of creating films about the war began.

During the Soviet period, the image of the victorious Soviet people was created. Writers, poets, cultural figures and, essentially, representatives of the cinematic arts worked. Soviet feature films: "Ordinary People", "Officers", "Liberation", "Father of a Soldier", "The Fate of a Man", "Battalions Ask for Fire", "And the Dawns Here Are Quiet", "Shield and Sword", "Seventeen Moments of Spring", "Resident Mistake" and others, showed the heroism of the Soviet people, the military, and employees of Soviet intelligence and counterintelligence agencies.

'Pure theory of cinematography' does not contain political and ideological assessments and is a rare phenomenon. Sergei Loznitsa noted that in cinema there is always a triumph of illusions. "...In any cinema – neither in the documentary nor in fiction – no reality exists."[2] We cannot completely agree with this thesis. Indeed, there is fiction in propaganda and feature films, especially when feature films are based on stories or novels. In scientific documentaries, which are considered by scientists as a historical source, fiction is minimal.[3]

Films about intelligence officers were carefully made: "Shield and Sword", "Seventeen Moments of Spring" and others. These films educate viewers today, and not just the generation of Soviet youth of the late 1960s and early 1980s.

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[2] "Это не поиск подлинности, это поиск способа говорить" С Сергеем Лозницей беседует Алексей Гусев, *Сеанс*, № 83. 2022, 65-66.

[3] See also: М. Ферро (1993), "Кино и история", *Вопросы истории*, № 2, 47-57.; С. О. Егоров (2022), "Кино, история, идеология: возможные подходы к интерпретации кинотекста", Исторический курьер, № 5, 12.

The four-part feature film "Shield and Sword" (1968) were filmed at the Mosfilm studio. It was made with the participation of the Defa studio of the GDR and the Start studio of the People's Republic of Poland by director Vladimir Basov. The author of the story was Vadim Kozhevnikov. The first episode, "Without the Right to Be Yourself," shows the process of infiltrating the Soviet intelligence officer Alexander Belov under the name Johann Weiss (played by Stanislav Lyubshin) into German intelligence. The plot of the film is as follows: a young intelligence officer was assigned to a promising young man living in the Baltic States. He was the nephew of a high-ranking German officer (in the role of Heinrich Schwarzkopf's nephew Oleg Yankovsky, who would later also turn out to be a Soviet intelligence officer). After repatriation to Poland, Heinrich helps Johann get a job as a driver in a taxi company, and then as a driver in intelligence. The second film, "Ordered to Survive," and the third film, "Not Subject to Appeal," contain a story about how an intelligence officer's career progresses. He gains influence by working in an intelligence school and recruiting agents there. At the end of the fourth episode, "The Last Frontier," I. Weiss leads the capture of a secret military plant and helps save prisoners of war working at the plant, doomed to death. I. Weiss receives a concussion and comes to his senses in the hospital. There is also a dubious scene in the film with A. Hitler, who is sympathetic to the often drinking young officer Heinrich Schwarzkopf. The Germans are shown as ideological warriors loyal to the Fuhrer. The audience liked the song "Where the Motherland Begins" performed by Mark Bernes in each episode.

The feature film "**And The Dawns Here Are Quiet**" (1972) directed by Stanislav Rostotsky was based on real events. Therefore, the film is still watched with interest in the 2020s. The film shows female anti-aircraft gunners, unprepared for combat with German Special Forces. They fight in difficult geographical terrain and die in the row. The main character of the film, Sergeant Major Vaskov, tried to save five of his subordinates, but he failed. The film shows short biographies full of difficulties and experiences associated with the Soviet regime and the war. The feature film was popular among Soviet television viewers.

The serial film "Seventeen Moments of Spring" (1973), directed by Tatyana Lioznova, tell the story of German Security Service officer Max Otto von Stierlitz. Actually, he is a Soviet intelligence officer, Colonel Maxim Maksimovich Isaev, who was introduced into Germany back in the 1930s. The role of Stierlitz was brilliantly played by Vyacheslav

Tikhonov. The 12 episodes of the film show the events that took place in the last months of the war from February 12 to March 24, 1945. When the top German leadership realized that the war was lost, they sought contacts with the allies (the USA and Great Britain). Stierlitz is often on the verge of failure. The real activity of an intelligence officer is apparently not as easy as in the movies. The film also adequately portrays German officers and generals. In the summer of 2023, this film was shown in connection with the 50th anniversary of its release.

In the feature film "Only Old Men Go to Battle" (1973) there are many plausible episodes from the life of military pilots who died very often. This was achieved because the main consultant of the film was Hero of the Soviet Union, Lieutenant General S. I. Kharlamov. The consultant was Honored Military Pilot of the USSR A. I. Ivanov. Performance of the songs "Carved curly maple leaf", "Dark-skinned woman", "I'll get up before dawn today", "It's not a month, it's dawn, it's clear!" and others made the film light-hearted. These songs were often broadcast on the radio. The screenwriter and also the main character Leonid Fedorovich Bykov in the role of Hero of the Soviet Union, commander of the "singing squadron." The regiment commander Alexei Titarenko (Maestro), utters several phrases: "Who said you needed to give up singing in war?" It became popular among the people. Also popular at one time were the following phrases: "Away from the gun" (go away), "Away from the authorities, closer to the kitchen." The film claims to promote internationalism. The heroes of the film are representatives of different nationalities of the USSR: Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Uzbeks. The film reflects the patriotic feelings of Ukrainians. Question from L. F. Bykov to his fellow soldiers: "What did you see today?" His answer: "They fought over Ukraine. ...The air is different here." The film shows the care of elders over the young. In the episode of handing over party tickets to young members of the CPSU (b), the secretary of the party committee says the enemy cannot be underestimated. He asks the main character (L. F. Bykov): "Do you want to say something?" Answer: "No. I do not know how. I'll tell you better in battle." The characters in the film try explaining and educate by personal example. The manifestation of heroism and nobility can be seen in the episode when the pilots wrote a leaflet in German. They challenged the best German pilot to an honest fight in a one-on-one air battle. The role of regiment commander L. F. Bykov was played well. This is indeed typical for persons who have gone through all the stages of their career.

The five-part epic film directed by Yuri Nikolaevich Ozerov (1921 – 2001) "**Liberation**" (1970-1972) tells the story of the outstanding historical role of the USSR in the victory over Nazi Germany. The film was made jointly with the GDR. The script was based on the memoirs of Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov. The first film, "Arc of Fire" (1968), was dedicated to the Battle of Kursk (July 5 – August 23, 1943). The situation is shown in the headquarters of the German command led by Adolf Hitler. The role was played by the actor from the GDR Fritz Dietz and in the Soviet headquarters of the Supreme Commander I. V. Stalin. In this film I. V. Stalin pronounces his response to the proposal to exchange his son, who is in German captivity, for Pauwels: "I am not exchanging a soldier for a field marshal." Stalin gave orders to liberate large cities on famous Soviet holidays. In Soviet times, this had ideological significance.

The second film, "Breakthrough" (1968), has an episode when a regiment is sent to hold the bridgehead. This film showed the heroism and genius of Marshal of the Soviet Union G. K. Zhukov. The leaders of the allied states are shown: I. V. Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill at the Tehran Conference when discussing the issue of opening a second front. The third film, "The Direction of the Main Attack" (1970), shows the events that took place after the defeat of the Germans in Stalingrad and at Kursk. The liberation of Belarus is shown. The fourth film, "The Battle of Berlin" (1971), is one of the best films about the war. Soviet soldiers liberated the territory of the USSR, and now they are fighting for the liberation of Poland and Warsaw. Events take place in Germany. The film shows G. K. Zhukov (played by M. Ulyanov), who plays the harmonica. The film shows the leaders of the Allied states at the Yalta Conference, but also Soviet soldiers.

After the epic "Liberation" Yu. N. Ozerov directed the two-part film "Soldiers of Freedom" (1977). At the beginning of the first episode, it is said that the film will show two years of the fight against fascism in Europe: in Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland. The fight was under the leadership of the communists. At the beginning of the film, the words of I. V. Stalin are spoken. He said that with the victories of the Red Army in European countries the growth of the anti-fascist movement is intensifying. The epic film shows the role of communists in organizing the anti-fascist and partisan movement. Field Marshal Pawels' conversation with the leader of the German communists, Wilhelm Pieck, was too overplayed. V.

Pick's proposal to Pauwels to fight against Hitler is ignored. The scene when the communist leader V. Pick and Pauwels came out to the captured German soldiers is shown in contrast: a beautifully and cleanly dressed field marshal and frozen and hungry German prisoners of war.

The second film begins with showing events in Bulgaria, telling about the struggle of the Bulgarian communists and partisans. The defeat of the partisan detachment, the scene of the execution of the Bulgarian general and the Soviet intelligence officer (Russian by mother) Vladimir Zaimov (1888-1942) are shown. His courage lies in the fact that he refused to be executed wearing a mask and himself directed his execution on June 1, 1942. Subsequently, General V. Zaimov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously. The leader of future Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, is also shown. He refused W. Churchill's offer to cooperate with the Yugoslav Tsar Peter. The idea is expressed that after the war the people themselves will decide what form of government in Yugoslavia will be: a monarchical, republican or Soviet republic.

It is shown how, before the New Year of 1944, people in Warsaw dream of a new Poland. Much has been said about the Warsaw Uprising. A military meeting of the front headquarters is shown. It is noted that the rebels have chosen a bad time, since the Red Army is having difficulty repelling attacks in the vicinity of Prague. All troops participate in battles. At this time it is impossible to start a new operation. The leader of the Warsaw Uprising, General Komarovsky, was subordinate to the Polish government in London. Poles are shown fighting and living in a besieged city: burying the dead and registering marriages. Komarovsky refuses to meet with the Soviet captain and entrusts negotiations with him to his deputy with no authority. At a time when the troops of the first Belorussian Front were making their way to Warsaw, General Komarovsky signed an act of surrender on September 30, 1944. The rebels capitulated. During the Warsaw Uprising, 200,000 Poles died, and the Germans sent the rebels who surrendered to concentration camps. The First Polish Army, formed in the USSR, entered the defeated Warsaw in January 1945. Warsaw is later liberated by the Red Army. During the capture of Warsaw, 17,348 Soviet soldiers and officers died. In total, 600,000 Soviet soldiers died during the liberation of Poland.

Soviet cinema was influenced by the principle of "socialist realism." Therefore, reality was presented in a distorted form: communist theory and its bearers were extolled; and the lifestyle of its opponents, class enemies, was belittled and caricatured. In films about the Great

Patriotic War, it was necessary to show the heroism of the fighters for their homeland. It became clear to ideologists that films about war influence relations between peoples and states, generations of people, form norms of behavior and values. Documentaries and historical films can become the subject of scientific discourse and the identification of historical truth.

FILMS ABOUT THE WAR OF THE PERIOD OF "PERESTROIKA" AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Unlike Soviet films before 1985, films from the perestroika period and Russian cinema formed a negative attitude towards the era of Stalinism. Vitaly Kurennoy noted that in the films "Cadets", "Penal Battalion" (2004) "... one ideological line can be traced very confidently and stably. It is associated with the condemnation of the Soviet state security agencies. At the same time, in a number of episodes, the viewer is clearly made to understand that the fascists are less terrible people than the NKVD officers."[4]

Russian cinema of 1992-2024, a time of triumph for detective stories, has not yet created films that Russian citizens would enjoy watching and reviewing. The six-part film "Life and Fate" based on the novel of the same name by Vasily Grossman were released on October 14, 2012. The novel was banned in the USSR for a long time and was published in 1988 almost 30 years after the death of the author.

Films about the wars of 1985-1991, 1992-2013 and 1914-2023 are not convincing. They have not fulfilled and do not fulfill the political and ideological functions of the modern Russian state. In the Russian Federation, after 1993, cinema began performing an entertainment function.

If in films of the perestroika period and Russian films before 2013 the activities of the Soviet state security agencies were denigrated. Then in films after 2013 they tried glorifying it. But in the absence of state ideology this could not be achieved. Although they watch with interest the film "SMERSH" (2018-2019, 2022) about the work of counterintelligence officers. Documentary films and films promoting the activities and ideas of the head of state and films that form a positive or negative assessment of events and famous politicians have become important. Ideas of Russian cinema 2000-2023 are: the fight against terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism and organized crime. One of the most successful

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[4] В. Куренной (2009), *Философия фильма: упражнение в анализе*, Москва, 232.

was the film "Height" about the events of 2000 in the North Caucasus, showing the heroism of the Pskov paratroopers.

Even after 80 years, interest in the events of the Great Patriotic War on the part of writers, poets, and film workers continues to this day. During the start of the Special Military Operation on February 24, 2022, interest in war films and especially in Soviet films increased significantly. The theme of war has great political and ideological significance in the struggle for historical truth. In European cinema, they want to present the image of the Soviet soldier-liberator as a conqueror.

In Soviet and Russian films, "...a military man is an almost mythological hero. He is a defender who fulfills his duty and does not fulfill a contract. The level of his professional training does not play a role, since his training is almost metaphysical in nature. He is prepared by the entire Russian history and culture." Therefore, "modern European cinema, when released into Russian film distribution, broadcasts, if not directly harmful, then at least ideas and experiences alien to the Russian viewer."[5]

In the cinema of the USSR after 1965, the theme of the Great Patriotic War was dominant. Soviet films about the war can be classified into groups: scientific-documentary, documentary, feature, feature-documentary and propaganda. Only scientific and documentary most accurately reflect historical events. Fiction and artistic-documentary films, openly or covertly, are of an ideological and propaganda nature. They reflect the interests of certain government bodies, a political party, a nation, or a group of people.

In the Russian cinema of 1992-2023, the themes of the fight against crime and terrorism dominated. The impulse in development in Soviet and Russian cinema in the 2000s occurred on the eve of anniversaries and other events (battles).

A survey of 799 students and teachers of the Sochi branch of Russian State University of Justice (the Ministry of Justice of Russia) was made. 88.6% of respondents were under 22 years old. The survey showed that 51.3% prefer to watch comedies, 48.1% action films. Among the Soviet films, the ones I liked most were "And The Dawns Here Are Quiet" and "Only Old Men Go to Battle," but 271 out of 799 respondents had not watched a single Soviet film about the war. Soviet films were recognized as the most truthful films about the war (noted by 590 people, 75.8%). To the question "Whose interests were reflected in Soviet films

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[5] И. Е. Мищенко (2020), "Современное кино о войне: опыт сравнительного анализа европейских и российских кинофильмов", *Культура и цивилизация*, Том 10. № 6А, 72.

about the Great Patriotic War?" 40% found it difficult to answer, 31% answered – the majority of citizens, 18% – the policies of the governing bodies of the Communist Party, 6% – the interests of government bodies, 5% – the interests of a group of people.

To the question: "Should films be ideological and propaganda in nature?" only 12% answered "yes," 35% answered "no," 22% answered it didn't matter. 31% were undecided.
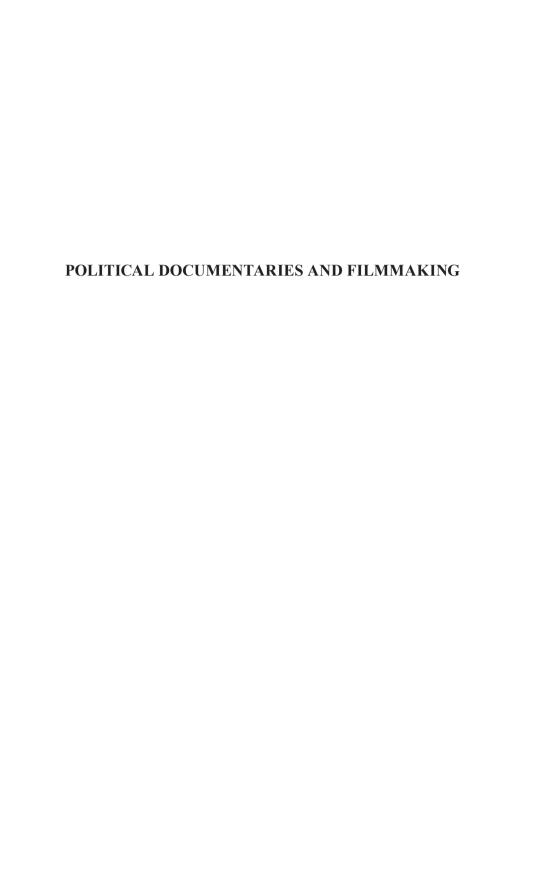
To the question: "Can war cinema be outside of politics and ideology?" 39% "yes", 23% "no." 38% found it difficult to answer.

The data presented indicate that films produced in Soviet times, not overly ideological or politicized, are successful even among modern Russian citizens. The data includes young people under 20, who recognized Soviet films as being of the highest quality and most truthful. Those Soviet films that were overly ideological and politicized ("Liberation", "Soldiers of Freedom") did not have the same success as films of a lighter genre. Soviet cinema was influenced by the principle of "socialist realism." It truthfully depicted the heroism of fighters for the homeland and did not extol communist theory and its bearers. It did not caricature the images of military opponents and class enemies during the Great Patriotic War. That is the reason why these films are still interesting to watch, and they represent the gold standard of Soviet cinema.

Translated by Dajana Lazarević

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POLITICAL DOCUMENTARIES AND FILMMAKING

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SITU ZHAODUN'S LEGACY: AN ENDURING CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIO-CULTURAL CINEMATOGRAPHY

Abstract

This article pays homage to Professor Situ Zhaodun, celebrated as the "Father of Chinese Documentary Film". Emphasizing his profound influence on both documentary filmmaking and film education in China, the piece highlights his four decades at the Beijing Film Academy, where he refined his teaching methods to foster originality and cultural engagement. Situ's approach, merging modernity with a profound respect for life and humanity, has left a deep imprint on Chinese cinema. He fostered a filmmaking approach that was deeply rooted in real-life experiences and local contexts. Situ's goal was to pursue a more profound exploration and understanding of China, not through the lens of dramatized narratives but through the authentic representation of everyday lives and cultural realities. Furthermore, the article recognizes Situ's instrumental role in nurturing successful Chinese filmmakers in both documentary and feature filmmaking. His visionary contributions and pedagogical methods have been crucial in developing a distinct narrative style in Chinese cinema, making

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his legacy a foundational element in the evolution and enrichment of Chinese film education and the broader cinematic arts. Situ's teachings continue to resonate across various cinematic disciplines, underscoring their enduring relevance.

Keywords: *Situ Zhaodun, documentary filmmaking, Chinese cinema, film education, socio-cultural cinematography.*

INTRO: A LEGACY IN DOCUMENTARY AND FILM EDUCATION

This article pays tribute to Professor Situ Zhaodun, revered as the "Father of Chinese Documentary Film", whose legacy has profoundly impacted not just the genre of documentary filmmaking but also the broader spectrum of film education and practice in China. Over his four decades at the Beijing Film Academy, Professor Situ consistently evolved his teaching methodologies to meet the changing times and diverse needs of his students, emphasizing the importance of originality and a deep connection with life and culture. His progressive approach to embracing modernity and innovation in filmmaking, coupled with his dedication to nurturing not only skilled filmmakers but also individuals who value life and humanity, has left a lasting imprint on Chinese film education. This article explores how Situ's forward-thinking vision and commitment to truth and authenticity in filmmaking provide invaluable insights not only for documentary filmmakers but also for the broader field of cinematic arts, including ethnographic filmmaking. By highlighting Situ's influential role and the broad applicability of his teachings, the article underscores the profound and multifaceted impact of his legacy on the evolution and enrichment of Chinese cinema and film education.

Situ Zhaodun (1938-2023) emerged as a prominent figure in Chinese cinema, notably in film education and documentary filmmaking. A respected member of the Communist Party of China, he served as a professor and postgraduate tutor in the Directing Department at the Beijing Film Academy. His tenure as a documentary director and a member of the China Film Association has significantly influenced the advancement of documentary higher education in New China. From a young

age, Situ was deeply influenced by his film-centric family background during wartime. After graduating from the Directing Department of the Beijing Film Academy in 1959, he dedicated over four decades to teaching at the same institution. As the director of the Film Department, Situ Zhaodun's career was distinguished by its extensive breadth and diversity. His role in the department encompassed a comprehensive engagement with various facets of film studies, evident in both the wide range of courses he taught and the accomplishments of his students. His educational contributions, which covered multiple academic levels and disciplines, included courses such as audio-visual language, film director creation, editing, advertising, and documentary creation. He initiated the founding of the first specialized film editing class in 1987, in partnership with the Department of Directing and the Chinese Film Editing Society. Additionally, his instruction in the advanced Level 64 Science and Education course underscored his ability to delve into complex and specialized topics within film education.

In addition to his teaching, Situ played an instrumental role in mentoring pivotal cohorts in Chinese cinema. He was particularly influential in guiding the undergraduate class of 1978 at the Beijing Film Academy, famously referred to as "Class 78". This group included future leaders of the "Fifth Generation of Chinese Film" directors, such as Chen Kaige, Tian Zhuangzhuang, and Zhang Yimou, who collectively instigated a significant shift in the landscape of Chinese filmmaking. Situ's mentorship also extended to later generations, including the graduate class of 1995, where future notable cinematographers like Lu Chuan, Jiang Shixiong, and Fang Gangliang emerged, further demonstrating the enduring impact of his teaching and mentorship in the field of cinema.

His contributions to film education have been widely recognized, earning him prestigious awards such as the "Outstanding Contribution Award for Promoting the Development of Chinese Documentary Films" by the China Television Documentary Academy Awards and a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Sino-French Documentary Biennale. In 1997, he received the "Golden Candle Award", the highest honor bestowed by the Beijing Film Academy. Although Situ Zhaodun will primarily be remembered for his substantial contributions to film education in China, his creative output in the realm of cinema is also noteworthy. His oeuvre includes a variety of feature films, such as "Children of the Commune", "Bamboo", and "Sunset on the Green Mountain", TV series such as "The Road", "Relatives", "Maple Leaf Dandan", and "Stock

Market Love", and documentaries including "Chinese Style", "Shadows of Spring and Autumn", and "My Country's People's Congress." His written works, like "Audiovisual Language" and "Fundamentals of Film and Television Directors" also contribute to his legacy.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF SITU ZHAODUN'S TEACHING: INNOVATIONS AND INFLUENCES

While Professor Situ Zhaodun's approach to documentary filmmaking has not been formally labeled under a specific school or named style, it closely aligns with what is commonly recognized as Realist or Observational documentary filmmaking. His unwavering focus on authenticity, truth, and the genuine representation of life closely mirrors the principles inherent to these styles. In this article, we delve into the life, work, teaching style, and enduring legacy of Situ Zhaodun. We aim to uncover the essence of his life's work and demonstrate its informative value for socio-cultural filmmaking, highlighting how his methodologies and perspectives can enrich this field.

Situ navigated his career amidst documentary artists who were redefining the genre from the 1960s onwards. Together, with filmmakers from all around the world he contributed to major shifts in the documentary film style, approach, and thematic focus, marking the 20th century as a period of significant evolution and diversification in the representation of reality through documentary film. Among Situ Zhaodun's notable international contemporaries were Frederick Wiseman from the United States, renowned for his observational style capturing American life; D. A. Pennebaker, a pioneer in direct cinema; and Chris Marker from France, known for his philosophical and innovative documentary approach. Jean Rouch, also from France, was instrumental in shaping both documentary and ethnographic filmmaking through his involvement in the cinéma vérité movement. In Japan, Shinsuke Ogawa's immersive projects on rural life left a profound mark, while Werner Herzog of Germany was acclaimed for his philosophical narratives. Claude Lanzmann, remembered for his monumental work "Shoah", brought a deep historical and ethical perspective to the genre.

Alongside these luminaries, Juris Ivens emerged as a monumental figure, also influential in the development of Chinese documentary. This renowned Dutch filmmaker, who had a profound influence on Situ, visited Mainland China in early 1973 with his spouse, following an

invitation by Premier Zhou Enlai. This visit led to the creation of the documentary series "YuGong Moved", consisting of 12 segments. The series captures the Chinese Cultural Revolution and societal dynamics of the time. Ivens adopted a direct filming approach with frequent close-ups, allowing subjects to interact with the camera.[1] Situ Zhaodun revered Joris Ivens as the Father of World Documentaries. He particularly admired Ivens' approach to filmmaking, which he believed was deeply rooted in qualities of humility, sincerity, and kindness. Situ considered these attributes to be at the heart of Ivens' methodology, profoundly shaping his own perspective and approach in the realm of film. However, when it comes to his own title, as the Father of the Chinese Documentary Film, Situ Zhaodun humbly refuses it, saying that: "Those who say this do not understand the history of documentary films... The pioneers of Chinese documentaries are Li Minwei, Sun Mingjing, Zheng Junli, Yuan Muzhi, etc. They have all made great contributions to the development of Chinese documentaries. Especially Sun Mingjing, who shot a large number of documentaries and scientific education films before liberation. He is also a pioneer in Chinese film education".[2]

DOCUMENTARY EVOLUTION IN CHINA: THE HISTORICAL SHIFTS

After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), China's documentary landscape underwent significant changes in both style and content. These transformations mirrored the broader socio-cultural and political shifts in the country, as detailed in Ebrey and Walthall's analysis of East Asian history.[3] The period saw an evolution in the narrative and thematic elements of Chinese documentaries, reflecting the nation's journey through complex historical phases. In the late 1970s and 1980s, there was a gradual shift from propagandistic styles to more exploratory and realistic approaches. Filmmakers started to move away from rigid, state-sanctioned narratives, experimenting with new techniques and storytelling methods. This shift was partly influenced by the introduction

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[1] Mengyu Li et al. (2020), "A Historical Review of the Chinese Documentary Programs", *Journal of Critical Reviews 7* (02): Article 133.

[2] Beijing Film Academy (2021), "The Party Branch of the Directing Department of Beijing Film Academy Held a Series of Publicity Activities on Department History Education and Teacher Ethics Inheritance.", May 13.

[3] Patricia Buckley Ebrey and Anne Walthall (2014), *East Asia: A Cultural, Social, and Political History.* Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

of foreign documentaries and collaborations, leading to a blend of Chinese and international styles. The content of documentaries also evolved, reflecting the broader social and economic changes in China. Initially focusing on political and historical themes, documentaries gradually began to explore a wider range of topics, including environmental issues, urbanization, and the complexities of everyday life. This was a move towards a more humanistic and individual-focused approach, allowing for a deeper exploration of Chinese society.[4]

Yu astutely observes a paradigmatic shift in the early 1990s with the advent of independent documentaries. These works, often ethnographic in nature, diverged significantly from state-sanctioned narratives, signaling a new epoch within the national cinema framework. Yu notes that these documentaries, emerging in the post-1989 period, served as both cultural artifacts and vehicles of alternative filmmaking, challenging the prevailing political discourse and consumerist tendencies of the market economy.[5]

In the 1990s and 2000s, the advent of digital technology and the internet further transformed the documentary scene. Independent filmmakers began to emerge, utilizing digital cameras and online platforms to create and distribute their work. This democratization of documentary filmmaking led to a diverse array of voices and perspectives, offering a more nuanced and multifaceted view of China. Contemporary Chinese documentaries are characterized by their stylistic diversity and thematic richness. Filmmakers like Situ Zhaodun are part of this modern wave, crafting works that are not only reflective of Chinese society but also resonate on a global scale. Their documentaries blend personal narratives with broader social commentary, offering insights into the rapidly changing landscape of modern China (Li et al 2020).[6]

SOCIO-CULTURAL CINEMATOGRAPHY

A rudimentary examination of fiction films, documentary films, and the ethnographic approach reveals a shared methodology between documentaries and ethnography, setting them apart from fiction. This intersection was a focal point of Nešković's exploration during the 2015 course "Aux marges d'anthropologie", led by Eric Wittersheim at the

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[4] Mengyu Li et al. (2020), *op. cit.*

[5] Kiki Tianqi Yu (2016), "Documentary", *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, March 10, 2016.

[6] Mengyu Li et al. (2020), *op. cit.*

Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. The background content for this discussion was developed during two seminars at EHESS: "Filmer le champ social", facilitated by Monique Peyriere in 2014/2015, and "Atelier de lecture en anthropologie: Rencontres entre mondes", led by Benoit de L'Estoile in 2013/2014. These seminars provided a comprehensive background for a reflection on the intricate connections and distinctions between documentary cinematography and ethnographic practice. The focus of this exploration was the nuanced intersection between documentary filmmaking on socio-cultural topics and ethnographic work, examining the subtle yet significant boundaries and connections between these two disciplines. In fictional filmmaking, scenarios are crafted to underscore a specific message intended for the audience.

The process begins with a clear concept of the final product, followed by the creation of structured scenarios that effectively communicate a predetermined message. In contrast, documentary socio-cultural filmmaking, akin to ethnographic methods, aims to explore and respond to various human-centric questions. The starting point is often an initial idea or hypothesis; however, the direction and outcome of the research are not predetermined. The end result could be a reaffirmation of the initial hypothesis, a new insight, or even the emergence of further questions. This outcome is shaped by genuine and relevant sociocultural phenomena observed and recorded during the research process. Socio-cultural documentaries, similar to ethnographic work, utilize a form of allegory in their narratives. This approach involves starting from tangible, concrete research findings and subtly drawing out broader, more abstract ideas or themes. Unlike fiction, where scenarios are constructed, documentaries, akin to ethnographic studies, delve into real-life situations, seeking to understand and represent them authentically. The outcome is a blend of observed reality and the interpretation or message derived from it, presented either in written form, in ethnography, or as visual narratives, in documentary films. This methodology underscores a commitment to exploring and understanding human experiences and social phenomena in their natural state.

Films, be they documentaries or fiction, often aim to convey messages addressing contemporary political or philosophical issues. The process of filmmaking, begins with a concept or a script. This initial idea outlines what the filmmaker intends to capture and the goals they wish to achieve with the film. However, this concept is subject to evolve as the project progresses. Filmmakers, like ethnographers in

their fieldwork, start with specific ideas or questions, then embark on a quest for tangible images and information to guide their research. This process in documentary filmmaking parallels the preparation for ethnographic fieldwork. Here, the filmmaker, akin to an ethnographer, gathers information and visuals to construct the overarching narrative or 'the big picture' they aim to convey.

In the realm of documentary films, particularly those focusing on sociocultural subjects, the quest for truth is a fundamental aspect. This pursuit involves filmmakers actively engaging in the process of bringing to light cultural expressions and traditions that might otherwise remain hidden or unobserved. They inquire into the depths of various societies and communities, revealing aspects of culture that are integral to the identity and daily life of the people, yet often unnoticed by the outside world. This approach is crucial for capturing the lived experiences of the subjects being documented, ensuring that the film reflects an authentic representation of their cultural and social realities.

Realist documentary filmmaking is a style characterized by a commitment to portraying real life as it is, without intervention or manipulation by the filmmaker. This approach in documentaries seeks to present an unfiltered, honest view of its subjects, emphasizing authenticity and truth. Belonging to this tradition is observational documentary filmmaking, marked by minimal interaction or intervention from the filmmaker. Observational cinematography is a specific form of documentary film that passivizes the cinematographer's action on the filmed actions. The filmmaker chooses not to impose their perception of the subject but to leave the judgment to the viewers. In France, we know "Cinéma verité", through Jean Rouch and "Direct Cinema", which is a pure and extreme form of observational cinematography. In "Introduction to Documentary", Bill Nichols refers to the cinematographer's position as resembling a "Fly on the wall", with a minimum of possible editing.[7] The filmmaker's perception corresponds to that of a fly on the wall. This method can be considered the opposite of poetic documentary with a tendency towards subjectivation. Connolly and Anderson, the authors of "The Highlands Trilogy" who used observational cinematography to present the first contact with indigenous tribes in Papua New Guinea, consider this type of documentary as one of the most demanding due to the need to find a logical narrative in events over which

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[7] Bill Nichols (2010), *Introduction to Documentary*, Second Edition, Indiana University Press.

we have no control. The decisive question in this approach is whether we are in the right place at the right time.[8]

The extensive nature of researching for a filmic subject often unveils inherent challenges. The process of selecting a subject can lead to deep attachment but may not always result in sufficient or relevant actions for filming, as evidenced by the experiences of seasoned filmmakers. These 'false starts' often mirror the challenges encountered in ethnographic fieldwork, where integration into the research community can be complex.[9] Literary accounts, as explored in works like "Une étrange étrangeté," indicate that rejections by the field are frequently unreported, highlighting the significant impact of subject choice on establishing effective research relationships.[10] The concept of control during the filmmaking process is critical. When controllable elements like equipment, time, and bureaucratic permissions are secured, filmmakers often find themselves embracing a loss of control to capture what is described as "uncontrolled truth" in cinematography.[11] This scenario transforms the filmmaker into a non-participating observer, requiring a suspension of ideological biases and personal subjectivities to ensure open-minded and meticulous observation of unfolding events. This approach underscores the nuanced balance between control and spontaneity in the documentary filmmaking process.

Understanding the quest for truth in documentary filmmaking, especially in capturing the lived experiences and cultural realities of diverse societies, sets the stage to explore the roots of this approach in Professor Situ Zhaodun's background. The next section looks into the familial and cultural influences that shaped Situ's perspectives and practices. It provides a deeper understanding of the personal and historical context that informed his commitment to authentic storytelling and his influential role in Chinese cinema. This exploration into Situ's family heritage and his own biography serves not only to humanize the figure behind the camera but also to contextualize his contributions within a broader tapestry of social and cultural narratives.

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[8] Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson (1989), *Premier contact: les Papous découvrent les Blancs*, Translated by Richard Crevier. Paris: Gallimard.

[9] Australian Screen (2014), "Interview with Bob Connolly", Accessed May 20, 2014.

[10] Michel Naepels (1998), "Une étrange étrangeté: Remarques sur la situation ethnographique", *L'Homme 38*, no. 148, 185-199.

[11] Australian Screen (2014), *op. cit*.

TRACING THE ROOTS:
FAMILY HERITAGE AND CULTURAL IMPACT

The roots of Situ Zhaodun's immersion into the film realm can be traced back to his father's influence and work in the industry. Details on his father's life and career achievements is provided by both the Kaiping Foreign Affairs and Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau[12] and the Kaiping Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press, and Publication.[13] These sources offer comprehensive insights into the familial and professional background that shaped Situ Zhaodun's path into the film industry.

Situ Huimin (1910-1987), a prominent member of the Communist Party of China and a respected figure in China's film industry, had a profound influence rooted in his early political and cultural experiences. Joining the Communist Youth League in 1925 and the Communist Party in 1927, he actively participated in significant events like the Guangzhou Uprising. His educational journey in Japan at Tokyo's Ueno Art School, Nihon University, and Waseda University, where he studied film, radio, and electronics, was pivotal in shaping his future in cinema. Despite facing detention in Japan for his political activities, he continued his involvement in progressive organizations. Upon returning to Shanghai in 1930, Situ joined the Shanghai Art Drama Club and began film production in 1932, establishing a home-based recording technology lab and directing films for the Communist Party's Dentsu Film Company. These films, such as "Peach and Plum Move" and "Children of the Storm", echoed the revolutionary spirit and mobilized patriotic sentiment against Japanese aggression. During the Anti-Japanese War, Situ moved to Hong Kong to support the anti-war film movement, organizing and filming significant works and founding the "Hong Kong Theater Actors Association". His leadership extended to directing the news documentary department of the Kuomintang-run China Film Studio and founding Kunlun Film Company post-war. His study in the United States at Columbia University broadened his expertise in film technology and management. After returning to China in 1951, Situ Huimin directed China's first major color documentary and was instrumental in organizing China's left-wing film movement. He held various leadership roles, contributing significantly to the film industry's development

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[12] Kaiping Foreign Affairs and Overseas Chinese Affairs Bureau (2004), "Famous Film Artist-Situ Huimin", published March 14.

[13] Kaiping Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television, Press, and Publication (2007), "Famous Film Artist-Situ Huimin", originally archived on September 27.

and formulating China's first five-year film plan. His commitment to overseas Chinese affairs included advocating for their rights and interests, reflecting his broad impact on both the film industry and Chinese communities worldwide.

For the special occasion of celebrating the history and legacy of the Directing Department, the Party Branch of the Directing Department at the Beijing Film Academy organized a series of events centered on "Department History Education and Teacher Ethics Inheritance." As a highlight of these events, on May 13, 2021, the Beijing Film Academy website published an extensive article about Situ Zhaodun, offering detailed insights into his early life and career achievements. Situ Zhaodun was born in the winter of 1938 in Hong Kong, amidst the escalating Japanese invasion of China that had begun over a year prior. His childhood was largely shaped by the backdrop of war, leading to a transient educational journey marked by repeated setbacks due to language barriers and the need to start anew at each school. It wasn't until after the People's Republic of China was established that Situ moved to Beijing and began a more stable phase of life. The ongoing wars meant that Situ's family faced financial constraints.

His mother, Deng Xueqiong, shouldered the responsibility of raising the children and managing household finances. Initially, she made children's clothing for the Sincere Company, and later founded the Xinxing Garment Factory in Chongqing, where she worked with sewing machines. Deng was a skilled tailor, even creating custom outfits for Mao Zedong during the Chongqing negotiations. Situ's father was deeply involved in Party work, making their home a hub for Party activities. This environment imbued young Situ with progressive ideologies, which he later recognized as the formative wealth of his life. In 1941, with the onset of the Pacific War, Situ and his family were displaced, eventually settling in Chongqing. His father took charge of the News Documentary Department at the China Film Studio, working alongside Communist Party members and notable figures like Shi Dongshan and Tian Han. The studio, known for documentaries such as Zheng Junli's "Long Live the Nation", gave young Situ the chance to meet many influential filmmakers and theater personalities. By 1952, Situ had moved to Beijing with his father, who played a key role in setting up the Bayi Film Studio. He attended a school popular among the children of government officials, including those from families of national leaders. He recalls that a visit by Premier Zhou Enlai in 1953 to this school deeply impacted him,

particularly Zhou's emphasis on humility and learning from workers and peasants. Afterward, Situ transferred to a rural middle school. This experience was eye-opening, bringing him into close contact with the lives of the working class and significantly widening his perspective. Situ remembers these years as crucial for his artistic growth.[14]

EARLY CAREER AND PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1959, Situ Zhaodun's entry into the Beijing Film Academy marked a significant juncture in his career development. His interaction with Tian Feng at the Academy was particularly influential. Before the entrance exam, Situ had sought Tian Feng's advice on how to approach the exam's essay component. Instead of direct guidance, Tian Feng engaged in conversations about Situ's life experiences and observations. This method of teaching emphasized the importance of understanding and consciously observing life, a lesson that profoundly resonated with Situ. He came to appreciate the emphasis on truth-seeking and independent problem-solving during his time at the academy. A notable incident in the examination room further shaped his perspective. An examiner, later revealed to be the Qian Xuewei, the director of "Shajiadian Grain Station", questioned Situ's aspiration to be a Chinese director, given his preference for foreign films and books. This confrontation prompted Situ to critically examine his cultural identity and aspirations in cinema. Throughout his studies, Situ was deeply influenced by Qian's values of honesty, humility, and a dedication to learning. Qian's approach to teaching, characterized by tolerance and open-mindedness, significantly impacted Situ's future pedagogical style.

Tian Feng, as the program head for Situ's Class '59, introduced a rigorous five-year teaching system for film directors. He stressed the importance of finding creative inspiration from everyday life and critiqued any form of pretension or superficial understanding in creative work. Situ recalls that Tian Feng's insistence on authenticity and depth in students' works was exemplified in his hands-on approach during rehearsals. The curriculum under Tian Feng's guidance, which included a variety of theatrical and cinematic exercises, laid a strong foundation for Situ's career. The teachings of Tian Feng, especially his emphasis on genuine artistic expression and character, left a lasting impact on Situ. Situ held Tian Feng in high regard, considering his mentor's spirit

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[14] Beijing Film Academy (2021), *op. cit.*

and knowledge almost unattainable. He valued his integrity, extensive knowledge, and passion for education. The notes and reflections Situ compiled during his college years continued to inspire and guide him in his later career, underscoring the enduring influence of his mentor (Beijing Film Academy 2021).[15]

DOCUMENTARY APPROACH:
BEYOND TRADITIONAL NARRATIVES

Prior to the establishment of a formal documentary directing major at the Beijing Film Academy, Situ Zhaodun had already developed a keen interest in documentary education, a decision that significantly influenced his life. In 1964, upon his graduation, Situ Zhaodun remained at the Academy to teach. During this period, Class '59, to which he belonged, endured the harsh realities of the class struggle during the literary and artistic rectification movement. His mentor, Tian Feng, a dedicated Communist Party member, tragically lost his life and, as Situ recalls, this profound loss imprinted on him the importance of loyalty to the cause of education. Situ's first teaching experience was in a pioneering training class for science and education directors, attracting students from across the country. To ensure high-quality instruction, the academy enlisted the experienced Han Wei from Shanghai as the chief professor, with Situ serving as his assistant. Living and learning alongside Han Wei, Situ was exposed to various science and education films and gained invaluable insights into visualizing abstract scientific principles and conducting thorough social surveys and experiments. He learned the importance of seeking truth from facts and the value of creating characters and expressing thoughts through visual means rather than dialogue. However, the onset of the Cultural Revolution brought a complete halt to educational activities, and Situ himself faced persecution, resulting in over five years of imprisonment. He resumed teaching in 1974 at the Beijing Film Academy, now merged with the Central Academy of Drama. That year, he taught a drama and film training class alongside Wang Suihan and other professors, teaching future renowned directors such as Wu Tianming and Teng Jinxian. In 1978, as China opened up and Western films entered the country, Situ, teaching the newly enrolled Class '78, encouraged his students to expose themselves to various film styles and look for stories in their own lives. He said:

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[15] *Ibid.*

"Chinese documentary filmmakers had no theory at that time; we were groping in the dark, grabbing anything we could to learn." ("Compared to Life, Documentaries are Nothing", 2021). This class, which included future luminaries like Chen Kaige and Tian Zhuangzhuang, became known as the "Fifth Generation of Chinese Film" directors.

Situ's guidance on the documentary film "Our Corner", directed by Xie Xiaojing and Tian Zhuangzhuang, further deepened his interest in documentaries. The film's portrayal of the lives of disabled individuals led to societal criticism but also brought validation from a disabled audience, reaffirming Situ's belief in representing marginalized voices. Throughout his career, Situ emphasized the importance of individualized art education, urging students to engage with a broad spectrum of films, books, and sister arts, and to immerse themselves in society for a well-rounded learning experience. His teaching philosophy evolved to stress lifelong learning for teachers and the importance of being grounded in reality for effective artistic creation. Situ Zhaodun's teachings and perspective on documentary filmmaking greatly emphasized the relationship between cinema and local culture, underscoring the importance of intertwining one's cultural and life experiences with the art of filmmaking. He shared a resonance with Zhang Yimou's belief that film is inherently a local art form, advocating that a filmmaker's connection to their cultural and spiritual roots is essential for maintaining authenticity and depth in their work ("Father of Chinese Documentary", 2023). This conviction was a driving force behind Situ's transition from teaching feature films to focusing on documentaries. He observed that feature films, which he initially taught, were not fully capturing the quintessence of Chinese life and culture. By emphasizing documentaries, Situ sought to foster a filmmaking approach that was deeply rooted in real-life experiences and local contexts. His goal was to encourage filmmakers to pursue a more profound exploration and understanding of China, not through the lens of dramatized narratives but through the authentic representation of everyday lives and cultural realities ("Compared to Life, Documentaries are Nothing", 2021). This approach aligns closely with the principles of ethnographic cinema, which prioritizes a deep and nuanced portrayal of cultural and social phenomena. Situ's legacy, therefore, extends beyond documentary filmmaking, offering valuable insights and methodologies that are highly relevant and beneficial to the practice of ethnographic cinematography.

Over his four-decade teaching career at the Beijing Film Academy, Professor Situ Zhaodun continually adapted and updated his course content to align with the evolving times and the diverse needs of his students. His dedication to educating not just skilled filmmakers but also "good people who cherish life and others", has profoundly influenced the realm of Chinese film education. He emphasized the importance of originality, encouraging his students to forge their own paths rather than follow in the footsteps of others. Aligned with his progressive teaching philosophy, Situ also expressed strong opinions about embracing modernity and innovation in filmmaking. He believed that film should not remain an aristocratic art form confined to traditional Chinese cinema. As new technologies emerge, he advocated for a welcoming and adaptive attitude towards modern platforms like Douyin and Kuaishou. Despite not having studied these platforms in depth, he recognized their significance and potential for cultural infusion. Situ emphasized the importance of engaging with these evolving mediums, suggesting that any content lacking in quality could be transformed with the right approach. His openness to new ideas and technologies, even at the age of 82, exemplified his forward-thinking vision for the future of Chinese cinema ("Father of Chinese Documentray", 2023).

In an interview with The Paper (澎湃新闻) in 2021, Situ Zhaodun shared his insights on film as a collaborative, interdisciplinary medium. He stated, "You just have to put aside your ego, sit down with your students, and discuss and develop film together… My view is becoming more firm: film is nothing extraordinary; it is just a technique. It only becomes valuable when combined with knowledge from other disciplines. Films can take various forms. They can be a commodity, a form of political propaganda, or even scientific" ("Father of Chinese Documentary", 2023). Situ Zhaodun repeatedly emphasized that for him, education was more than a profession; it was a vocation – a lifelong commitment and pursuit, transcending the conventional definition of a job. He recognized the crucial need for the continuity of film art education across generations, understanding that our grasp of the art form is tied to the evolving perspectives of each era. His conviction that the future of film would only grow brighter was a cornerstone of his teaching philosophy. His students fondly recall his phrase, "My door is open for you 24 hours a day!" This guiding principle, originally voiced by his mentor Tian Feng, underscores the deep sense of responsibility inherent in teaching. Situ was always available to his students, ready to assist them

with any doubts, confusions, or challenges they faced. His dedication to student service was a reflection of his commitment to the ethics and style of a true educator.[16]

Reflecting on his early experiences teaching the renowned Fifth Generation of Chinese film directors, Situ Zhaodun said: "We had no experience and were essentially groping in the dark, driven by our love for documentaries. Originally, I taught feature films. I joined the Beijing Film Academy in 1959 and started teaching after graduating in 1964. I was fortunate to teach the Fifth Generation. In my first conversation with them, I said that our learning was based on the Soviet model, starting with "Battleship Potemkin." Over the years, we had no understanding of the state of cinema, especially Western cinema. So, I couldn't claim to teach them, but I had an advantage because my father was involved in the film industry. I could provide them with a lot of films. I wasn't worried about the abilities of these Fifth-Generation students because they had life attitudes and experiences that many students today don't have. I suggested we watch a lot of movies together, starting from Italian Neorealism, the French New Wave, and so on. I couldn't teach commercial cinema because, at that time, China was still a planned economy and completely unaware of commercial society ("Father of Chinese Documentay", 2023).

Situ's approach to film education was marked by both a detailed focus and an overarching vision. He emphasized the importance of the documentary movement in shaping the future of Chinese cinema. Situ advocated for a foundational approach in film education that starts with documentaries, based on the premise that a genuine appreciation of art stems from an understanding of real life and human stories. He viewed documentaries as a means to explore societal and global issues, arguing that a filmmaker's role is defined by their understanding of public perspectives and concerns. His affinity for documentaries developed from his early exposure to news documentaries and his subsequent academic exploration in the field under Han Wei.

In 1998, Situ played a key role in introducing the first postgraduate documentary studies program in the Director's Department. This initiative expanded upon the existing documentary curriculum, with professors such as Xie Xiaojing and Yang Lin contributing to its development. Situ's commitment to this field was influenced by his experiences and

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[16] *Ibid.*

the teachings of his mentor, Tian Feng, who emphasized the importance of real-life narratives in filmmaking.

Situ's dedication to the advancement of Chinese documentaries was evident in his teaching methods, which included encouraging students to engage in thorough social research. He stressed the discovery of meaningful real-life themes and characters as crucial for creative inspiration. Situ taught his students the importance of respecting factual accuracy and subject integrity, advocating for a thoughtful and methodological approach to documentary filmmaking that underscored its societal relevance.

His philosophy towards documentaries involved exploring Chinese stories and characters, believing that understanding comes not just from seeing and listening, but through a combination of these senses with critical thinking and filming. Situ maintained that societal value and relevance are best understood through active social engagement. His involvement in documentary creation and education was a significant aspect of his professional life, reflecting his belief in the potential of documentaries to contribute meaningfully to society and cinema.[17]

Situ Zhaodun's approach to documentary filmmaking, distinct from feature film methodology, was grounded in a philosophy that emphasized reality over theme. He saw feature films as driven by themes that directed their material collection, whereas documentaries, in his view, should transcend simple storytelling or audience allure. He highlighted the importance of their cognitive and documentary values, challenging the dominant focus on narrative in documentaries. Situ was a proponent of documentaries as mirrors of reality, unguided and unaltered, serving as catalysts for social reflection and intellectual stimulation, rather than as means for distorting societal narratives. Situ's dedication to authentic portrayal was exemplified in his creation of "Western Dolls", a documentary that poignantly captures the lives of children in western China. This film, resonating with the deep-seated values of the Chinese people, particularly in regards to education, received widespread acclaim. It stood out as an early and impactful voice in the narrative of western China's development, reflecting the ethos and priorities of the Chinese community. His vision for documentaries was that they should inherently embody a critical spirit, aligning with anthropological principles that value genuine and unmodified representations of cultures and societies. Situ's approach was not about critiquing or undermining societal

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[17] *Ibid.*

structures but about encouraging a collective effort to understand and accurately depict the true essence of communities or locales ("Father of Chinese Documentary", 2023).

LEGACY THROUGH MENTORSHIP: SHAPING FUTURE FILMMAKERS

Professor Situ Zhaodun's influence in the realm of documentary filmmaking extends profoundly through the generations of students he mentored, particularly those belonging to the acclaimed Fifth Generation of Chinese filmmakers. Among his notable students, Chen Kaige stands out, known primarily for his feature films like "Farewell My Concubine" (1993), "Yellow Earth" (1984), and "The Emperor and the Assassin" (1998). Although more recognized for narrative cinema, Chen's work often embodies a documentary-like realism, a testament to Situ's influence. Among his most notable students is Zhang Yimou, a celebrated director known for his visually stunning films and narrative depth. Zhang Yimou's work, although primarily focused on feature films, embodies the realism and authenticity that were hallmarks of Situ's teachings. Tian Zhuangzhuang, another prominent student, ventured into documentary with works like "Delamu" (2004), capturing life along the ancient Tea Horse Road. His films, including "The Blue Kite" (1993) and "Horse Thief" (1986), reflect a similar blend of narrative and documentary styles. Shiyu Wei, inspired by Situ Zhaodun, directed "A Piece of Heaven: Preliminary Documents", a documentary that explores the significance of memory and documentation, focusing on Situ Zhaodun's life and legacy. Wei's "Golden Girls" also demonstrates the range of topics explored by Situ's students, delving into aging, sports, and gender in Chinese society.

Yang Lina, another of Situ's students, gained international acclaim with "Old Men" (1997), a poignant depiction of elderly life in Beijing. Her "Home Video" (2000) offers an intimate exploration of her family dynamics. Zhang Jingwei's "KJ Music Life" (2009), detailing the life of a Hong Kong music prodigy, won multiple awards, showcasing another facet of Situ's legacy. Other students, including Xia Gang, Li Shaohong, Liu Miaomiao, Hu Mei, Zhang Jianya, Jin Tao, Zhang Junzhao, Wu Ziniu, Peng Xiaolian, and Jiang Haiyang, primarily known for their feature films and TV contributions, also reflect the broad impact of Situ's teachings. While their documentary works may not be as internationally renowned, their narrative films often carry the imprint of Situ's

influence in their thematic depth and stylistic choices. This legacy of Situ Zhaodun, manifested in the diverse and influential works of his students, highlights his significant role in shaping modern Chinese cinema.

FINAL REFLECTIONS: SITU ZHAODUN'S ENDURING IMPACT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL CINEMATORGRAPHY

Situ Zhaodun's legacy in documentary cinema, distinguished by his steadfast commitment to truth and realism, offers invaluable insights for the realm of socio-cultural cinematography. His approach, deeply rooted in the complexities of Chinese culture, highlights the critical importance of integrating cultural awareness and understanding into cinematographic storytelling. By embracing Situ's principles of truth-seeking and authentic representation, socio-cultural cinematography can extend beyond its traditional narrative scope. This integration not only deepens the narrative dimension of socio-cultural cinematography but also strengthens its capacity to provide a more layered and genuine depiction of human experiences and societal nuances. Consequently, Situ Zhaodun's legacy becomes an essential reference point for socio-cultural cinematographers, steering them toward a more profound and accurate exploration of the human condition.

His teachings and the principles he advocated – truth and authenticity, methodological teaching, emphasis on relationships, comprehensive observation, social impact and reflection, and adaptation and innovation – transcend the boundaries of documentary filmmaking, offering a profound impact on socio-cultural cinematography. His influence guides socio-cultural cinematography towards a more insightful and empathetic portrayal of the human condition, enriching the narrative fabric of this genre with authenticity and a critical eye towards the truths of diverse cultures and communities.

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OLIVER STONE'S POLITICAL CINEMA

Abstract

Where there is the combination 'Politics and film', there is likewise the inevitable protagonist of political cinema – the American filmmaker, Oliver Stone. This paper explores the most important celluloid achievements of the great movie director, analyzes his film projects, summarizes them and draws conclusions. The focus of Oliver Stone's research is always the same: social power, political dominance, 'court' intrigues, political schemes and organized conspiracies, and coups. All of these are seasoned with very interesting analysis of the social milieu of the protagonists. In Stone's films, some of the following questions arise: What political motives drive his (anti)heroes? What are the main drivers of political activity? What is the societal, social and geopolitical concept of his heroes? The paper comprises a short biography of Oliver Stone, his most significant feature films and those of documentary-political nature, as well as some closing remarks on the significance and reach of his films.

Keywords: *political cinema, Oliver Stone, social power, conspiracy, United States, anti-globalism.*

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OLIVER STONE – A BIOGRAPHY

The American filmmaker William Oliver Stone was born in 1946 in New York. The director-to-be was the son of Jacqueline Godet, a Catholic woman of French ancestry, and Jewish stockbroker Louis Stone (real name: Louis Silverstein). Oliver Stone's religious views were pretty neutral and came somewhere in the middle of those of his parents. He opted for Protestantism and joined the Episcopal Church of the USA. Years later he would show a propensity for Buddhism. His parents' divorce came as a bitter blow to him, and since that point in his life he would go on to spend much more time with his father, which was to leave a visible mark in the films he was to make. He entered Yale University, but did not graduate from it, enlisting into the army instead, whence he was conscripted into the Vietnam War. This fact would affect Stone's worldview and his future celluloid interests.

He graduated from New York University in 1971, with a degree in film studies, where he was deeply influenced by director Martin Scorsese. His first major feature film, *Midnight Express*, which brought conditions in Turkish prisons to the silver screen, earned him and British director Alan Parker an Academy Award in 1979. He wrote a crime story for Brian de Palma, which grew into a movie script for *Scarface* in 1983. He carried off his first major solo award, an Academy Award for Best director in 1987 for *Platoon*, his powerful anti-war story about the Vietnam war. It was not difficult for Stone to write the screenplay and direct the piece, which was autobiographical to a large extent; the movie would go on to make the 2007 "100 best American films" list compiled by critics; the list includes movies made during the first hundred years of American cinema. He took on the same topic with the film *Born on the Fourth of July*, for which he would also go on to win an Academy Award for Best Director.

More feature films were to follow from there, perhaps even better-quality ones than those he had previously made, and by all means certainly more memorable than the mentioned two films that earned him the Academy Awards for Best Director. Nevertheless, because of their strong criticism, especially of the US establishment, these films were largely ignored, so only *JFK* was awarded an Oscar, and only for Best Adapted Screenplay, in 1992. From the 1990s onwards, Stone would go on to make *The Doors* (a 1991 tribute to Jim Morrison), *Nixon* (from 1995), *Alexander* (a huge commercial success about Alexander the Great

from 2004), *World Trade Center* (about the 2001 attack on the Twin Towers, from 2006), *W.* (from 2008), *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps* (from 2010), *Snowden* (from 2016), as well as a TV show about prisoners in Guantanamo Bay. Alongside all these feature films, the documentaries *Comandante* (from 2003), *Looking for Fidel* (2004) and *Castro in Winter* (2012) carry special political weight. They all deal with the leader of the socialist revolution in Cuba, Fidel Castro. Then there were also the movies *South of the Border* (about the rise of left-wing governments south of the Rio Grande, from 2009) and *Mi amigo Hugo* (about the Venezuelan political leader Hugo Chávez, from 2014).

OLIVER STONE'S POLITICAL FIMLS

JFK (1992)

Oliver Stone's first piece of real political cinema premiered in 1991. Its abbreviated title, *JFK*, refers to John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Oliver Stone won an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay for his adaptation of the story centered around the assassination of the 35th president of the USA. The film itself seems to vacillate between the intention to depict from a documentary angle the unfortunate Dallas, Texas event from November 22, 1963, and a broadly-constructed plot that revolves around the efforts of Jim Garrison, a Louisiana district attorney, to begin an investigation aimed at shedding more light on the background of the assassination and the perpetrators of the crime. And just as in every good feature film the plot begins suddenly, when something happens to the protagonist by chance, in this film the prosecutor Garrison learns by accident that the only person accused of the murder of President Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald, stayed in his very city – New Orleans, Louisiana – only a few months before the assassination in the summer of 1963. The plot of the film sticks to the documentary narrative closely.

Stone first construes the events in detail, the inherited problems President Kennedy encountered after he had taken office: the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, as well as racial segregation in the country. At the very beginning of the movie, he presents some possible points of resistance to the efforts to reform and de-oligarchize the country. He then moves on to the "Garrison case", and redirects the story to the efforts of the district attorney from Louisiana to expose the conspirators gathered around Lee Harvey Oswald via inductive reasoning and a case study;

above all Jack Ruby (the killer of Lee Harvey Oswald), David Ferrie, and Clay Shaw. The plot of the film includes a lot of flashbacks which the director uses to return to certain earlier events intended to clarify events and circumstances.[1] Garrison's initial conviction that by using induction he could find a chain of direct conspirators expands throughout the film, not only to union leader Jimmy Hoffa and mob leaders Sam Giancana, John Roselli, and Trafficante, but also to people at the top of the military, intelligence agencies and the White House itself. Conspiracy required a system. "Everyone was doing their part there," states an unnamed intelligence officer from the Department of Defense who secretly met with Garrison. "A tacit agreement was made that the president must be removed." He was much too in the way. It was the job of the people from the security sector not to be overzealous in protecting the president after he had landed at the Dallas airport.

The "go-stop" policy, Kennedy's pacifism and the effort to initiate a policy of détente in times of bloc vehemence cost him his life. "He was in many people's ways," the film states. Stone hints at profiteers from the military-industrial complex, deposed generals and demoted heads of intelligence agencies, such as Allen Dulles and J. Edgar Hoover. They all bore a grudge against John Fitzgerald, and they all felt the need to take revenge on him. The conspiracy had been prepared for a long time, through the grapevine. Jesus was killed by the Pharisees, because he got on the wrong side of them, by pointing out to the hypocrisy of the Old Testament customs that he wanted to change. It was the same with Kennedy, too. He tried to rattle the 'Deep State', to drain the 'Great Swamp'. He was betrayed by people from his own ranks: dissatisfied, wounded, spiteful; they were keen on getting revenge. Gaius Julius Caesar was killed by Cassius and Brutus, also people from his milieu. "This was also the case here," opines Oliver Stone. At one point, DA Garrison, a family man with five children, asks his wife: "How could Lee Harvey Oswald go to the Soviet Union, stay there, marry and bring a Russian woman back to the US if he hadn't worked for the service?" Exploring the world of intelligence agencies, Stone opens a new hidden world of parallel games in which jerseys and roles are changed as needs be.

The final scenes of the film abound in the expected fiasco of the indictment against Clay Shaw for conspiracy, due to insufficient evidence. Nevertheless, like Stone, Garrison devised a strategy from the beginning on at least two levels: one where he strove to prove a conspiracy (in

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[1] Richard Corliss (1991), "Oliver Stone: Who Killed J.F.K.?", *Time*. December 23.

which he failed), and the other: to put on unstable ground the conspiracy of silence about the existence of a conspiracy regarding the assassination of President Kennedy to which common sense points.[2] Garrison won the second battle. Regardless of the fact that the archives pertinent to the "Kennedy case" have not been opened to this day, very few people indeed believe today that Lee Harvey Oswald was the (only) murderer of President John F. Kennedy.

NIXON (1995)

One of the best feature films by Oliver Stone, which, although it did not win a single Academy Award, is the very pinnacle of Stone's political filmmaking in terms of its quality, dramatic plot and brilliant acting. The film is an integral system – both a feature film and a documentary, a kind of biographical tribute to one of the most controversial presidents of the USA of the 20th century – Richard Nixon. Even at the very beginning of the film we can't help but be under the impression that a great deal of effort went into rendering the composition and structure of a feature film as documentary-like as possible. Here, using frequent flashbacks in the narrative, the author seeks to return the plot to the past only to move it to a future which is in fact merely the recent past.[3] Stone thus biographizes the movie plot and, as if he were the author of a scientific paper, dissects the footnotes portraying the protagonist of the film.

The first part of the film is more dynamic and interesting. Stone focuses on portraying Richard Nixon in it: his nature, character, psychosocial traits, (un)spontaneity, sexuality, work ethic and family relationships.[4] What emerges in the first part of the movie are the character traits of a man who was actively involved in politics for a little longer than a third of his life: as a federal-government Washington official, as a 'witch hunter' in McCarthy's anti-communist era, as US vice president in Dwight Eisenhower's era, as the losing contender in the 1960 presidential election against John F. Kennedy, and, finally, as the 37th president of the USA, who would irrevocably resign from that highest political post in 1974, during his second term. In this part of the movie, Stone remains committed to the *JFK* idea about the conspiracy of the

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[2] Patricia Lambert (2000), *The Real Story of Jim Garrison's Investigation and Oliver Stone's Film JFK*, M. Evans Incorporated.

[3] Mick LaSalle (1996), "Oliver Stone's Absurd Take on *Nixon*", *SfGate*. Hearst Communications, Inc. July 12.

[4] Roger Ebert (1995), "Nixon", December 20.

most powerful political, military, intelligence and economic US elites in realpolitikal events.

The idea of a political conspiracy of the establishment is a logical extension of *JFK*, only now everything is viewed from a Nixonesque perspective: Nixon and (the) Kennedy(s) intertwine, collide and touch directly or through intermediaries who seem to hover above the protagonists, playing with their roles and destinies. The social milieu from which Nixon came is especially memorable. It is a poor Quaker family of atomized ranchers, their only options being to survive or disappear on one of the hundreds of orange plantations in California. Social darwinism at work wreaked havoc on the Nixon family, but it allowed Richard to study law at the local university and become the first man of the United States. To the moving cry of a young Richard Nixon, who, in a state of despair and disturbance over the loss of his loved ones, asks his mother why life is so cruel and when happiness will come, the Spartan mother, who received a Puritan and Quaker upbringing, replies: "Strength in this life, happiness in the next." Richard, too, was looking for power in this life: for social and political power, sacrificing everything, even morality. Nixon is fascinated by meetings with the most powerful people: these are two emperors, one Shah, dozens of presidents of republics, and prime ministers.

When Kennedy very narrowly wins the 1960 presidential election, Nixon regrets that he is no longer in the company of the greats: de Gaulle, Adenauer and Macmillan. Moreover, at the 1968 Republican convention held after he had secured victory in the elections, in front of thousands of members who greet him exaltedly, he triumphantly utters the sentence "Say you didn't want this!" to his wife Pat. And in order to get all of that, he had to make compromises with what we colloquially call today the 'Deep State' or the 'Great Swamp'. As a leading anti-communist, he agreed to be the leader of the establishment. And when the deposed head of intelligence, J. Edgar Hoover, warns him that "sometimes the irresponsible make the system snap", and that "the system survived one radical reformer in the White House, but it wouldn't survive another" (Bobby Kennedy), Richard Nixon returns again to the anti-hero side: he treads the safe, well-beaten tracks of the 'beasts of the deep state'.

Trying to satisfy the inert forces of the establishment, and to control the processes in times of revolt, public-morality erosion, and the rise of transparency, Nixon becomes a victim of his own technique of governance. The "Watergate" affair – spying on political opponents during

the election campaign – would lead Nixon to the no-win situation of saving himself from impeachment by irrevocably resigning. And thus we reach the narrative arcs of the second part of the feature film, which go into the complex processes of the dramatic unraveling of the "Watergate" affair. Stone's exhaustive use of the material renders this part of the film static and even torpid, difficult to watch at times. It overwhelms the viewer with the smallest details of the "Watergate" affair, abuses of political power and state secrets; court intrigues and schemes. The impression remains that Stone had already told everything in the first part of the film.

"BUSH (THE JUNIOR)" **OR** *W.* **(2008)**

If a film deserves to get acknowledgement and win the Academy Award for Best Director, it is undoubtedly the 2008 film *George W. Bush* or just *W.* Made as a full-length feature biopic, it draws on the best things from Stone's previous biopics on American presidents. In a little more than two hours, we get a round-up of one life and one biography.[5] The feature has a well-shaped, homogeneous structure. The character of the protagonist and his companions in the film derive from their actions, they can be read with the power of intuition. In this film, Stone does not suggest, but unobtrusively leaves it to the viewers to intuit the clues themselves, to draw conclusions independently, without any imposition. The flashbacks are associative, they are not intended to clarify, as in *JFK* and *Nixon*. After these two earlier films, in which Stone seems to want to say too much by cramming all the facts and events into a movie script, the feature *Bush Jr.* is a masterfully polished piece. The chronicle of George W. Bush Junior's life is in fact an unobtrusive comedy in which Oliver Stone portrays the downfall of the American political scene. Again, it's a story about nepotism, plutocracy, corruption and "the iron law of oligarchy".[6] The dynamic of the narrative is greatly contributed to by the brilliant acting of Josh Brolin, who interprets the character and work of George Bush Jr. in his role. Unlike *JFK*, which is overcrowded with documentary bits and clarifications, and *Nixon*, which is divided into a biographical part that shows the rise of

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[5] Stephen Galloway, Matthew Belloni (2008), "Bush biographers mixed on script for Oliver Stone's *W.*", *The Hollywood Reporter*, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, April 11.

[6] Agencies (2008), "Oliver Stone making a comedy? Maybe, with Bush film", *China Daily*, Beijing, May 9.

the titular character, as well as a documentary part which heralds the end of a career, in the movie *Bush Jr.*, the occupation of Iraq is merely the final act of the downfall not so much of a president as of the world power he ruled. The whole film is actually a biography of a downfall.

To depict the genesis of the downfall, Stone returns to the early youth of the elder son of Texas magnate George Bush Sr. As a trusted man and an exponent of the deepest state, Bush Jr.'s father, Bush Sr., entered high politics crawling, first as a member of the infamous Warren Commission (connection with JFK), then as director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), going on to serve as Ronald Reagan's vice president in both of his terms (dilligently building his empire on oil and politics), managing to get the presidential chair itself in the end. His elder son, George Bush Jr., lived the life of a bon vivant: he was prone to 'painting the town red': drunk parties and skirmishes with the law. Stone ascribes such a character to the genes of Jr.'s temperamental mother Barbara. As the movie progresses, the great director would build the story on the complex of 'the Great Father' whom the son would never either surpass or outdo. The script builds a narrative around the efforts of George Bush Jr. (or: W.) to step out of his great father's shadow. And when W. boasts that he is "the fittest and fastest president", after his deputy vice president Dick Cheney's remark that "Dad was faster after all", W. does admit: "Yes, Dad is faster". Bush Jr. has obviously had to prove himself all his life to win his father's favor and would never win the love reserved for his younger brother Jeb, who is much closer in temperament to Bush Sr.

Throughout the movie this would be the basic motivational impulse of Bush Jr.: only through victories could Bush Jr. prove himself to 'Big Daddy'.[7] Oliver Stone himself admits in an unusual way: no matter how limited in his intellectual abilities he was, no matter how little he worked on himself, W. is devilishly talented at summoning the daring cowboy-oilman (anti)hero whose archetype is embedded in the collective unconscious of the average American who has watched the saga of the Ewing family and its long-running soap opera *Dallas* at least once in their life. In several places in the movie, Stone depicts the idea that W. knows his way around people. The introverted father, Bush Sr., would never admit it. Unsuccessful as an oilman, sporting goods dealer, sports manager and baseball team owner, 'W.'s son' redirected his driving force – his extroversion – into politics: his father's domain, and he succeeded

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[7] John Robert Greene (2021), *The Presidency of George W. Bush*, University Press of Kansas, 91.

there. The successful politician is unsuccessful in everything else. Oh, how familiar that sounds! Against the expectations of his father, and mother Barbara, he first becomes the governor of Texas, and then the president of the USA. And no one can come to their senses after learning that W. is more than successful, least of all his father and mother.

The rise of W. has its explanation: it is the period of the climax of US power in the world. The nation is delirious – no one is as strong as the US, the only remaining superpower in the world. Stone captures that moment brilliantly. America and the Americans needed a cowboy at that moment who knows how to brandish a revolver throughout the world and take what belongs to him. And what belongs to him are the Iraqi oil reserves, which, according to data from the movie, are as much as a quarter of all world reserves.[8] It was prey that could not be relinquished. And it was relinquished by the hesitant Bush Sr. "Dad, you are indecisive!" cried the son to his father. Bush Sr., still suffering from the complex of having withdrawn from Vietnam, stopped halfway[9]: he expelled Saddam Hussein from Kuwait and occupied the oil fields in the south of Iraq, in Basra. However, he soon withdrew. This, according to his son's interpretation, cost him his second term.

Bush Jr. waited for his moment, and when Clinton left the White House, he moved into it, bringing with him the affair of the recount – of only about a thousand votes more in the state of Florida. By his father's admission, he would never have become president if his father's friend James Baker hadn't helped. Bush Jr., at the height of US power, goes all the way in the Iraqi adventure and emerges from it victorious. To criticism that he is embarking on an insane adventure that even his father does not support, he replies: "This is my war, not dad's!". Nonetheless, that victory has the overtones of a Pyrrhic victory. Stone hints at the beginning of the end of a rise. And while the beginning of the end of a rise in *JFK* was the violent termination of one life and one hope for change, and in *Nixon* a resignation as an escape route out of impeachment, here it is the moral demise of a (geo)politics that does not have a single moral value, but exclusively war booty. That's why the message of George Bush Sr., the 'Big Daddy' who appears to his son in a dream, sounds so sobering: "You succeeded, but actually destroyed everything, ruined 200 years of reputation of our Bush family."

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[8] John S. Duffield (2012), "Oil and the Decision to Invade Iraq", *Political Science Faculty Publications*, 27, Georgia State University.

[9] John Robert Greene (2015), *The Presidency of George H. W. Bush*, University Press of Kansas, 259.

The movie *Bush Jr.* or *W.* is a great piece of cinema by Oliver Stone. It stands as a testimony to the ups and downs – to the failure of a rise at the moment when the ordinary observer least expects it.

SNOWDEN (2016)

Snowden is Oliver Stone's first real political, non-presidential, feature film. Judging by its content, it is a natural continuation of *JFK*, *Nixon*, and *Bush Jr.* This celluloid piece also deals with the abuses of the political higher-ups. It is, in fact, a documentary adaptation into a feature film with a political topic and non-presidential content. In the middle of 2013, the 'Snowden' affair shook up not only the USA, but also the world, especially allied countries such as Japan, Italy, and Germany, which were under special digital surveillance by American security structures. The plot of the adapted screenplay and film revolves around the activities of young IT expert Edward Snowden, who unauthorizedly collected data from the digital database in the computer center in Hawaii where he worked, and handed them over for publication to the independent journalistic team of the London *Guardian*. Snowden was accused of the most serious crimes belonging to the category of unauthorized disclosure of secret information, so he was forced to flee the USA for Hong Kong (China), and thence to the Russian Federation, hoping he would be able to reach Cuba and Ecuador, which offered him asylum.[10]

The plot of the film unfolds in the training camps of the American army somewhere in the USA. A young Snowden soon becomes aware that he is unable to fulfill the tasks in military training, gets injured and it is 'game over' for him. However, he is back to the field again when he applies for a surveillance job in the world of digital technology within one of the command intelligence centers. He passes the test top of his class and enters the US National Security Agency (NSA) with great success. He is entrusted with important jobs: Geneva, Tokyo, Hawaii. We can see the rise of young Snowden, who finds an attractive girl (at least in the movie), Lindsey. There is a fancy house, a good car and upper middle class status. However, this way of living has its price. His bosses are increasingly demanding, and the initial monitoring of data and identification of opponents acquires more brutal proportions over time: physical elimination and the tracking of people for which there are no court orders issued, espionage of entire social groups that do not pose

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[10] T.d.L. (2017), "Tout comprendre à l'affaire Snowden", *Le Parisien*, Paris, November 8.

any danger and especially a threat to the national system of the US. The increasingly brutal jobs he participates in prompt Snowden to reconsider his role in that machinery of evil. He realizes that people's human rights are being violated, and he demands answers from his superiors.

The young operative is stupefied by the answers. At one point, his superior tells him: "Between the freedom of privacy and security – people choose security." Snowden asks: "But how do you know that? These people have never been asked whether they want to be under constant digital surveillance?" The answer is astounding: "There hasn't been a world war for more than 50 years. That's because we monitor and keep things under surveillance." And when Snowden realizes that he himself is being monitored and kept under surveillance, that his correspondence is being tracked via email, that his significant other's photos are being downloaded and his intimate moments are being recorded via a web camera, he becomes fully aware of the madness which he lives in. He makes a very risky and even dangerous decision to go public with data about the massive abuse to which the NSA is subjecting tens of millions of people around the world, who are by some hand of fate connected to the initial investigation in the fight against terrorism.[11] Snowden leaves the USA and in a Hong Kong hotel room he gives information to independent journalists of the *Guardian*, discloses the truth about the mass digital monitoring of not only suspicious and ordinary people, but also hundreds of political decision-makers in Europe and the world. The USA issues an arrest warrant for Snowden, and after a month's quarantine, he is granted asylum in the Russian Federation.

The movie *Snowden* is just a continuation of the story about the strengthening of the political power of the oligarchy that eliminated the Kennedys, led the war in Vietnam and clinched lucrative deals within the military-industrial complex, and then connected with the world's oil oligarchs and attacked Iraq, only to launch a punitive expedition into Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, and passed a whole set of laws aimed at protecting the national security. The culmination of those procedures was the so-called 'surveillance state' – digital tracking and surveillance without any legal basis. Congress and the presidential administration have also been involved in the digital security conspiracy, while no one asked the citizens whether they wanted their human and civil rights to

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[11] Rhonda Richford (2016) "Oliver Stone Reveals Details About His *Snowden* Biopic", *The Hollywood Reporter*, Santa Monica, Los Angeles, June 22.

be violated for the sake of such goals. The state of emergency declared after September 11, 2001 served to set this precedent.

OLIVER STONE'S DOCUMENTARIES

Oliver Stone's politically-themed documentaries occupy a significant place in the oeuvre of the famous director. Here we shall mention only some of these movies.

The 2003 documentary *Comandante* and its 2004 sequel *Looking for Fidel* are interviews, a kind of political confessionals, which Oliver Stone conducted with the legendary Cuban leader Fidel Castro.[12] This is a story about the resistance of tiny Cuba in the face of a much more powerful stronghold of capitalist imperialism from the immediate Cuban surroundings. In the film, Stone often poses direct and even provocative questions, to which he gets witty and interesting answers from the leader of the Cuban revolution. The overthrow of the Batista regime, the Cuban missile crisis, the Non-Aligned Movement, relations with the Soviets, the attitude towards Cuban ex-pats in the USA, the position of dissidents and the state of human rights in Cuba are just a few of the questions that intrigued the world-renowned creator Oliver Stone in this film. The film was met with indignation in the US, and critics panned it, accusing the great director of engaging in "cheap left-wing propaganda".

The political film *Mi amigo Hugo* is Oliver Stone's documentary panegyric on the charismatic leader of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez. Using his friendly ties with the late president of Venezuela, Oliver Stone portrays another strong anti-globalist figure of South America.[13] Chávez is a leader who tried to use all the resources of oil-rich Venezuela to improve the social image of the people of this poor South American country. The plot of the film follows the anti-colonial policy of Venezuela, and the efforts of its politicians to free the country of its dependence on multinational corporations, especially the US ones. The film also features other Latin American leaders, such as Fidel Castro, Nicolás Maduro, and José Vicente Rangel. This movie too was heavily criticized by national security opinion makers in the USA.

The 2016 documentary film *Ukraine on Fire* is a documentary piece that construes political, ethnic, historical and economic-social

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[12] Kathy McDonald (2003), "Oliver Stone Meets Fidel Castro", *Documentary*, IDA, April 21.
[13] Cory Franklin (2017), "The deafening silence of Hollywood's Chavistas", *Washington Examiner*, May 01.

relations in contemporary Ukraine.[14] The piece was judged as "subversive, pro-Russian and nonobjective", so Stone was boycotted by Western distributors.[15] The film hints at the gloomy events in that country, which would escalate in 2022 with a major war between the Kremlin and the government in Kyiv. The script follows the ethnogenesis of the liberation movements in today's Ukraine: from the modern-era withdrawal of Poles from those areas and the liberation struggles of Bohdan Khmelnytsky, through Ivan Mazepa's joining the side of the Swedish king against Russia, to the short-lived formation of the Ukrainian state in 1918. A lively national consciousness grows to the point of extremism during the Second World War: a special emphasis is placed on the infamous Nazi SS division called the Galicia Division which clashed not only with Russian and Jewish civilians, but also with the Polish population.

The attempt of Stepan Bandera, Mykola Lebed, Roman Shukhevych and other leaders to finally form an independent Ukrainian state failed. Bandera was taken to a German concentration camp, and after the expulsion of the Germans, Ukrainian nationalists waged a guerilla war against the Soviet authorities as late as the beginning of the 1950s. Oliver Stone documents how many Ukrainian Nazis were spirited away and provided with refuge in the USA and Western European countries after the war. The director then deals with Khrushchev's "Crimean gift to mother Ukraine", and then moves on to perestroika and the 1991 declaration of Ukrainian independence. Radical elements enter the Ukrainian assembly, the "Verkhovna Rada", and the struggle between pro-Russian and anti-Russian forces reaches its climax during the "Orange Revolution" of 2004, when the pro-Western candidate Viktor Yushchenko eventually beats the pro-Russian candidate Viktor Yanukovych for presidency after the annulled presidential elections. Economic and social problems further worsened during Yushchenko's rule, so Yanukovych convincingly wins the new presidential election with the promise that Ukraine would pursue a balanced policy between Russia and the European Union. The stalemate in negotiations with the EU, which demanded unbearable economic and social cuts from Ukraine, was the reason for pro-Western supporters to launch a rebellion so that Yanukovych's government would not hand over the country completely to Russia. The peaceful uprising in Kyiv's main square Maidan was additionally radicalized over time

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[14] Othmara Glass (2022), "For the Kremlin?", *Frantfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Frankfurt am Main, August 19.

[15] Mike Kuhlenbeck (2017), "*Ukraine on Fire* exposes fascism", *Workers World*, July 17.

through the actions of armed Ukrainian nationalists. The commotion lead to an armed rebellion with numerous casualties. Yanukovych leaves the country and takes refuge in Russia, and the new, radically pro-Western government is trying to defuse pro-Russian tensions: in Crimea, the Donbas and Odesa. War is on the horizon.

CONCLUSION

Today, Oliver Stone has become synonymous with political cinema. The so-called 'presidential film' occupies a special place in his cinematography. Presidential films about the Kennedys, Nixon, and George Bush cover political power, social power, influences, interests, blackmail and complexes, plots and tragic denouements. Stone unmasks the "iron law of oligarchy".[16] Although he deals with powerful people, human destinies absorb him, in fact. Stone portrays his heroes, tries to establish their subconscious and conscious motives. He constantly asks: What drives them and how far are they willing to go? He is trying to tell us that "even the rich (read "the powerful") cry". At the same time, Oliver Stone also deals with the great anti-globalist leaders of South America throughout his documentaries. In these movies, he tries to interpret the heroes he portrays, to present to the audience their motives and strivings, and to convey the message of the enslaved world of Latin America, which is looking for a life worthy of a man in the 21st century.[17]

And if someone, at the very end, asked the question: "What is Oliver Stone's political cinema like?", the answer could be short, succinct and almost pithy: intellectually provocative, dynamic, documentary-like, and, above all, warm – with a strong human message which seems to be missing in contemporary auteur cinema.

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ABUSE OF POWER THROUGH THE PRISM OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CINEMA

Abstract

Film and politics are two separate entities whose symbiosis leaves no one indifferent. At first glance, it looks like an oxymoron, since politics is the 'art of the possible' while film is the art of impossible, i. e. imaginary. Film deconstructs political (un)reality, raises politically important questions, sometimes creates public opinion in the interests of political actors and decision-makers, which remains hidden for the film audience. Another touchpoint of both arts is the circumstance that both of them have their own scripts, actors, directors, costume designers, producers, and last but not least, consumers. The aim of this article is to explain how political corruption works through the prism of mainstream movies (including documentary films) with political agenda and a strong (anti)corruption ethos. Selected cinematography examples are drawn from various moments in film history and geography and include Hollywood, Bollywood, Iberian and Russian political cinema. The author focuses on the political analysis of the film's view of the captured state, the financing of political parties, compromising material, in a word, the abuse of power.

Keywords: *film, politics, corruption, political cinema, abuse of power.*

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WHAT MAKES A FILM POLITICAL?
TOWARDS IDENTIFYING THE POLITICAL IN FILM

The easiest way to inject a propaganda idea into most people's minds is to let it go in through the medium of entertainment picture when they do not realize that they are being propagandized.

<div align="right">Elmer Davis</div>

Scholars focused on the study of the political genre have failed to reach a consensus on the definition of political film. One of the reasons for this is fact that some nonpolitical movies have political aspects, so it is hard to categorize them as political movies. Hence, scholars avoid to define what makes a film political and prefer to identify a different typology of political films. Christensen and Haas identified four types of political films: pure political films, politically reflective films, socially reflective films and artist's political films.[1] Pure political films are produced by governments and they feature political processes, political figures (actors) and political events. Their political function is education or critique and the common genres are documentary and propaganda films. Mr Smith goes to Washington and Frost/Nixon are identified as pure political films.

Politically reflective films are depicted in allegorical and methaporical narratives so the audience could interpret political messages in them. These films are linked with current event or history and the common genres are sci-fi, horror, fantasy, thrillers. Political function of this type of film is to generate discussion, debate, sometimes critical thinking. Politically reflective films are interwoven with sociological imagination and they are visualizing socially desirable and undesirable behavior, beliefs and values, customs, law. Independence Day and Air Force One are paradigmatic examples of this type of political film.

Socially reflective films are related to politics of everyday life focusing on human rights issues, injustice, (in)equality and also reflects sociological imagination. Building social emphaty and tolerance is the political function of this type of political movie. The majority of Hollywood films produced and marketed as entertainment belong to this category, e.g. one of the most popular movies in history, Gone With the Wind, an epic historical romance during the American Civil War and the Reconstruction era. Casablanca, one of the most layered films

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[1] T. Christensen & J. P. Haas (2005), *Projecting Politics*, New York: Routledge

to interpret belongs to this typology. For the majority of the audience, it is a Bogart-Bergam love story film whose replicas have transcended spatial and temporal frameworks. It is not just a film about strong passion but also a movie with democratic political messages, anti-fascist, pro-interventionist, pro-Allies political film. Casablanca also shows the phenomenon of the abuse of power through corrupt activities of Vichy French police chief captain Luis Renault. Through the character of captain Luis self-interest, institutionalized (systemic) corruption and collaborationist loyalty are critiqued.

The opposite situation is also possible, that *prima facie* political film is dominated by love. As an illustrative example I would cite The American President (1995), a film about a popular democratic president who is preparing for a re-election run and who attempts to consolidate the administration's 63% approval rating by passing a moderate crime control bill. Instead of shedding light on the logrolling phenomenon as a political market in which votes are exchanged as a sort of currency,[2] the film is focused on the love sentiments of the widowed president towards the female lobbyist who is working to pass legislation to reduce carbon dioxside emissions.

Artist's political films are creative, conjure up memory and they can belong to any genre. Their political function is imaginative and evocative so the audience can experience a different environment. These films, among other things also reflect political meaning. Mafia structure and the way it works through political mechanisms in Coppola's Godfather is a good example of this type of political movie.[3]

Political genre film could deliver an ideological or political message and it is usually percieved as political propaganda. The film industry, especially Hollywood production is sensitive to audience reaction and tries to avoid ideological movies. Political message films are put on the Hollywood agenda to raise awareness of the necessity of a political reform, for example campaign finance (Warren Beatty's film Bulworth).

From a sociological and historical perspective, in adittion to the primary artistic and aesthetic expression, foreign and domestic movies are undoubdtely pocally driven. The plot, background social values, a view of institutional activity, picture of otherness and sources of funding for films are political in nature. Five decades ago, author tandem

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[2] R. Holocombe (2006), *Public Sector Economics: The Role of Government in the American* Economy. New Jersey: Prentice Hall

[3] E. Giglio (2010), *Here's Looking at You Hollywood Film and Politics*, Baltimore: Peter Lang, 27.

Zimmer and Leggett concluded that "all films are political".[4] Political cinema is a construct which relies on the formation and transformation of subjectivity and the most narrative driven political cinema is biopolitical cinema.[5] In his thoughts on modern political cinema, known as Cinema 2, Gilles Deleuze concluded that cinematographic art should contribute to the "invention of the people".[6] The key difference between classical and modern political cinema is the idea of the people who are missing.[7] In case that the subjects of political cinema are not preconceived (for example, the Algerians in the Battle of Algiers), the key political role of the film is their construction out of the materials provided by culture and history.[8]

It is important to introduce the syntagm contemporary political cinema to the research agenda, which includes the spectrum of films made between the 1990s and the early 2010s on different meridians, in different societies and political cultures. This genre is constructed outside the classical cause-and-effect matrix and resistance to the neoliberal paradigm is the essence of this kind of political cinema. Contemporary political cinema as audio visual expression is symbiosis of philosophical framework and cinematic texts and images, with the intention of deconstructing ideological clichés.[9]

Philosophical terms such as uncinematic, acinema, impure cinema, non-cinema are nothing more than assigning political elements to film. According to Adorno, un-cinema is the negation of movement in modern cinema which constitutes its artistic character.[10] Adorno positioned cinema as a leader of modern art, but only insofar as it rebelled against its own status as art through self-awareness of its technological origin.[11] For Lyotard, the concept of acinema is a treat of sterile moments which "gives rise to perversion and not solely to propagation".[12]

[4] C. Zimmer & L. Legget (1974), "All Films Are Political", *SubStance 3* (9), 123-136.

[5] M. Holtmeier (2016), "The Modern Political Cinema: From Third Cinema to Contemporary Networked Biopolitics", *Film-Philosophy 20* (2-3), 303.

[6] Deleuze, G. (1989), *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 217.

[7] *Ibidem.*

[8] M. Holtmeier (2016), *Ibidem*, 303-323.

[9] J. L. Slattery (2019), "Contemporary Political Cinema", *Film-Philosophy* 23 (3), pp. 399-402.

[10] L. Nagib (2016), "Non-Cinema or The Location of Politics in Film", *Film-Philosophy 20* (1), 131-148.

[11] Hansen, M. B. (2012), *Cinema and Experience: Sigfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 218.

[12] J. F. Lyotard (1986), "Acinema". in: Rosen, P. (ed.), *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*. New York/Chichester: Columbia University Press, 351.

Bazin introduced the theoretical construct of impure cinema, which is succinctly reflected in the observation that cinema's "existence precedes its essence" and which without public can't exist, like a house that "has no meaning except as a habitat".[13]

Contemporary movies with political agenda are less focused on individuals deserving of national libertation and building a nation state, which was the key topic of militant Third Cinema movement in the 1960s. In contrast to postcolonial discourse, contemporary political cinema addresses history, collective memory through the creation and recreation of the audio-visual archive as world memory as one of the key pillars of film aesthetics today.[14] Patricia Pisters, relying on the theoretical concept of the Thousand Plateaus (Deleuze & Guattari) identified metallurgic strategies in contemporary media culture. She emphasized that contemporary filmmakers are metallurgists who form and express world memory, as memory goes beyond the conditions of psychology, via images and sounds which contribute to political conciousness of citizens as film public.[15]

THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON IN THE EYES OF CINEMATOGRAPHY – THE ILLUSION OF POWER OR HOW POLITICS CORRUPTS PEOPLE

Power and human greed are universal connectors of corruption in political life and political practice. Two centuries ago Lord Acton in his dictum wrote that "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". There is no unique and universal anti-corruption medicine (*panacea*) because corruption is a phenomenon as old as society and state. Plato's philosopher-king teaches us that the learned virtue of governing society is a weak and insufficient barrier to human tempation. In the most concise way, for the purposes of this paper, we normatively define political corruption as abuse of public official position for private purposes. The normative element in this context represents a deviation from the common good (public interest), that is, from publicly and universally constituted preformance guidelines to preform some

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[13] A. Bazin (1967), "In Defence of Mixed Cinema", in: *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1, essays selected and translated by Hugh Gray. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 53-75.
[14] Pisters, P. (2016), "The Filmmaker as Metallurgist: Political Cinema and World Memory", *Film-Philosophy 20* (1), 149-150.
[15] *Ibid.*

public functions by office holders who have a certain public function or electoral mandate.[16] In literature, institutional corruption as a form of social and political pathology is also defined as "a systemic and strategic influence which is legal that undermines the institution's effectiveness by diverting it from its purpose".[17]

The global world became more sensitive to corrupt practices in politics, which was affected by the end of the Cold War, the end of socialism, development of investigative journalism, the rise of democracy, the development of civil society, the spread of crime.[18] On a symbolic level, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the demolition of the corruption wall. Until that political event, corruption was the model of behavior in many communist countries. Public policies were a facade for political corruption and unfair distribution of resources. By introducing democratic forms of government, the communist regimes became easily replaceable in a procedural sense even though non-domestic concept of excercising power remain constant. In these circumstances, in newly formed democratic states resources were limited and the capacities that would limit the missue of public property were insufficiently built. Citizens' dissatisfaction was additionaly motivated by bureaucratic red tape which was reflected by excessive work load and excessive use of documents.[19] It would be logically wrong to conclude that films that shed light on corruption were the exclusivity of the post-Cold War era. Orson Welles's black and white picture masterpiece Citizen Kane (1941) and Sweet Smell of Success (1957) illustrate the film industry's interest in corruption as a phenomenon of social pathology during and the post-WWII era. Citizen Kane is a film about rise of a businessman who came from nothing and rose to power by manipulating public opinion during the Spanish-American War. In building a yellow press empire and publishing scandalous articles, Kane became corrupt. This film demonstrates universal human greed as well as corruption of media that should be the guardian of the public interest.[20] Sweet Smell of Success is a movie about Sidney Falco, a corrupt Manhattan press agent who creates positive

[16] T. Perić Diligenski (2021), *Rasprava o političkoj korupciji*, Beograd: Čigoja Štampa, 35.

[17] L. Lessig (2013), "Institutional corruption defined", *The Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics 41* (3), 553.

[18] I. Krastev (2004), *Three Essays on the Politics of Anti-Corruption*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2.

[19] H. Altunok (2018), "Bureaucratic Red Tape", in: Farazmand, A. (ed.), *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*. Springer, Cham, 1-4.

[20] H. E. Spence (2021), *Media Corruption in the Age of Information*. Berlin: Springer

publicity for his clients and negative publicity for his anemies. In this film corrupt ambition is superior to journalistic ethics.

The psychological profile of corrupt political bosses as well as the staffing matrix for selecting people who are appointed to positions in political parties and public administration is intriguing for cinematography. The preferences of corrupt politicans in real political life as well as in the movie reduce to the choice of pragmatic actors who have don't care whether or not they represent a risk to the corrupt system. This logic leads to reduction of corruption cost and increases the odds of finding a reliable partner for corrupt exchange.[21]

A paradigmatic example of corruption at the highest political level that leads to state capture and unfair distribution of resources is represented by the film The Last King of Scotland (2006). This multi-genre political film (history, drama, biography, thriller) depicts the psychological metamorphosis of the fictional Ugandian dictator (Idi Amin) who wanted to modernize and improve the economic situation in his country. His political performance once again proved the truth of the sentence that hell is full of good meanings, but heaven is full of good works. When the charismatic leader orchestrated a military coup and finally obtained absolute power, he started systematically abusing it. His political practice was reduced to voluntarism and decisionism, based on pecuniary motives. The film visualizes the way the dictator built a classic modern patrimonial or neopatrimonial state, as a negative regime type associated with informal institutions such as corruption, clientelism and autocracy rule.[22] The Ugandian dictator who is a paradigmatic kleptocrat, sees and understands the state as a source of profit and he creates an environment for maximizing rents. The kleptocrat always gives primacy to the policy that channels resources into his own pockets and opposes policies that distribute benefits to the entire community.[23] Through the prism of film, losing absolute power is the dictator's political nightmare and his biggest fear.

The dystopian political thriller, V for Vendetta (2006) describes political corruption and social inequality as driving forces for activism of a masked vigilante, V who notes that "people should not be afraid of

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[21] Porta, D. della & Vanucci, A. (2010), "Politička korupcija i loša uprava u Italiji", *Political analysis 1* (2), 6.

[22] M. M. Charrad & J. Adams (2011), Introduction: Patrimonialism, Past and Present. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 636, 6-15.

[23] R. S. Ejkerman (2007), *Korupcija i vlast: uzroci, posledice i reforma*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 126-132.

their governments" but "governments should be afraid of their people". This film has strong anti-corruption sentiments and "mobilizes viewers at a visceral level to reject the politics of apathy in favor of politics of democratic struggle" (Ott 2010, 39).[24] V for Vendetta illustrates the universal negative impact of totalitarian and corrupt governments and also the universal human tendency for the conquest of freedom and the spirit of resistance. The educational role of this movie towards audience is reflected in raising awareness of manipulation and violence practiced by political elite and necessity for citizens to combat such inhuman practices.

Corrupt politics in Iberian cinematography

Iberian cinematography has illuminated the presence of political corruption at the local level, which is also one of the most important social issues in Spain. Endemic corruption at the local level of governance in this country has been recognized as a pressing problem in the national public discourse.[25] The Realm (Spanish: El Reino, 2018) is film which studiously illuminates the omnipresent corruption in the post-Franco era, a period when Spain was moving towards the West. In such a political atmosphere, Spanish society and political market was attractive for foreign investors and the European Union's funds. This type of modernization created incentives for corruption and once again proved the truth of Samuel Huntington's observation that corruption in the majority of societies prevails in the most intensive phases of modernization.[26] Modernization in Spain created new sources of wealth and local politicians started abusing funds as rent seekers, buying real estate and yachts, and consequently hiding embezzled funds in Andorra. The Realm is a portrait of Manuel, a corrupt local politician who was selected as the scapegoat by his corrupt party colleagues, in order to present false anti-corruption results and enable the corrupt system to continue to function. Manuel refused to disappear abroad as suggested to him and he was arrested and charged. While he was on bail awaiting trial, he started a personal investigation to uncover the biggest corrupt fish. In that investigation, *kompromat* as a form of political vulgarity

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[24] B. L. Ott (2010), "The Visceral Politics of V for Vendetta: On Political Affect in Cinema", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 27 (1), 39.

[25] M. Borrella & M. Rode (2021), "Love is blind: partisan alignment and political corruption in Spain", *SERIEs Journal of the Spanish Economic Situation 12* (3), 423.

[26] S. P. Huntington, (2007), "Modernization and Corruption", in: Arnold J. Heidenheimer et al (eds.), *Political Corruption, Concepts and Contexts, third edition*, New York: Routledge, 253.

for collecting evidence of crimes to use for blackmail was a necessary dramatic tool.[27]

Political corruption through the lens of Russian cinematography

The political climate in Russia is not favorable to free-thinking artists, so the creation of a film about corruption as a sociopathological phenomenon in that country is worthy of praise. Leviathan (2014), a rare Russian film about corruption and local clientelistic networks was Oscar-nominated, recognized by Western audiences, and criticized by the Russian Government. The film was shot in 2014, which Putin declared the year of culture, but politics overcame cultural expression, which is a universal characteristic of authoritarian regimes. The film was targeted as "anti-Russian" because of the criticism of the church and local corrupt politicians, i. e. captured state and privatized institutions. Oriental despotism is creatively packaged in scenes where a lawyer is huging Putin in one photography and where the camera focuses on TV news regarding the contaversial Pussy Riot feminist group. The political mesage to the audience was sent through the scene in which main actor, Kolya and his friends use photographs of former SSSR presidents (Lenin, Brezhnev and Gorbachev) for target practice. The action of Leviathan takes place in an isolated Russian coastal town on whose shore is the skeleton of a whale as a metaphor for the Russian government which does not serve its citizens. This skeleton is a modern version of Hobbes's Leviathan, a symbol of the "postmodern recognition of contempoprary perversion of both church and state".[28] In this movie, the church and the govermnent as key institutions which constitute Russian identity are hotspots of abuse of power for achieving private goals. Politicians and priests prone to corruption create a parallel, informal institutional order in which only the best bribe offerers are included. The strength of informal institutions in a whale skeleton society is an expression of the inability of formal institutions to limit greed and private egoism.[29]

[27] J. Choy (2020), "*Kompromat*: A theory of blackmail as a system of governance", *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 147.

[28] G. Goff (2022), "Transforming Leviathan: Job, Hobbes, Zvyagintsev and Philosophical Progression", *Journal of Religion and Film*, Vol. 26 (1), 3.

[29] V. Stanković i T. Perić Diligenski (2023), "Neformalni oblici društvene anomije", *Srpska politička misao*, 80 (2), 233.

Anti-corruption ethos in Bollywood cinematography

Corruption is an inevitable topic in Bollywood cinematography since institutionalized corruption is pervasive in India. India's economic activity is dominantly gray, and in such an environment, citizens are forced to use informal institutions to exercise their rights. In order to acquire the basic elements of governance, buisinessman have to negotiate bureaucratic mazes.[30] Indian bureaucrats are prone to the red carpet phenomenon in order to extort more bribes. Citizens are the most affected by such institutional efficiency, which was recognized by Indian film directors and producers. Hindi cinema is the most engaged in terms of raising awarness about the harmfulness of corruption.

An excellent example of socially engaged film is An Insignificant Man (2016), a documentary film about massive anti-corruption protests in India, organized and managed by Aam Aadmi Party (the Common Man's Party). This party was an anti-corruption pioneer and headed by political leader Arvind Kejriwal. Another Hindi movie worth mentioning is Gabbar is Back (2015), a story about a man who creates his own anti-corruption military network (the Anti-corruption force) in order to eliminate the most corrupt individuals who hold public office. It is a film about a man dissapointed in the state apparatus who takes the law into his own hands, kidnapping and murdering corrupt public servants.

Abuse of power in documentary movies

Documentary movies about political corruption shed light on corrupt practices of high level public officials and the people they are close to. Behind Closed Doors (2023) is such a film which portraits corruption of politically exposed persons (PEPs) in developing countries, who are included in bribery practices and money laundering. Over half a trillion dollars flows out of developing countries each year into Western economies via complex offshore structures. Offshore heavens serve to hide corrupt activities and finance secrets from outsiders.[31] Behind Closed Doors demystifies British tax heavens which try to attract non-residents by offering low taxation, light regulation and above all, secrecy. These finance heavens are attractive for political and economic actors from

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[30] J. Miklian & S. Carney, (2013), "Corruption, Justice and Violence in Democratic India", *SAIS Review of International Affairs 33* (1), 37.

[31] J. O'Donovan, H. Wagner, & S. Zeume (2016), "The Value of Offshore Secrets – Evidence from the Panama Papers", *Review of Financial Studies*, 1.

the former British colonies, who have acquired wealth by abusing power and public resources.

In the case of the Kenyatta family, the inheritors of Kenya's first independent president, Jomo Kennyatta illustrates how political corruption works. Sixty years after gaining independence, the Kenyatta dinasty is one of the wealthiest in Kenya. The main question is how president Jomo was able to become so rich on a modest salary. Declassified CIA reports testify that funds provided by foreign governments were used by Kenyatta and his associates to buy land for themselves instead of landless Kenyans. Uhuru Kenyatta, Jomo's son and president of Kenya (2013-2022) continued the family's financial practices and invested in offshore structures, though he claimed to be an advocate of transparency and an anti-corruption actor. The situation is similar in Azerbaijan, where the Aliyevs, politicians and the richest family own banks to lounder money through. The Pandora Papers expose a London property empire worth nearly 700 million dollars amassed by the ruling family of Azerbaijan. The corruption matrix is the same in Pakistan where the government of Nawaz Sharif passed a law which prevented tax authorities in this country from questioning the origin of money that entered Pakistan from abroad. After the Panama Papers were discovered, investigative agencies found out that Sharif couldn't justify the assets he had made from known sources of income. The Sharifs were never included in the list of the richest since the exact amount of their holdings is hidden in the United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Luxembourg, etc.

CONCLUSION

Film and politics are two separate entities whose symbiosis leaves no one indifferent. At first glance, it looks like an oxymoron, since politics is the 'art of the possible' while film is the art of impossible, i. e. imaginary. The film deconstructs political (un)reality, raises political important questions, sometimes creates public opinion in the interests of political actors and decision-makers, which remains hidden for the film audience. Another touchpoint of both arts is the circumstence that each of them has its own scripts, actors, directors for scenes, costume designers, producers, financiers and last but not least, consumers.

In summa, according to our opinion, a political film is constituted by two elements: a dominant political theme and a political message or at least information of political content that is sent to the audience. A

dominant political theme includes an insight into a political event, the way political institutions function and the behavior of political actors.

Political corruption, as the abuse of power for private purposes, on the movie screen is an attempt to engage artistically in the process of raising awarness of its harmfulness. Contemporary political cinema sheds light on its causes, manifestations and consequences. Films on political corruption educate the audience around the globe about the importance of sanctioning this form of social pathology.

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THE FILM INDUSTRY AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

Abstract

From the movie 'The Birth of a Nation', which promoted the status quo regarding racism in 1915, to the propaganda films of the Nazi Party, all the way to movies like 'W' in 2008 depicting the life of U.S. President George W. Bush, or the influence of actors and celebrities in election campaigns – and much more – their run for political office (like Arnold Schwarzenegger) – the film industry is included in politics and election campaigns in many ways.

In this paper, we will research this influence from two perspectives. First, we aim to examine and illustrate how the film industry projects an image of the world that influences political values and elections. This includes exploring how specific political values are promoted, how positive or negative attitudes towards individuals in politics are formed, and how opinions on particular topics are subtly imposed by the film industry.

Second, we will delve into the direct influence of the film industry on political behavior and election campaigns. We will explore questions about the creation of propaganda films and commercials within election campaigns, resembling real entertainment movies. We will also investigate the involvement of celebrities in advertisements and events within politicians' election campaigns and the creation of a popular image around

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them. Additionally, we will address questions about celebrities directly running for office.
By addressing these aspects, we aim to shed light on the intricate relationship between the film industry and the realm of politics and election campaigns..

Keywords: *Film industry, election campaigns, celebrities, elections, movies and politics, propaganda movie.*

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about media effects and influence on political behavior, values and perception, especially in election campaigns, there was a lot of research about concepts like framing, agenda setting and priming[1] or worldview.[2] But what about the film industry and its influence?

"Thinking of movies as independent variables does not seem likely to shed light upon the more nuanced aspects of the relationship between film and politics".[3] From the movie 'The Birth of a Nation' (1915) "which promoted racial stereotyping of African-Americans",[4] to the election films of the Nazi Party, all the way to movies like 'W' in 2008 depicting the life of U.S. President George W. Bush, or the influence of actors and celebrities in election campaigns – and much more – their run for political office (like Arnold Schwarzenegger) – the film industry is included in politics and election campaigns in many ways.

Even when they are not about politics or political figures, movies promote specific values, sometimes even specific ideologies, desirable or undesirable political positions ("cancel culture") and worldviews. In this paper, we want to examine and illustrate how the film industry projects an image of the world[5] that influences political values and elections. This includes exploring how specific political values are promoted, how positive or negative attitudes towards individuals in politics are formed,

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[1] D. A. Scheufele, D. Tewskbury (2007), "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models", *Journal of Communication 57*, 9-20.

[2] P. E. Lou (2013), *Mediji i politički proces*, Beograd: Fakultet političkih nauka.

[3] E. Haas et al. (2015), *Projecting politics: political messages in American films*, Routledge, 4.

[4] E. D. Giglio (2010), *Here's looking at you: Hollywood, film & politics*, Peter Lang, 1.

[5] Siniša Atlagić (2018), "Politička slika sveta na izbornom plakatu u Srbiji od 1990. do 2017. godine", *Communication and Media*, br. 43.

and how opinions on particular topics are subtly imposed by the film industry during election campaigns.

Also, we want to delve into the direct influence of the film industry on election campaigns. We will explore questions about the creation of propaganda films and commercials within election campaigns, resembling real entertainment movies. We will also investigate the involvement of celebrities in advertisements and events within politicians' election campaigns and the creation of a popular image around them. Additionally, we will address questions about celebrities directly running for office.

HOW THE FILM INDUSTRY PROJECTS
AN IMAGE OF THE WORLD?

The terms 'image of the world' or 'worldview' expresses "how people, by adopting knowledge, beliefs and language, come to see the world in a certain way".[6] "The key function of any image of the world is to provide support for the establishment of rules according to which society will be organized".[7] By creating and imposing a certain image of the world, the basis for the legitimate rule is created, they provide explanations of the world and guidelines for action, providing citizens with points of support, masking social, economic and political domination and providing a mechanism for managing the behavior of the masses. "In the realization of these goals, it is necessary to start from the basic mechanisms of realization of the strategy of formation and maintenance of the image of the world previously recognized in social psychology: identification, social categorization, social and causal attribution and the mechanism of stereotyping".[8]

The film industry holds a remarkable power in shaping and projecting an image of the world to audiences worldwide. Beyond mere entertainment, films serve as powerful mediums that influence perceptions, values, and cultural understanding of past and future events. "With the film, one can quite legitimately build a special version (that is, an interpretation) of the past that can have an enviable influence on the consciousness of those who 'consume' it".[9] This intricate process involves a dynamic interplay of storytelling, cinematography, and societal nuances,

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[6] P. E. Lou (2013), *op. cit.*, 164.

[7] Siniša Atlagić (2020), *Izborne poruke i svest birača*, Demostat, Beograd, 14.

[8] Siniša Atlagić (2020), *op. cit.*, 17.

[9] N. Zvijer (2009), "Ideologija i vrednosti u jugoslovenskom ratnom spektaklu: prilog analizi filma na primeru Bitke na Neretvi Veljka Bulajića", *Hrvatski filmski ljetopis 57-58*, 27.

collectively constructing a unique lens through which audiences perceive the world.[10] Some films go beyond mere entertainment, serving as a reflection of contemporary issues and societal values. Whether intentional or unintentional, films can become mirrors that reflect the concerns, aspirations, and challenges of the world at a given time. By addressing social, political, or environmental issues, filmmakers can engage audiences in critical discussions and inspire change, but the film industry could also be a factor regarding the social status quo.

In this subtitle we will compare two different "images of the world" – one picture imposed by Yugoslav cinematography, and the other imposed by Hollywood through the movies and so-called "cancel culture".

During the era of socialism, Yugoslav cinematography played an important role in shaping and supporting the ideological tenets of the socialist social order.[11] Cultural policy in Yugoslavia under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito sought to use the power of cinematography to strengthen national unity and convey the ideals of a unique Yugoslav model of socialism through promotion and identification with Socialist Values, stereotyping the ideal of "Brotherhood and Unity" and heroic narratives and storytelling. Many movies and sitcoms in that period were created among themes of social equality, collective effort, and the importance of community and celebrated the heroism of individuals who embodied the socialist ideals in everyday life.[12] These films aimed to inspire a sense of solidarity among the diverse ethnic groups within Yugoslavia, promoting the idea of a shared Yugoslav identity and reinforcing the belief in the socialist project.

Historical Revisionism and defining and stereotyping a collective enemy have also often used mechanisms in Yugoslav cinematography. "Suzanne Buck-Morss attaches great importance to the concept of the enemy within an ideological system, emphasizing that defining the enemy is simultaneously defining the collective as self".[13] Movies like "The Battle of Neretva", "Kozara", "Sutjeska" were used as a tool to reinterpret and present historical events in a manner that aligned with the

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[10] R. Vekić (2015), *Mijenjanje stavova persuazijom* (Doctoral dissertation, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Depatrment of Psychology).

[11] Živko Andrijašević, (2022), „Film u funkciji oblikovanja socijalističkog identiteta", *Montenegrin Journal for Social Sciences 6* (1), 105-116.

[12] Buljubašić, B. (2022), "Prikaz socijalističke svakodnevnice u transformaciji – televizijska serija Bolji život", *Etnoantropološki problem 17* (2), 629-659.

[13] N. Zvijer (2009), *op. cit.*, 27.

heroic narrative of the role of the Partisans in the fight against fascism during World War II, portraying them as heroes who won the freedom.[14]

Yugoslav cinematography was also utilized as a tool for education and propaganda. Documentary films, for example, glorified the achievements of socialism as the driving force of the nation, through depictions of progress in industry, agriculture and social protection.

And what about the Hollywood film industry today? Hollywood movies also impose certain worldview. They promote topics usual for postmodern liberalism – like environmental issues, gender equality or LGBT rights, and also, they create a certain image of who are the 'good guys' and who are the 'bad guys' in the world,[15] and in this way often support US military interventionism. "Less than two weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that the film industry could make a 'very useful contribution' to the war effort".[16]

Like Yugoslav cinematography, Hollywood also imposes political values through narrative storytelling and selective portrayal of issues. Films often weave political messages into their storylines, portraying protagonists who champion specific political ideologies or address contemporary political issues. This form of storytelling can subtly or overtly influence audiences' perspectives, shaping their understanding of political events and ideologies.

There are also heroic narratives and political archetypes, like the heroic activist, the corrupt politician, or the rebel challenging the establishment. "Take the case of two films of the 1990s. Both *Wag the Dog (1997)* and *Primary Colors (1998)* were released during the administration of Bill Clinton, and each film revolves around an American politician (a president in one and a presidential candidate in another) besieged by charges of improper sexual or ethical behavior. It is not a coincidence that both films were in release when President Clinton charges of sexual misbehavior with Paula Jones and Monika Lewinsky".[17] In many sitcoms and movies people with Russian or Serbian names are often criminals, killers or other "bad guys", people who smuggle weapons or want to cause damage to USA and that is one way to use the mechanism of stereotyping and finger pointing to persons or collectives to

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[14] Zvijer, N. (2010), "Koncept neprijatelja u filmovanim ofanzivama-prilog sociološkoj analizi filma", *Sociološki pregled 44* (3), 419-437.

[15] E. D. Giglio (2010), *op. cit.*

[16] N. Zvijer (2005), "Holivudska industrija: povezanost filmske produkcije i političkog diskursa", *Sociologija*, 47(1), 47.

[17] E. D. Giglio (2010), *op. cit.*, 2.

dehumanize them, make them a legitimate target or declare them like country enemies or culprits.[18]

The film industry's internal dynamics, including studio decisions, casting choices, and script approvals, can be and often are influenced by political values and the so-called cancel culture is a great example of that. In Hollywood, cancel culture can manifest through various means, including public backlash on social media, calls for boycotts, and industry consequences such as job terminations, contract cancellations, or disassociation from projects, and seems like it is always about specific topics like gender equality, minorities and LGBT. We are now dealing with the fact that many Disney cartoons are in question because of accusations of racism or 'inappropriate' behavior of characters (like when the prince is kissing Snow White while she is sleeping) and with scenes like that with Jonny Deep when he was left without some roles and contracts when his wife accuses him of violence even though in the end it was proven that accusations were false.

Certain themes or perspectives may be favored or discouraged based on the prevailing political climate. This influence can extend to industry awards, where films that align with certain political values may receive recognition over others, and many say that Oscar is compromised because of that. In 2019. Galloway says that there is "Oscar's Political Dilemma: How Left Is Too Left? The Oscars 2019 faces a conundrum: In order to win the Academy Award, the film must court Hollywood liberals, which can mean alienating the ticket-buying public at large" (Galloway, 2018).[19] So that is one more way how film industry is connected to imposing the specific worldview in a political sense.

FILM INDUSTRY AND POLITICAL PROPAGANDA

"Propaganda activities in politics are nothing new, and their character and direction depend on the nature of the political system and the technological progress of society".[20] Propaganda affects the consciousness

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[18] O. G. Orlova (2021), "The American Movies As A Discourse And A Source Of Russian Stereotypes", in: *O. Kolmakova, O. Boginskaya, & S. Grichin (Eds.), Language and Technology in the Interdisciplinary Paradigm*, vol 118. *European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 123-136.

[19] Stephen Galloway (2018), "Oscar's Political Dilemma: How Left Is Too Left?", Hollywood Reporter.

[20] Jelena Vujanović (2021b), "Politički marketing–stanje discipline i otvorena pitanja", *Godišnjak FPN 15* (26), 100.

and behavior of people through various psychological mechanisms such as the suggestion mechanism which includes labeling, generalization, transfer mechanism, faking, favoring the majority, etc.[21]

Throughout history, governments and political entities have harnessed the storytelling capabilities of cinema to disseminate ideological messages. Propaganda films, ranging from wartime documentaries[22] to state-sponsored narratives, have been crafted to mold public opinion, garner support for political agendas, and even shape the collective memory of historical events. These films are often characterized by a deliberate use of emotional appeal, manipulation of facts, and a clear agenda to serve political objectives.

Film propaganda can influence political and electoral behavior in different ways. "A small-scale audience study in the mid-1990s found that viewers of Oliver Stone`s controversial biopic JFK (1991) reported a significant decrease in their intentions to vote".[23]

Nazi movies are most often used in literature as an example of the use of film for propaganda. They use cinematography to create the stereotype "of a fearless blond-haired and blue-eyed Aryan, a self-sacrificing and blindly obedient young man, who tomorrow or the day after tomorrow will fight for the Germanization of the whole world",[24] to legitimize the dictatorship and to convince people of the infallibility of the leader and the correctness of the National Socialist ideas and order. The movie "Triumph of the Will", directed by Leni Riefenstahl, is one of the best-known examples of Nazi propaganda in film. Film pictures the 1934 Nuremberg Rally, and through specific cinematic techniques, that were groundbreaking at the time, glorifies Hitler as a charismatic leader and the Nazi Party as the savior of Germany. Leni Riefenstahl used specific film editing methods in the purpose of legitimizing the regime "She managed to achieve that the cameras in the film begin to follow the events through the eyes of the viewers, and everything that appears on the film becomes the incarnation of their emotions. In this way, persuasiveness was achieved and it was possible for the Nazi staging of reality to replace reality with a cinematic process, replacing it with a

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[21] Siniša Atlagić (2020), *op. cit.*

[22] C. R. Koppes and G. D.Black (1990), *Hollywood goes to war: How politics, profits and propaganda shaped World War II movies*, University of California Press.

[23] E. Haas et al. (2015), *Projecting politics: political messages in American films*, Routledge, 4.

[24] J. Jurković (2023), *Uloga propagandnog filma u nacističkom režimu: studija egzemplarnog slučaja Trijumfa volje Leni Riefenstahl* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Zagreb. The Faculty of Political Science).

pseudo-religious ritual of expressing allegiance on the line: leader, party, people, and this was precisely the main feature and purpose of Nazi propaganda".[25] Beside of creating heroic narratives about Hitler and giving a stereotype image of the world, Nazi movies also creates a stereotype about 'others' and point finger in Jews as an enemy's. The film "Der Ewige Jude", which was directed by Fritz Hippler, was an example of anti-Semitic propaganda. The main purpose of this movie was to dehumanize Jewish people through hateful stereotypes and false narratives.

As Goebbels said, films should not be recognized as propaganda, "because the best propaganda is the one that cannot be recognized. (…) Nazi propaganda conveyed its messages also in entertaining feature films, which accounted for slightly over 50% of film production. They sold the Nazi ideology under the motto 'easy topics for difficult times'",[26] and had a great contribution to election victories and support that National Socialists had in Germany in that period.

The purpose of hidden propaganda is to legitimate political decisions and get support from citizens for government or election candidates. Because the same politicians were in charge of the war and post-war period in the 1990s in Croatia, this kind of propaganda was widespread among Croatian feature films about the War in the 1990s to legitimate their role and create a heroic narrative. "None of these films were commissioned (or presented as such), and at the base of each of them were personal human stories. However, the propaganda messages in those films were strongly present and sufficiently noticeable, so the propaganda intent of those films can be discerned".[27] The mechanism through which 'truths' were shown in these films are dialogues that express a certain stereotype or labeling and pictorial confirmations of the truth of what is said in the dialogue. For example, in the film *Bogorodica* ("Madonna") (1999) there was a dialogue where one Croat talking about how the Serbian policeman cannot be trusted and soon you can see a scene with Serbian policemen that confirms that. Or in the movie *Anđele moj dragi* ("My dear Angel") (1995), directed by Tomislav Radić, one Croatian woman explains to German women how the Croatian flag was forbidden in SFRJ. With this kind of scene, they wanted to point "out

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[25] T. Cipek (2009), ""Trijumf volje" kao trijumf nacizma. Propaganda u filmu Leni Riefenstahl", *Međunarodne studije 9* (1), 94.

[26] T. Cipek (2009), *op. cit.*, 99.

[27] J. Kukoč (2016), "Propaganda i odmak od propagande u hrvatskim dugometražnim igranim filmovima o Domovinskome ratu 1990-ih", *Arhivi i domovinski rat: 49. savjetovanje hrvatskih arhivista, Plitvice, 26.–28. listopada 2016.: radovi*, 243.

that Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia was legitimate, but also neces-sary due to the oppressed position in it, and it should be clearly shown that the Croats (naively) expected a peaceful separation. The bearers of the verbal explanations of these claims are often the characters of rea-sonable Croats, who explain to the aforementioned characters of naive Croats that a peaceful separation will certainly not happen because the Serbs have decided to "tramp on" Croatia".[28] Croatian politicians who participated in election races after 1995, used the legacy of these mov-ies and movie lines in their election campaign. Some of their election TV spots were created with the same narrative and the same propagan-da techniques as in these films.

The relationship between the film industry, political propaganda and election campaigns is seen in other election TV spots in general.[29] The producers of political spots in election campaigns use the same techniques:

- storytelling;
- masking a propaganda message in words and dialogues of ordinary people (e. g. in one TV spot of the governing Serbian People party in the 2023 election campaign there was a scene where two ordinary gays are talking in Caffe about government pro-natality measures, and then there came the president Aleksandar Vučić and "explain" the measures to them and they get thrilled[30]);
- show scenes of large rallies in support of a party or candidate in order to induce the effect of favoring the winner;
- using a psychological mechanism of transfer to transfer positive emo-tions from specific actors, objects (e. g. state flag), or subjects (e. g. a scenic representation of the family) from spot to candidate, or using symbols, stereotypes, or insinuations to transfer a negative emotions to competitors;
- creating a heroic narrative (in one election spot of Dveri in 2023 there is a scene where people in black suits, representing a bad state tax policy, are taking bags with products from farmers and then came a president of movement Dveri, drives the men away and saves the farmer[31] or tv spot of the Peoples party in which their leader, Vuk

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[28] J. Kukoč (2016), *op. cit.*

[29] V. Nedeljković (2022), "Politički TV spot u predizbornim kampanjama u Srbiji: fokus na 2022.", *Novosadska novinarska škola*.

[30] See more: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMbxa2ViqeQ&t=4s&ab_channel=DnevnikVeb

[31] See more: https://www.instagram.com/obradovic_bosko/reel/C0ey1NZMbRr/

Jeremić, is saving one couple from robbery of their apartment which in that spot symbolize preventing a Serbian province Kosovo from being taken from Serbia[32])

MOVIE STARS IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS

"Parties are trying to avoid the "advertisement awareness" that voters have developed and are looking for new ways to mobilize and motivate voters in election campaigns".[33] One way is the inclusion of celebrities (actors, singers, and the like) in the campaign. "The Cold War politicians (…) asked themselves: Who would people be more likely to listen to: drab politicians or glamourous stars? What if left-leaning celebrities such as Charli Chaplin, Humphrey Bogart, Katharine Hepburn, and Edward G. Robinson used their star appeal to promote radical causes, especially Communist causes?".[34] Prominent figures in Hollywood often use their platforms to advocate for political causes. Celebrities, as influential public figures, can shape public opinion through endorsements, activism, and political statements. The alignment of celebrities with specific political values not only reflects the industry's stance but also contributes to the imposition of those values on a broader scale. "Movie stars do more than just show us how to dress, look, or love. They teach us how to think and act politically. 'If an actor can be influential selling deodorants', Marlon Brando explains just before the 1963 March on Washington, 'he can be just as useful selling ideas'".[35] The participation of celebrities in election campaigns, whether they are candidates or supporting a candidate, is the use of a psychological mechanism of transfer by which the positive qualities of a person or the positive emotions that people have towards that person are transferred to the political option he supports or whose candidate he is.[36]

In the USA, "during the mid-1960s, the two former stars designed innovative campaign strategies that drew on their experiences as actors to accomplish what more established politicians like the prickly Barry Goldwater could not to do: sell conservativism to a wide range of

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[32] See more: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C0r0MTQsqY4/?igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA%3D%3D

[33] Jelena Vujanović (2021a), "Izborna kampanja Alternative za Njemačku 2017. godine – Gerila marketing u funkciji mehanizma sugestije i podražavanja", *zbornik sa konferencije Students encountering science – STES2021,* Univerzitet u Banjojluci, 2010.

[34] S. J. Ross (2011), *Hollywood left and right: How movie stars shaped American politics*, OUP USA, 3.

[35] S. J. Ross (2011), *op. cit.*, 5.

[36] Siniša Atlagić (2020), *op. cit.*

previously skeptical voters. By making conservativism palatable, Murphy and Regan helped make the conservative revolution possible".[37]

In 2023. in the election campaign in Serbia, we had a so-called movement "Pro-glas", which advocates for increasing voter turnout and for change of government, led by famous actor and director Dragan Bjelogrlić. Also, we had a list of support for the Serbian People's Party with a lot of celebrities on that list and also a lot of pre-election spots with famous actors like Lidija Vukićević.

Participation of celebrities in election campaigns also means increasing visibility and publicity. "Arnold Schwarzenegger merged Mayer's, Murphy's, and Regan's creative use of media with Heston`s use of image politics to fashion a new era of celebrity politics. (…) The popular action hero relied on these outlets rather than on mainstream newspapers or television news shows to spread his message to voters".[38]

But that is not always a good thing. When a certain celebrity is popular but known for not-so-moral or socially acceptable behavior, then their support or candidacy can put the whole party under public scrutiny and bring negative publicity. Popular movie star – Sergej Trifunović in one period was president of the party called "Free Citizen Movement" in Serbia. But tabloids connect him with drugs and misbehavior so his party gets negative publicity. Not only misbehavior but even some personal characteristics could be understood as political weakness in public eyes. When actress Ashley Judd wanted to run for USA senator "her ending the idea of being Senator started with the public's discovery of her personal challenges, such as "depression". This was unfortunately considered fallible to the public eye, making the humanistic actress appear weak, and not a viable candidate".[39] To put it another way – people are ready to 'forgive' some misbehavior to celebrities but not to celebrities who want to be politicians.

Volodimir Zelensky is an example of how actors can use their own roles and shows for political marketing. His television series *Servant of the People* in which he was acting as the president of Ukraine "was internationally acclaimed as both an entertainment product and an integral part of Zelensky's presidential campaign",[40] and even billboards

[37] S. J. Ross (2011), *op. cit.*, 4.

[38] S. J. Ross (2011), *op. cit.*, 9.

[39] J. Hajla (2023), *Acting Political: How do Performers Utilize Their Acting Background in Politics from Reagan to Trump* (Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University), 42.

[40] K. Kaminskij (2022), "Joker as the servant of the people. Volodymyr Zelensky, Russophone entertainment and the performative turn in world politics", *Russian Literature 127*, 151-175.

before the first round of presidential elections in which Zelensky was candidate had the text "The President is the People's Servant", alluding on that tv series. Because of the timing in which was held the finals season of the series, The Ukrainian electoral committee marked it as political advertising and asked from Zelensky to pay for that spent TV time from campaign funds.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we analyze the relationship between the film industry, politics, and election campaigns in a few aspects: creating and imposing a certain 'worldview' through both political and non-political movies and sitcoms that subtle influence people's political values and behavior, creating propaganda movies that have direct political influence, the influence of propaganda film techniques on making tv spots for election campaigns and participation of celebrities in election campaigns whether as support or as candidates.

We saw how Yugoslav cinematography through heroic narratives about Partisans and their role in WW II and about Josip Broz Tito and through showing an ideal type image of everyday life in socialistic state order serve to straighten identification with Socialist Values and ideal of "Brotherhood and Unity" and to the legitimate authority of Josip Broz Tito. On the other hand, we saw how with a similar mechanism Hollywood production serves to legitimate another kind of 'worldwide'. Through movies and pointing fingers at collective 'bad gays', US cinematography often gives legitimacy to US military interventionism, and Hollywood also imposes political topics like LGBT and women's rights, liberalism, etc.

When we talk about the film industry and political propaganda we could see how Nazi propaganda through movies imposes political messages about the supremacy of Hitler's leadership and Nazi state order and stereotypes about Jews, and how Croatian movies used the same methods to impose their view of 'truth' about the war in the 1990s and to justify Croatian war leaders, who were still in politics after the war stopped. Also, we show how a similar pattern of propaganda techniques you can find in TV spots of political parties in general. In the end we saw what the role of movie stars and celebrities is both as support and as candidates in election campaigns, and even how some movie actors, like Zelensky, used their own shows or series like political advertising.

We can say that there are some similar psychological and technical mechanisms that are used in every analyzed aspect of the relationship between the film industry, politics and election campaigns: using the publicity of films, series and actors; specific storytelling; creating a heroic narrative; black and white representation of reality; inducing identification with collective; stereotyping 'good and bad guys' and through that assigning the role of friends and enemy's, victim and culprits; using the psychological mechanism of transfer and inducing the effect of favoring the winner; masking a propaganda message in words and dialogues of ordinary people, that is, trying to propaganda not look like propaganda.

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CRITIQUE OF SLOBODAN MILOŠEVIĆ'S RULE IN SERBIAN CINEMATOGRAPHY: A CASE STUDY OF THE FILM "THE PROFESSIONAL"

Abstract

Artists most often find inspiration for their works in various social and political phenomena surrounding them. Hitler himself recognized the immense power that film could wield as a propaganda tool, a sentiment later perfected by other authoritarian leaders after the conclusion of World War II. Even the former Yugoslavia was not exempt from this influence. Simultaneously, movies often served as a cry, for dissidents who aimed to highlight social and political anomalies. In many Serbian movies of the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the political situation in Serbia and the former Yugoslavia was addressed. Artists frequently criticized the low level of democracy and freedom in our country through allusive elements and indirect means. Nevertheless, one movie stands out from the others as it directly addressed all the political events that marked the 1990s, namely "Profesionalac" („The Professional"). The movie is enriched with authentic footage from all protest rallies organized against Slobodan Milošević since 1991. It's worth saying that one of the main roles in this film is played by Branislav Lečić, who portrays the character of Theodor Teya Kray,

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a professor of the Faculty of Philosophy, fighting against Slobodan Milošević's regime. Branislav Lečić was also a real participant in all these protests, which facilitated the incorporation of documentary footage that complemented the movie itself. The aim of the work is to show which of the negative aspects of Slobodan Milošević's regime were prersented directly and which were presented indirectly.

Keywords: *Slobodan Milošević, movie, film, autoritarian government, Branislav Lečić, the Professional.*

INTRODUCTION

The movie "Profesionalac" was produced in 2003 based on the play of the same name, written by Dušan Kovačević. It was a contender for an Oscar in the Best Foreign Language Film category. Through the encounter of two individuals after the October 5th changes, who were on opposing political sides during the 1990s, and their personal memories of that period, the movie effectively portrays all the significant social and political events that unfolded in the former Yugoslavia during that time. From the initial major demonstrations against Slobodan Milošević on March 9, 1991, through the onset of the war in Croatia and Kosovo, to protests over the "electoral fraud" in the Belgrade elections of 1996 and the bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, as well as the change of government following the elections on September 24, 2000. The additional authenticity of all these depicted events in the movie is heightened by original footage and the fact that one of the main roles is played by Branislav Lečić, who was actively involved in many events during the 1990s as one of the opposition leaders fighting against Slobodan Milošević's rule. In the film, Lečić portrays the character of Theodor Teya Kray, a Faculty of Philosophy professor who becomes the director of a state publishing house after the October 5th changes. The second main role in the movie is played by Bora Todorović, who portrays Luka Laban, a retired State Security inspector who, during Slobodan Milošević's rule, interrogated Teya for his oppositional, or "anti-state", activities. Through various allusive elements, but also in a direct way, often presented in a satirical manner, the movie depicts

the reality during the last decade of the 20th century and all the transitional elements that affected our country after the October 5th Changes in 2000. Additionally, the personal involvement in the film of then-significant political figures Milan St. Protić and Predrag Marković adds an extra layer to the entire story.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Film can be considered one of the youngest arts that developed primarily due to technological progress in the mid-20th century. Additionally, it should not be overlooked that film combines various already existing arts such as literature, music, photography, and more. However, throughout its short history, film has evolved from purely entertaining content to content that often contains propaganda elements.[1] This was first recognized by the government of Germany, where from 1933 until the end of World War II, the film industry was under the control of the Ministry of Propaganda.[2] The dedication of Germany to the development of film as a propaganda tool during that time is also evident in the number of cinemas opened before and during World War II. After the First World War, Germany had 2,000 cinemas, which increased to 5,466 by 1938 and 7,043 by 1942.[3] It is believed that film conveys a message much more easily and persuasively than written media, especially during a period when television was not yet developed as a medium.[4] More precisely, the attractiveness of film lies in the combination of audio and visual elements, evoking a wide range of emotions in the audience.[5] The development and power of film have been influenced by the development of popular culture and mass media.[6] In other words, film has become exactly what McLuhan observed as the basic task of a film author – to "|transport the viewer from one world (his own) to the world

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[1] Dejvid Kuk (2005), *Istorija filma I*, Beograd: Clio.

[2] Dragutin Papović (2014), "Utjecaj politike na crnogorski igrani film u XX. Stoljeću", *Časopis za suvremenu povijest 46* (2), 224.

[3] Милан Кољанин (2000), "Филмска пропаганда–увод у холокауст", *Годишњак за друштвену историју*, 1, 37.

[4] Nemanja Zvijer (2005), "Holivudska industrija: povezanost filmske produkcije i političkog diskursa", *Sociologija*, 47(1), 47.

[5] Daniel Franklin (2006), *Politics and film: The political culture of film in the United States*, London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 12.

[6] Božo Skoko et al. (2012), "Uloga igranog filma u brendiranju država, regija I gradova", *Međunarodne studije*, 12(3), 13.

created by the film creators".[7] Like any propaganda tool, it remains up to the consumer how they will encode the message and whether they will accept and understand it as the sender intended.[8] There are also different opinions that state that the "movie's ideological value is fixed – as it has become universal and natural".[9]

The significance of film and the popularity it gained during World War II is reflected in the fact that some communication scholars consider film from that period to have had one of the most significant impacts on the culture of memory worldwide.[10] After the end of World War II and the onset of the Cold War era in geopolitical relations, there was additional development of various propaganda elements in movies created both in the West and the East. Western cinematography, personified through Hollywood during that period, was based on the promotion of anti-communist and democratic content. In various science fiction films, certain monsters metaphorically represented the USSR.[11] Thanks to these Hollywood movies, the so-called *American Dream* was created.[12] Additionally, Hollywood aimed to "create a different truth that suits different individuals and groups".[13] On the other hand, movies made in the East, particularly those related to the wartime period (World War II), aimed to develop the identity of newly formed states such as the USSR or Yugoslavia.[14] This simplification of good and evil in social and political relations was done, so that 'ordinary' people wouldn't have to think too much.[15]

For this reason, many communication theorists believe that film is "always ideologically colored and is difficult to imagine as a neutral expression".[16] The existence of censorship in Yugoslavia during that

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[7] Маршал Маклуан (1964), *Познавање општила – човекових продужетака*, Београд: Просвета, 348.

[8] Zoran Slavujević (2009), *Političko komuniciranje, politička propaganda, politički marketing*. Beograd: Grafokard, 31.

[9] Стјуарт Хол (2008), "Кодирање, декодирање", у: Ђорђевић, Јелена (прир.) *Студије културе – зборник*, Београд: Службени гласник, 281.

[10] Inez Hedges (2015), *World Cinema and Cultural Memory. Houndmill*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 4.

[11] Andrea Gronemeyer (1999), *Film. A Concise History*, London: Laurence King, 78.

[12] Sead Vegara (2015), "Američka filmska propaganda", *Novinar*.

[13] Nemanja Zvijer (2014), "Cultural reflections of war crisis: the picture of war in the 1990 croatian cinema", *Теме 38* (1), 67.

[14] Živko Andrijašević (2022), "Film u funkciji oblikovanja socijalističkog identiteta", *Montenegrin Journal for Social Sciences 6* (1), 105-116.

[15] Zoran Slavujević (2005), *Politički marketing*, Beograd: Fakultet političkih nauka i Čigoja štampa, 72.

[16] Тома Ђорђевић (1989), *Теорија масовних комуникација*, Београд: Савез инжењера и техничара Југославије, 171.

period is evident in the fact that out of about 800 movies produced from 1945 to 1990, more than 40 were censored in some way.[17] Simultaneously, there was latent censorship, manifested in the sporadic screening of controversial movies, the absence of marketing campaigns, screenings during periods when audiences visited cinemas the least, and early removal from the repertoire.[18] The large number of movies with war themes produced during Yugoslavia's existence, is indicated by the creation of a new genre called partisan ("red") westerns.[19] Research shows that from 1960 to 1969 alone, a total of 81 movie with partisan themes were produced.[20] The goal of those movies was to "mobilize the people for major actions in building a socialist state and the inevitable victory of communist ideas".[21] In other words, these movies served as the basis for creating a myth that would unite the community. For this myth to be created, a story about the common and equal struggle of all peoples against the occupiers needed to be fabricated.[22] This was achieved by censoring certain themes and movies, as well as requesting scriptwriters and directors to falsify history. Large financial resources were allocated for war-related themes linked to World War II, and Yugoslav war films featured the biggest movie-stars of that time, such as Richard Burton or Orson Welles.[23]

When the former Yugoslavia disintegrated into a long-lasting civil war, that theme became dominant in the domestic cinematography. Simultaneously, the war theme also dominated film productions in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, resulting in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian film "No Man's Land" from 2001 winning the prestigious *Oscar* award for Best Foreign Film. Some film theorists refer to this period in Balkan film development as post-partisan.[24] The fascination with the war theme in films can be attributed to the fact that it is a "particularly suitable

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[17] Милан Никодијевић (1995), *Забрањени без забране – Зона сумрака југословенског филма*, Београд: Југословенска кинотека, 53.

[18] Aleksandar Vranješ (2013), "Partizanski film kao sredstvo političke propagande", *Pogledi*.

[19] Nevena Daković (2004), "Plamen na ničijoj zemlji", *Vreme*.

[20] Radina Vučetić (2012), *Koka-kola socijalizam*, Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 137.

[21] Dragutin Papović (2014), *op. cit.*, 224.

[22] Predrag Marković (2021), "Bitka na Neretvi bila je jedan od najskupljih filmova na svetu izvan engleskog govornog područja, a partizanski film jedan od rekih evropskih autentičnih žanrova po čemu smo jedinstveni u svetu", *Nedeljnik*.

[23] Aleksandar Vranješ (2013), *op. cit.*

[24] Nemanja Zvijer (2017), "Partizanski versus postpartizanski film", *Zbormik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti*, 32, 199.

form for cinema achievements".[25] Nevertheless, it should be noted that in almost all films dealing with the theme of war in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was an expression of "telling the truth about that period".[26] Along with the war themes, from the 1990s onwards, criticism of the socio-political context characteristic of our Serbia at that time also appeared as a theme in Serbian films. Therefore, we can conclude that the film industry plays a significant role in creating a positive or negative image of specific events, phenomena, groups, or individuals. What is a common characteristic for almost all war films in the former Yugoslavia is that, consciously or unconsciously, although more often consciously, is that they interpret traumas.[27] So, it can be concluded that one of the "very significant forms of nation and state branding has become the film industry".[28]

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The subject of the work is the critique of the rule of Slobodan Milošević in domestic cinematography, using the example of the film "The Professional". The aim of the work is to demonstrate which of the negative aspects of Slobodan Milošević's rule were presented in direct and which in indirect ways. The primary approach in the work will be qualitative, with a predominant method of discourse analysis. Bešić explains that discourse begins when we start to deal with the meaning of a statement.[29] Through discourse analysis, the system of signification can be deconstructed.[30] Discourse is an interdisciplinary method encompassing several elements: 1) the communicative intentions of the author; 2) the relationship between the author and the recipients; 3) the context; 4) the stylistic and rhetorical features of the message; 5) the prior experiences reflected in the message.[31] The most important elements of discourse include the material carriers of discourse (written text or spoken language), the social meanings established through language use, and the

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[25] Дејан Дашић (2022), "Савремени филм у функцији пропаганде и ревизије историје", *Баштина*.

[26] Jurica Pavičić (2023), "Državotvorni tres u srpskoj kinematografiji: pa ovo je kao Hrvatska devedesetih", *Velike priče*.

[27] Sanja Lazarević Radak (2019), *Jugoslovenski film i kriza socijalizma*, Mali Nemo.

[28] Дејан Дашић (2022), *op. cit*.

[29] Miloš Bešić (2019), *Metodologija društvenih nauka*, Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 258.

[30] Kevin Dunn & Iver Neumann (2016), *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research*, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 43.

[31] Kuralay Kenzhekankyzy Kenzhekanova (2015), "Linguistic features of political discourse", *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences 6* (6), 192.

social carriers that include specific social groups using language within a certain context.[32] More precisely, "the primary role of discourse is to signify reality, to name and define it, to indicate and direct actors in how to perceive that reality".[33] In addition to discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis will also be used as an auxiliary method.

ANALYSIS OF THE MOVIE "THE PROFESSIONAL"

As previously mentioned, the film "The Professional" critiques the political situation in Serbia during the 1990s through various direct and indirect elements. The movie begins with original footage from the protests of October 5, 2000, which marked the fall of Slobodan Milošević's regime and symbolized the symbolic end of Serbian society with socialism. Then, the film shows what Serbia looks like one year later. At the beginning of the film, we learn that one of the leaders of the October 5th Changes and opposition-minded Theodor Teya Kray has now become the director of a publishing house and has appointed his long-time lover, Marta, as his secretary. It is precisely in this publishing house that a workers' strike breaks out due to possible privatization. Here, a dual criticism of the government after the October 5th Changes becomes evident: first, there is clear nepotism, and second, the new government insisted on privatizing all state-owned factories and other companies. One of the strike leaders cannot pronounce "public procurement" and says several times: "We will not allow our house to be sold to whatever it's called...", which illustrates how the citizens in Serbia have remained living in old times like socialism, regardless of the social and political changes that have occurred in Serbia. Even Inspector Luka Laban, who also belongs to some previous era, cannot pronounce "public procurement".

Inspector Luka Laban, retired from State Security, comes to visit Theodor Teya Kray and brings him books that Teya has 'written'. It turns out that Laban, as a member of State Security, had been monitoring Teya because he had oppositional inclinations, and by observing him, Laban was writing about his life. Laban explains that his daughter bound these 'books' that he brought because he doesn't trust bookbinders since they tend to report anything 'interesting' to the police. In

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[32] Paul Gee (2014), *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method*, New York and London: Routledge, 58.
[33] Miloš Bešić (2019), *Metodologija društvenih nauka*, Novi Sad: Akademska knjiga, 248.

response, Theodor Teya Kray states that "instead of the police working for the people, the people work for the police", which is a clear allusion to the authoritarian and unfree system they lived in. When the police do not work in the interest of all citizens but exclusively for the ruling elites, it is one of the characteristics of totalitarian systems, as noted by Hannah Arendt.[34] Additionally, Laban insists that Teya should not address him as "sir" but as "comrade". We know that people used such forms of address during socialism, which is another indicator of how Laban has sentimental feelings towards the previous era. Despite being more inclined towards that system, Laban has also developed a patriotic sentiment towards Serbia. When his colleague informs him that Teya and his group are preparing a "Romanian scenario" (an allusion to the fate of Romanian autocrat Ceaușescu), Laban responds that he will "show them the Serbian scenario".

At one point, the leader of the striking workers interrupts the conversation between Laban and Teya. Teya then talks to him and tells him that he can't just barge into the director's office whenever he wants, as he couldn't do that even with the previous director, whom he only saw once a year, on May 1st. This date holds special symbolism as the International Workers' Day and was significantly celebrated in the former Yugoslavia during socialism. It was often celebrated collectively in various companies. Socialist authorities insisted on their own holidays to establish a new tradition and create legitimacy for the newly established customs after the end of World War II.[35]

Then, Laban starts talking about Russian literature and the literary ideas and symbols he notices in Chekhov and Dostoevsky, stating how Chekhov wrote the short story "Grief" based on 'his life'. Teya responds by telling him that his knowledge of literature "doesn't suit" a police officer. It is evident that there is a stereotypical representation of the police profession. Indeed, a 2004 study showed that survey participants perceived police officers negatively, highlighting negative traits such as being corrupt, foolish, and arrogant.[36] Later in the conversation, Laban confirms this stereotype when he says that Jean-Paul Sartre "was convinced he was a military attaché at the French Embassy". He then attempts to justify it by saying that he only heard of foreign names like

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[34] Hana Arent (1998), *Izvori totalitarizma,* Beograd: Fond za otvoreno društvo, 254.

[35] Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin (1990), "Metamorfoza socijalističkih praznika", *Narodna umjetnost: hrvatski časopis za etnologiju i folkloristiku 27* (1), 21.

[36] Valentina Baić (2004), "Autostereotipi i heterostereotipi prema pripadnicima policije", *Bezbednost 4*, 547.

Marx, Engels, and Lenin, but in the dossiers of members of various embassies, he came across names like Jean-Paul Sartre. This is another indicator of how Laban was a 'communist'. At the same time, we see that Laban being foolish is not his fault but a result of the socialist system in which he grew up. This system did not want to create educated people who could think critically, as they might pose a threat to the system.

Laban frankly admits that he wanted to kill Teya. He says, "While I was in service – officially, and when your people kicked me out of service, then privately." This portrayal illustrates how State Security functioned during that period and how they dealt with individuals who, in their assessment, were a threat to the system. It is enough to remember the tragic fates of journalists Dada Vujasinović and Slavko Ćuruvija, as well as politician Ivan Stambolić, to understand the consequences of such actions. In the continuation of the dialogue between Laban and Teya Kray, they engage in a conflict regarding the events on March 9, 1991, and who was responsible for that situation. Laban, in line with the narrative of that time, talks about a violent desire to seize power. Furthermore, in one of the dialogues, Laban admits that State Security and the police had the "entire city under surveillance, except for a few public toilets."

On the other hand, Teya, in his "Oration about the Monkey", stated that "it took a man thousands of years to become a human from a monkey, and communism only took 50 years to turn a human back into a monkey." This represents a clear allegorical story. At that moment, when Teya is giving the "Oration about the Monkey", he is in a tavern with a group of people, and Laban, disguised as a newspaper vendor, is sitting at their table because he has the task of Teya's surveillance. When the gathered group asks him how much the newspapers cost, Laban replies, "800,000", which is another allusive element pointing to the financial inflation caused by the poor governance of Slobodan Milošević. Later, the group at the table orders the song "Government Falling", and the waiter asks them not to sing that song because the tavern is full of police. This was meant to show how extensive the control was during Milošević's rule.

During the protest following the fall of Knin, in the Sports Hall, a picture of Nikola Tesla, who was born in Smiljan not far from Knin, was hung on the wall. While addressing the gathering, Teya stated, "Shame on us in front of Nikola Tesla, who asks *where is my home, brothers.*" Such a performance had an additional intention of evoking emotions in individuals as the home of one of the most famous Serbs was attacked.

Furthermore, through this scene, we can observe how the State Security operated during that period. A large number of people did not gather at this protest, and Laban, in a conversation with his policemen, asked, "How many of ours are there?" to which he received the reply, "More than half." Additionally, the functioning of the State Security is depicted in a scene where the leader of the strikers in a publishing house, Jovan, pulled out a gun on Teya and his secretary Marta. However, upon seeing Luka Laban, he refrained from executing them. From a later conversation between Laban and Teya, we learn that Jovan is a master at inciting workers, and Laban moved him from one company to another for that reason. In the Service, they refer to him as "Trotsky". In a further discussion, Teya asks Laban if Jovan would be held responsible for murders if he committed them. Laban responds that it would be considered murder and suicide, to which Teya tells Luka that he had been through that as well. Laban responded with a smile, "The two of you, dead, would testify that I was present? Jovan would surely be a witness to your tragedy. You loved her, she cheated on you, and then you decided to kill her and pass judgment on yourself. Newspapers are full of tragic loves like that, every day." Teya responds to this with confusion and asks if Jovan still works for the Service, to which Laban says, "Probably". After this response, Teya becomes even more puzzled and wonders how this is possible when the Service has supposedly been changed, referring to the changes after the events of October 5th. Luka Laban responds, "Who says it's changed? Only your late father and I have changed, everything else remains the same." From Laban's statement, it is clear that he wants to convey that people within the system always stay the same; only their superiors or the ruling elites who lead the country change, and the individuals in the Service are accountable to them. Another important point we learn from this response is that Teya's father worked for the police, which is not uncommon, as family members often found themselves on opposing political sides – a longstanding characteristic of Serbian society dating back to modern independent Serbia foundation, the fact which is to be intensified by division between chetniks and partisans during the Second World War period. Later in the movie, we find out that Teya's father was a staunch communist, as evidenced by the fact that at his funeral, there was no priest, and a traditional-country band performed instead.

During the funeral, Teya's mother implores him not to involve himself in politics, stating that politics "killed his father." Teya responds

that he will stop engaging in politics once there is a change of power. His mother asks, "When will that be?" and Teja replies, "After these elections." This indicates that there was a belief during that time that a change of power could be achieved through the electoral process without resorting to any violent means for regime change. It also reflects the desire of the intellectuals involved in political life at the time not to engage in politics for personal gain but out of conviction that they could bring about change. However, many of them, like Teya, ended up in various high-level political positions after the changes. Nevertheless, the scene in the tavern after Teya's father's funeral shows that there was also consideration of a violent change of power. Teya sits with friends, and hunters led by the disguised Luka Laban arrive. Teya inquires about the range of the weapons carried by the hunters and then tells his friends that if "Milošević steals these elections, just as he has done before, we will organize a hunt for him." It's important to note here that during the 1990s, it was widely believed that Milošević manipulated elections that were organized. Additionally, during this encounter, Teya gives his father's ring to the musicians to play the song "Government Falling". This demonstrates how willing he is to offer important symbols from his own life to have musicians perform a song that carries a significant message that an authoritarian political leader's reign comes to an end. The song "Government Falling" was performed by one of the most renowned Serbian musicians, Momčilo Bajagić Bajaga, and it was recorded for the needs of this movie. Later, this song gained great popularity and became an indispensable part of all protest gatherings held in Serbia over the past 15 years or so. In late 2016, one of the opposition members of parliament, Saša Radulović, together with members of his parliamentary group, sang this song in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

When they were returning by train from Teya's father's funeral, Laban approached them disguised as a conductor. They were carrying election posters with them, and Laban suggested that they cover the entire train with those posters, as it would be good marketing for their political option since the train travels across the entire country. Teya's fellows referred to Laban as a "propagandist" and "PR", indicating that they are aware of the importance of investing in such means, even though in Serbia, voters primarily base their decisions on sociodemographic and/or rational elements rather than the electoral campaign process itself.[37]

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[37] Bojan Todosijević i Zoran Pavlović (2020), *Pred glasačkom kutijom: Politička psihologija izbornog ponašanja u Srbiji*, Institut društvenih nauka, 197.

The allusion that opposition forces at that time were connected to foreign agencies and governments is depicted in the scene when Teya found himself in the hospital. Laban, disguised as a doctor, visited him and asked who paid him to "hate our president", but then rephrased his question and said, "Who are you in contact with from abroad?" Meanwhile, it should be noted that the police, once again, were portrayed as an institution working in favor of the ruling political structures. Namely, Teya asked the disguised doctor Laban, "Does anyone know who tried to run me over by car?" To this, Laban replied that he heard from the news that an investigation was underway and that it was necessary to "have trust in our police". Teja responded that he feared that those conducting the investigation were the ones who tried to run him over.

In the movie, there is a noticeable critique of the NATO bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, presented from the perspective of children. During the bombings in shelters, children are told various stories and fairy tales to divert their attention from the grim reality they are experiencing. An animator tells the children the story of "The Three Little Pigs" and explains how the wolf destroyed their houses. At one point, one of the children present asks, "Is the wolf working for NATO?" With this question, there is a clear critique of NATO's actions in destroying houses in Yugoslavia. Additionally, it's worth noting another allusion. During the bombing, specifically during a period while the bombing was ongoing (up to April 28, 1999), Vuk (the Wolf) Drašković served as the Deputy Prime Minister of the country. So, the boy's question can also be interpreted as asking whether Vuk Drašković was working for NATO. This connection is not accidental, as Vuk Drašković's rhetoric after the year 2000 was that Serbia should become a member of that alliance.

The movie gains authenticity from the appearance of Jovan Mandić, who is beaten by the police in a police station because he had turned off the public lighting in the center of Belgrade on New Year's Eve in 1997. This happened during the large protests due to irregularities in the local elections in Belgrade in 1996. Jovan Mandić is indeed a real person who worked at the Electric Power Industry of Serbia (EPS) as the head of the special measurements department. Mandić did indeed turn off the streetlights on Vidovdan (June 28) in 1992. At that time, the only light came from candles lit by citizens gathered at the protest (B92 2016). In the film, when the police ask him why he turned off the public lighting, Mandić replies, "So that the candles could be seen better",

clearly establishing a connection between the events in the film and re-al-life occurrences.

At the end, it's important to note that when Teya falls from the train, Luka Laban jumps after him and saves him from more serious injuries, possibly even death. Laban justifies this action by explaining that his daughter Ana was in a romantic relationship with Teya, and she would accuse him of killing Teya. However, it's essential to keep in mind that duriong their conversation in the office, there was a certain level of friendship that developed between these two main characters, despite their diametrically opposed social and political positions and moments of mutual hatred. Their reconciliation should symbolize a symbolic rec-onciliation between the divisions that exist within the Serbian people, where these divisions have been growing and polarizing to the point where the culture of dialogue has been lost, and opposing sides are un-willing to listen to different arguments and perspectives.

The film ends by showing members of State Security, or whatev-er the security service was called at that moment, monitoring Theodor Teya Kray through the same screens as in the 1990s. This serves as a clear indication that the Security Service hasn't truly changed, as Luka Laban claims. The Service continues to operate as it did in the previous era, with only the political structures having changed. Everything else remains the same. This should be connected to the many disappointed expectations that citizens had after the events of October 5th (the over-throw of Slobodan Milošević). Hence, it's not surprising that there is a low level of political culture and interest in participating in various so-cio-political events. One of the last lines spoken by Luka Laban captures this sentiment well: "Back then, I was the boss, and you were a loser. Now you've become a director, and I'm a taxi driver, which is basically the same as being a loser. That's the change of power." Indeed, in Ser-bia, the change of power has largely boiled down to personnel changes without substantial changes to the system, which is what voters expect-ed when they participated in the electoral process.

CONCLUSION

The movie "Profesionalac" has provided a strong and significant form of social engagement in depicting authoritarian rule in Serbia dur-ing the last decade of the 20th century. It represents a unique approach in Serbian cinema where, in addition to indirect and allusive critiques

of the authorities, it directly criticizes them by utilizing authentic figures from that period. Similar critiques of power in Serbia during those years can be observed in movies like "Kordon" or "Crni bombarder", but "Profesionalac" stands out in this regard, primarily due to its use of various documentary footage appearing in the film and the inclusion of authentic individuals who genuinely participated in protests against Slobodan Milošević, such as Branislav Lečić. The particular value lies in the fact that, during all documentary footage, explanations are provided regarding the context and the exact events, which is essential primarily for the foreign market. In this way, thanks to the film industry, foreigners get acquainted with Serbian culture.

A detailed analysis of the movie "Profesionalac" reveals that the filmmakers used various direct and indirect methods to criticize the rule of Slobodan Milošević, as well as the new regime that took power after the conclusion of the election process on September 24, 2000, and the defense of election results, which ended on October 5th of the same year when Slobodan Milošević conceded defeat in the elections. The direct criticism is evident when the characters openly state in the film that Milošević is "stealing elections" and that some opposition-minded individuals are willing to use violence to bring about a change in power. It also portrays how the State Security (or security services) monitors individuals with opposing political views who want to change the government. The monitoring of citizens' actions is depicted through Luka Laban's admission that "the whole city is under surveillance, except for a few public restrooms". Furthermore, it describes the lack of freedom of expression, where different musicians are always afraid to play and sing the song "Pada Vlada" (Government Falling) because it implies an imminent change in power. On the other hand, indirect criticism of the authorities is visible through various allegories and allusions. Notably, Teya's "Oration about the Monkey" stands out as a critique of the communist society, whose heir was Slobodan Milošević. Similar criticism of the communist system is directed at the worker Jovan when he mentions that he saw the previous director "once a year, and that was on May 1st."

As mentioned in the movie, indirect criticism is also directed towards the new government in Serbia, which used its power to place 'its' people in high positions, as exemplified by Theodor Teya Kray, who promised his mother during his father's funeral that he would no longer engage in politics but continued to do so. This highlights not only the filling of official positions but also a certain inconsistency that was

characteristic of the new power structures in post-October 5th Serbia. Additionally, as indicated in this work, Teya's secretary is his long-time mistress, Marta, who clearly obtained her position through nepotism. Furthermore, when Laban announces the protest, he questions Teya about why there are demonstrations again when democracy has arrived.

Laban, despite being an inspector who comes from the previous system in which he was educated and worked, is not entirely portrayed stereotypically. He is depicted as someone who opposes the newly established system after October 5th, 2000, but also as an individual who is willing to work on himself and further educate himself. This is most evident in his knowledge of art, such as Sava Šumanović's painting, literature by Dostoevsky and Chekhov, and the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre. At the same time, Laban has accepted that with the change of power, he lost his social status, and he is not ashamed to work as a taxi driver to earn enough money to buy medicine. What is most important about the character of Laban is that he is essentially a good person, but he did certain things because it was expected of him by the service, and it was part of his job. This is depicted in a dialogue between Teya and Laban when Teya tells him that he is a "monster of a person", and Laban responds that he was just a "professional".

The supporting characters, Teya's friends from the 1990s who were involved in opposition activities alongside him, do not appear in the movie after the events of October 5th. Therefore, it is unclear whether they obtained any positions or roles after the political changes. We also do not have information about their professional qualifications or levels of education. Based on their impressions, it's challenging to determine if they have received a university education. However, they are aware of the importance of political marketing and the emphasis on crafting the image of candidates. In preparation for the decisive elections, they have prepared several sets of posters to assist their preferred opposition candidate in achieving the best possible election results. Additionally, the film never explicitly mentions the names of any opposition politicians from the 1990s. Instead, in a brief sequence at a tavern, Milan St. Protić and Predrag Marković briefly appear. Of course, the movie is interwoven with original footage from various protests during the 1990s, featuring figures like Zoran Đinđić, Vuk Drašković, and Vojislav Koštunica.

An important message of the movie is the fact that there have been no substantial changes within the state structures. Despite Luka Laban's insinuation that some changes occurred when he tells Teya that

"his people threw him out of the State Security", the film illustrates two examples that contradict this notion. First, when Laban says to Teya, "Who tells you that the Service has changed, only your late father and I have changed, everything else remains the same". Second, the film concludes with the State Security continuing to monitor Teya through the same screens, despite the change in government. This is a clear symbolic message that there hasn't been a change in the actual structural systems but rather cosmetic changes at the highest levels of state functions related to personnel appointments.

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CINEMATIC SELF-CRITICISM AS A METHOD OF JUSTIFICATION OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICS: THE CASE OF *BARBIE* AND *OPPENHEIMER*

Abstract

The role of mass media in the dissemination of political propaganda has been widely explored; however, this research focuses on more sublime political messages that are conveyed through films, particularly blockbusters that target relatively broad audiences. Since the beginning, Hollywood movies have served as a reflection of viewpoints that have been socially acceptable at a given moment. Nowadays, filmmakers and movie studios often use the method of mild self-deprecation as a way of legitimizing broader political messages. In other words, they criticize themselves to avoid much harsher criticism from the audience. We use the recent examples of Barbie and Oppenheimer to explore the current trend in strategies – such as limited self-awareness and pseudo-self-criticism – that are used to justify far more glaring issues with capitalism and (American) imperialism.

Keywords: *philosophy, self-criticism, legitimacy, films, politics, ideology, Barbie, Oppenheimer.*

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INTRODUCTION

This research examines the political strategies behind the film-making process, specifically those that aim to persuade the audience into acceptance and justification of a particular system of beliefs. The process that is sometimes informally described as the 'whitewashing' of questionable politics is, in reality, a web of complementing methods aimed to ensure the legitimacy of a specific political stance. One of the methods of gaining legitimacy relies on securing wide approval of a given political message, and pseudo-self-awareness may be particularly helpful in convincing the general public that the statement in question is morally and politically acceptable.

Before turning to specific examples from film dialogue, we will establish a framework on how cinematic experience serves in the deliverance of political messages. In the following section, we introduce the notion of political legitimacy and analyze the theoretical and practical obstacles that prevent films from becoming a more traditional medium of political authority. In Section 3, we turn to the alternative way of reaching legitimacy through persuasion and introduce many variations of the concept of self-criticism to establish a specific type that is suitable for subtle propaganda of various political sentiments. In Sections 4 and 5, we analyze the examples of self-criticism in *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer,* respectively, as we explore more general ideas encoded in the two films.

FILMS AS CONVEYORS OF POLITICAL IDEAS: A LONG ROAD TO LEGITIMACY

Throughout history, many mediums have been used to reflect current systems of beliefs or even promote different ideologies, and films are not an exception. From Wells' musings in *Citizen Kane* on how greed stands in the way of (the American conception of) democracy[1] to strong anti-Soviet sentiment in films produced in the US during the Cold War,[2] and even feminist cinema as a more subversive illustration of a counter-culture to traditional Hollywood values and representations,[3] examples of politically indifferent movies, if such even exist, are rare.

[1] J. Naremore (ed.) (2004), *Orson Welles's Citizen Kane: A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, USA.

[2] T. Shaw and S. Kudryashov (2016), "The Cold War on film: Then and now", *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television 36* (1), 1-4.

[3] C. Johnston (1973), "Women's cinema as counter cinema", *Film theory: Critical concepts in media and cultural studies 3*, 183-192.

Part of the reason is, naturally, the fact that filmmaking is a narrating process no less than traditional story-telling and, as such, is inseparable from everyday politics that shape the characters' and creators' lives and worldviews. Another reason is that films, similarly to journalism, appeal to a broad audience but, unlike the former, are not bound by impartiality. This position makes them a productive playground for creative individuals *and* various parties of interest willing to finance such ventures.

Given the context of financing, it comes as no surprise that producers often judge movie projects based on their *marketability* and *playability*. In the era of blockbusters, the former – the ability to attract the audience – is starting to take a lead over playability – the ability to *keep* the audience or, more precisely, elicit a positive response.[4] If the film is marketable enough, it will be watched enough to make a profit for everyone involved, and whether the audience will enjoy or even approve of it is of lesser importance.

In a film industry mainly motivated by profit, the question of what we can say about the political agenda of such films arises. Studies have shown that blockbusters are not only able to tackle more serious issues, such as capitalism, privatization, and racism but can also criticize the culture they are the product of, as long as such criticism does not stand in the way of profit.[5] Furthermore, they can influence and change public opinion, especially when the public in question is unaware of the intention to have their opinion changed.[6] But what is the nature of that influence?

The fact that media driven by profit can alter public opinion and to do so by criticizing at least some parts of the consumerist culture it originated from does not, in itself, certify that such an influence is justified or even beneficial. Furthermore, there are no guarantees that the blockbusters and movie studios that produce them have the authority necessary to drastically change the landscape of public opinion. Perhaps we should ask the following question: do political messages introduced in blockbusters have legitimacy, or should we consider their political

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[4] C. H. Davis et al. (2016), "Making global audiences for a Hollywood 'blockbuster' feature film: Marketability, playability, and The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012)", *Journal of Fandom Studies 4* (1), 105-125.

[5] M. Allen (2016), *Political Messages in Hollywood Blockbusters: An Analysis of Political Themes in Science Fiction from the Last Four Decades.*

[6] T. Adkins and J. J. Castle (2014), "Moving pictures? Experimental evidence of cinematic influence on political attitudes", *Social Science Quarterly 95* (5), 1230-1244.

content as gibberish that quickly loses its potency, just like the film's playability is becoming less and less important?

From a philosophical point of view, the concept of legitimacy originates from the concept of political authority, that is, an individual or a group whose moral virtues qualify them as the arbiters of law.[7] Therefore, a policy or a message, in its broadest sense, is legitimate only if it is introduced by a morally respectable agent. Alternatively, we can take a minimalist route and describe legitimacy as a normative property of an individual political decision[8] independent of the policymakers' moral propriety. Thus, a purely philosophical perspective does not seem to amount to the project of ascribing legitimacy to cinematic political messages, as it – even in its most reduced form – cannot be separated from normative moral theories, and it is tough to think of films as typical political decisions that can hold a normative property. It is, perhaps, even more challenging to describe filmmakers and producers as particularly virtuous individuals whose moral supremacy prompts us to accept them as indisputable lawmakers.

However, a more sociologically oriented approach could provide insight into why we *feel* that political messages encoded in films have such strength or even straightforward legitimacy. According to this perspective, legitimacy has less to do with morals and justice and everything to do with obedience and compliance.[9] A political message is, thus, as legitimate as it is accepted. Therefore, if the audience is willing to act on the ideas portrayed in blockbusters, we could argue that blockbusters *are* a legitimate source of political information.

Nevertheless, this morally bereft outlook does not seem to settle the question of the political legitimacy of the movies for long, due to several reasons. The first reason is that the creators of modern blockbusters, as we shall see in Sections 4 and 5, do not shy away from positioning themselves as the ultimate *moral* arbiters. It means that they act as moral referees despite the lack of formal or even conventional recognition of them as such. People predominantly appreciate blockbusters for their entertainment value and rarely consider them ethical guidelines. However, if we are to argue that there *are* sublime messages in blockbusters, then those messages are typically nothing short of moralistic propaganda.

[7] A. Buchanan (2002), "Political legitimacy and democracy", *Ethics 112* (4), 689-719.

[8] F. Peter (2020), "The grounds of political legitimacy", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association 6* (3), 372-390.

[9] U. Abulof (2016), "Public political thought: Bridging the sociological–philosophical divide in the study of legitimacy", *The British Journal of Sociology*, 67(2), 371-391.

The second obstacle in the way of political legitimacy concerns the technical limitations of film as a medium. While it is, as we have seen, more approachable to a broad audience than, for instance, professional literature, or, in our modern time, any other *written* source, the trouble with the film is that it is often implicit in its message encoding. While written sources can spell out the messages, films cannot do so, as they rely on visual content that is necessarily imprecise.[10] Thus the question is: if a medium is vague in conveying its political content, how can we assess its legitimacy?

Finally, the third reason is that, according to the aforementioned sociological framework, the mere existence of a political message in a film does not warrant its legitimacy. For a message to be legitimate, it also needs to be accepted, which is not always an easy task. The audience typically has preexisting political attitudes that may or may not align with the message a film is trying to convey. Such background attitudes tend to be persistent to the point that each new piece of information is judged in the light of them. If a new message strongly contradicts the viewer's presuppositions, the viewer will be more inclined to reject it,[11] which means that the movies need to be/seem relatable to the vast majority of the audience. Just because the audience is presented with the political idea does not mean they are willing to follow it, and the lack of following indicates the lack of legitimacy. Therefore, filmmakers – if they aspire to legitimacy and the broader recognition that comes with it – typically need to use many different persuasion techniques to ensure that the message gets to the target audience and that the audience accepts it.

PERSUASION STRATEGIES, IDEOLOGY, AND THE ROLE OF SELF-CRITICISM

When an agent is not officially recognized as a political authority and still strives to make an impact on policies or influence public opinion in general, they may turn to a strategy described as *self-legitimization*. It is a process of justification of one's actions and values that even acknowledged political organizations sometimes turn to, particularly in the face of public criticism.[12] For the self-legitimization of Hollywood

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[10] T. McClelland (2011), "The Philosophy of Film and Film as Philosophy", *Cinema 2*, 11-35.
[11] D. O. Sears and R. Kosterman (1994), "Mass media and political persuasion", *Persuasion: Psychological insights and perspectives*, 251-278.
[12] H. Schmidtke and T. Lenz (2023), "Expanding or defending legitimacy? Why international organizations intensify self-legitimation", *The Review of International Organizations*, 1-32.

studios and producers, the people in charge must be aware of general sentiments in society to properly assess the risk of potential criticism. Ideally, the social criticism will be addressed even before it appears, or at least before it gets the cultural momentum that can negatively impact the overall profit.

While self-legitimization can, in fact, contribute to the overall transparency of the various businesses, it is, nevertheless, a fruitful ground for persuasion. Since there are no official guidelines on *how* one can fairly self-legitimize, companies are free to justify themselves in any way they find appropriate. And sometimes, the whole process is a farce that merely serves to calm the general public while the main issues remain intact. Some of the examples include practices such as *whitewashing,* that is, the denial of systemic oppression of people of color,[13] or *greenwashing*, which occurs when companies that significantly contribute to pollution present as eco-friendly.[14]

If we return to contemporary filmmaking, we can see that many modern blockbusters seemingly go out of their way to include diverse actors and messages about, for instance, women's empowerment, LGBT rights, or any other socially relevant issue. And even these endeavors often fall short when it comes to proper diversity and representation among people behind the screen and, as it turns out, are rather symbolic compared to real-life numbers and statistics. A study conducted and published by the *USC Annenberg Inclusion Initiative* at the beginning of 2024, which covered popular US-produced films between 2007 and 2023, has shown that the number of women and people of color among film directors was disproportionately lower than expected compared to the percentage they make of the general population. Furthermore, available data points to the lack of probability that the underrepresentation issue is going to be resolved any time soon, due to the producers and distributors still being reluctant regarding investments in films made by non-white and non-male directors.[15] The seemingly growing representation of minorities on the screen, thus, often covers the real power imbalance behind the scenes.

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[13] M. Reitman (2006), "Uncovering the white place: Whitewashing at work", *Social & Cultural Geography 7* (2), 267-282.

[14] Netto De Freitas et al. (2020) "Concepts and forms of greenwashing: A systematic review", *Environmental Sciences Europe 32* (1), 1-12.

[15] S. L. Smith and K. Pieper (2024), *Inclusion in the Director's Chair: Analysis of Director Gender and Race/Ethnicity Across the 1,700 Top Films from 2007 to 2023*, USC Annenberg inclusion initiative.

The trouble is that the studios that are, on the surface, vocal about social injustice, more often than not, benefit from the very same power imbalance they pretend to criticize. Such 'criticism' is, due to where it is coming from, very meek and hypocritical, even when the message incorporated in the script is unproblematic and seemingly empowering. But the more consequential issue is that it may not even be criticism *at all*, but rather the subtle way of justifying the *status quo*. Given all the benefits the entertainment industry has been reaping off social inequality[16], it is evident that Hollywood was never about revolution; it was about entertaining and *preventing* people from thinking of revolution.

It should be noted that techniques such as whitewashing, greenwashing, and many other kinds of audience manipulation are not monolithic. They come in various shapes and forms and help different corrupt causes. Moreover, they are umbrella terms that serve to describe many small-scale coordinated tactics that filmmakers and producers use to persuade the audience into compliance and, thus, provide justification and legitimacy for the current state of things.[17] Typically and, perhaps, unfortunately for moral philosophers, it can be challenging to draw a clear line between *persuasion* and *manipulation*, as both approaches have the same goal of changing one's opinion. Furthermore, manipulation needs not to be done for nefarious reasons, as one can be tricked into doing something good for themselves or others.[18] The same goes for the more specified strategy of *propaganda*, which may promote true or false beliefs and do so for better or worse for society.[19] The most notable difference between propaganda and other types of persuasion lies in the former's organized attempt to promote *ideology*,[20] although the ideological aspects of the content may not be apparent to those on the receiving end.

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[16] Studies have shown that women in the entertainment industry, on average, earn less than men of the same qualifications, while people of color not only earn less than their white peers but also have fewer work opportunities (Weinstein 2019, Yuen 2019). These examples show the intertwined relationship between systemic oppression and profit and illustrate how movie studios financially benefit from social inequality.

[17] The strategies we discuss here are mainly borrowed and adapted from research concerned with mass media in general, as somewhat surprisingly, there are not many studies that focus solely on manipulation tactics in filmmaking.

[18] S. Sorlin (2017) "The pragmatics of manipulation: Exploiting im/politeness theories", *Journal of Pragmatics 121*, 132-146.

[19] C. Wardle (2018), "Information disorder: The essential glossary", *Harvard, MA: Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics, and Public Policy*, Harvard Kennedy School.

[20] A. Hyzen (2021), "Revisiting the theoretical foundations of propaganda", *International journal of communication 15*, 3479-3496.

All the fuzziness around the notions of persuasion, manipulation, and propaganda prompts a challenge even for social scientists to recognize and differentiate them at times, let alone pass a moral judgment on when and to what degree these strategies are acceptable. This lack of recognition is what makes laymen susceptible to propaganda and is a reason why the ideologies persist even among those educated in ethics. Furthermore, mass media, including blockbusters, play a paramount role in ideology dissemination, as the same political content can reach many people at once. Despite mass media not being recognized as a political authority, it can serve the interests of the political and business elite while maintaining the illusion of a society that autonomously creates its public sphere.[21] In summary, the strength of mass media is not in giving power to the people but in persuading us that we *already have* all the power we need so that we do not require more of it.

Although we have seen that blockbusters can have political legitimacy *only* in the sociological sense of the notion, it does not prevent filmmakers from including philosophical and ethical points in their work nor from using them to gain the audience's approval. Even though, in normal circumstances, most people would renounce movie studios as ethical authorities, it does not mean that their moral judgment cannot be clouded by the subtle propaganda introduced in the movies, particularly if it is done properly.

The best course of persuasion would entail that it runs smoothly so that, ideally, the target audience remains unaware of someone trying to alter their opinions. Thus, one of the simplest and most used persuasion tactics relies on a *mere repetition* of the political or ethical message. Although messages relayed in this way are bound to lose some of their content along the many repetitions, they are likely to stick in one's mind.[22] If a message is simple, sounds intuitive enough, and is repeated a sufficient number of times, the chances are that at least some of its recipients will be reluctant to question it. The idea is to ensure a natural reception so the audience does not sense that the film is trying to influence them but instead feels that it is speaking *for* them.

While mere repetition may be sufficient when it comes to simple messages, more complex aspects of the ideology require a more nuanced manner of communication. As we have seen, sometimes, a political

[21] Arambala, G. (2023), "Mass media and propaganda: habermas and the decay of public opinion in contemporary society", *Prajñā Vihāra: Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 24 (2), 14-28.

[22] H. Schmidtke and T. Lenz (2023), "Expanding or defending legitimacy? Why international organizations intensify self-legitimation", *The Review of International Organizations*, 1-32.

message cannot be spelled out, particularly not through mass media that people turn to for entertainment, not for a lesson in morality. The audience is, in general, unwilling to have their political opinion changed by something so mundane as a blockbuster. However, what blockbusters *can* do is to subvert the expectations through the imitation of *self-awareness* or even *pseudo-self-criticism*.

The notion of self-criticism is not unambiguous due to its various interpretations throughout the history of philosophy and social science. In Ancient Greece, it was understood as a vital part of self-care,[23] while in communist China, it was used to describe a part of the process of strengthening the solidarity among the party members.[24] Contemporary psychology, however, interprets it as an unhealthy form of self-judgment,[25] while some modern philosophers see it more benevolently – as a way of overcoming difficulties through reflection and humor.[26] Self-criticism, thus, appears as one of those conceptions with as many definitions as there are contexts in which it is used, and none of them seem to align with one another.

We argue, however, that there is yet another context, and our context concerns propaganda of the complex ideological messages in blockbusters. This new definition of self-criticism has two main characteristics. The first characteristic is that it is either *limited* in its scope or even entirely *manufactured* and only looks like self-criticism/ awareness. The second characteristic is that filmmakers turn to it as a method of manipulating the audience, in the sense that they point out the *minor* flaws in the dominant ideology so that the audience loses the focus of the *major* flaws. To gain a better grasp on how such an approach can not only appease the harsh critics but even elicit praise from otherwise anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist audiences, we now turn to the examples of the two films that marked the year 2023 – *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer*.

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[23] M. Nowicka-Franczak (2015), "Self-criticism in public discourse: A device of modernization? The case of Eastern Europe", in: *Dimensions of modernity: The enlightenment and its contested legacies. Junior Visiting Fellows' Conferences* (Vol. 34).

[24] L. Dittmer (1973), "The structural evolution of 'criticism and self-criticism'", *The China Quarterly 56*, 708-729.

[25] J. Costa et al. (2016), "Shame, self-criticism, perfectionistic self-presentation, and depression in eating disorders", *International Journal of Psychology and Psychological Therapy 16*, 317-328.

[26] C. Atkinson (2015), "Self-deprecation and the habit of laughter", *Florida Philosophical Review*, XV(1), 19-36.

THE *BARBIE* CASE: FEMINISM AND PSEUDO-SELF-CRITICISM AS JUSTIFICATION OF CAPITALISM

While most film critics judged *Barbie* based on its impressive technical aspects or the overall feminist message, little to no attention was given to the implied messages concerning capitalism and its side-product of consumerism. This comes as no surprise, though, as the film is arguably aesthetically pleasing, and its criticism of patriarchy is both well thought-out and age-appropriate. We have seen that mainstream movies sometimes criticize the culture they originate from and do so as long as this criticism does not interfere with profit. By the end of October 2023, *Barbie* made revenue of 1.44 billion US dollars worldwide, thus making its director Greta Gerwig a female director with the biggest debut at the box office.[27] It also made the top of the highest-grossing movies of 2023 list,[28] which shows that its feminist undertones not only did not harm the profit but may very well contributed to the film's box office success.

However, since the film aims at young women as its primary audience, its decision to criticize patriarchy is less of a bold take on social injustice and more of a good marketing strategy. Likewise, *Barbie*'s up-to-date take on women's empowerment, combined with its lack of proper criticism of capitalism in general, only goes to show the limitations of social criticism we can see in mainstream productions. It is not only *feasible* for blockbusters to succeed at one criticism while completely failing at assessing the other equally important social issue, but it is, as we argue, *essential* for them to avoid too strong a criticism of capitalism.

Furthermore, *Barbie*'s neat take on feminist topics not only does little for the women of the working class but may even contribute to Hollywood's more general goal of steering away the public's attention from other social issues at hand. It creates an illusion that *if* the criticism of oppression against women finally made its way into the mainstream, then it may also happen to other social problems. To solidify this idea, *Barbie* does *not* avoid the class discussion entirely but instead approaches it from the more favorable angle of pseudo-self-criticism and limited self-awareness.

The pseudo-self-criticism finds its way to the audience through characters' passing yet accurate remarks on feminism, capitalism, and

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[27] The data was taken from the following statistics: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1401601/global-box-office-revenue-barbie-by-region-worldwide/

[28] More information is available at: https://collider.com/highest-grossing-movies-2023-ranked/#39-barbie-39

consumerism, as well as comical depiction of *Mattel*'s executive board, where the capitalists are presented as quirky, but overall not-ill-meaning-by-intention figures.[29] The trouble is that neither this self-awareness nor the criticism that characters seem to offer affects the story-telling in a relevant way. Therefore, it can be argued that these elements were introduced merely to *prevent* potential criticism regarding the film's overall blindness to the class issue. If we take a more distrustful approach, we could even argue that those messages serve to justify and normalize class inequality under capitalism. To avoid this discussion becoming purely speculative, we will now turn to the actual lines in *Barbie* that, arguably, provide a proper illustration of what pseudo-self-criticism looks like in practice.

The first hint at the intertwined connection between *Barbie*'s liberal feminism and its pro-capitalist undertones appears in the opening narration that explains how the introduction of Barbie dolls has transformed little girls' play routine. It states that girls no longer had to play with dolls representing babies, nor to prepare for the role of motherhood but could instead own "money, house, car, career". To be a successful woman is, thus, apart from being a mother, represented in terms of monetary gain: a recurring idea that will be present in the rest of the film, most notably in one of the later scenes where the character of Mattel CEO eagerly explains:

> "Women are at the foundation of this company! There was a female CEO in the 90s and then another one. At some point. So that's two right there!"

This exclamation occurs moments after we learn that Mattel's imaginary executive board is made exclusively of men and mostly plays out as a seemingly self-aware joke on how men run most companies. In one of the previous scenes, we get another similar and relatively accurate remark on how men run society when a random character explains to Ken that they still do patriarchy well and that they are "just better at hiding it".

These jokes work well within the context of the film insofar as they are correct and self-reflective to a point.[30] However, this criticism

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[29] Such a representation, again, comes as no surprise given that *Mattel* is among the producers of the film.

[30] According to the available data, just under thirty percent of companies worldwide employ women as senior managers, and this modest number is even an improvement compared to the previous decades. More information is available at: https://leftronic.com/blog/ceo-statistics/

is of little importance even within the film's universe, let alone does it affect the real world. The character of Gloria, who started as a secretary, remains a secretary, and the ignorant male-exclusive executive board remains ignorant and male-exclusive. So, what was the point of including such complaints, if not merely to indulge the audience by looking self-critical while ultimately letting everything remain as it was?

This false sense of self-awareness, nevertheless, suffices in preventing the audience from becoming *too* curious and creative. We are invited to ponder on the lack of women CEOs just so we do not question the existence of CEOs as such, be they men or women. We are told to rethink women's position in society so that we do not challenge the capitalist society as a whole.

When the film addresses the problem of capitalism more directly, it does so in a similar manner. We get some characters mentioning the "rampant consumerism" or being excited about the idea that can raise the company's profit, but these one-liners lack the impact on the story's unfolding. Self-awareness that seemingly unmasks the dark side of capitalism, in reality, only serves to create an illusion that something is changing for the better.

As one character jokingly tells another: "I gave you a choice, so you could *feel* some sense of control", in a situation that is mostly out of their control, the same happens to the audience. The pseudo-self-criticism this film offers aims at our *feeling* of excitement when we see our opinions represented on the cinema screen. Nevertheless, it ultimately reveals the obligatory lack of imagination under capitalism. Capitalist productions can imagine many magical worlds except for the one where capitalism does not exist.

THE *OPPENHEIMER* CASE: PARTIAL CRITICISM OF AMERICAN IMPERIALISM

Unlike *Barbie*, *Oppenheimer* aims at a mature audience. From the lengthy runtime to the inclusion of prolonged nudity scenes and the constant scientific and political jargon, everything about the film firmly insists on the aforementioned maturity. Likewise, the political messages it has to offer are, expectedly, more complex and more elegantly handled. While historical films arguably require a sense of seriousness, this approach often serves the purpose of covering more subtle undertones, which – in itself and even in this case to a certain degree – does

not necessarily include unfair characterizations. *Oppenheimer* – unlike many of its predecessor Hollywood movies that uncritically praise the history of American warfare – offers a more nuanced approach to the highly sensitive episode in human history.

What makes *Oppenheimer* stand out from the majority of US-produced films is its atypically compassionate take on communism – a political stance whose strawman versions have been endlessly scrutinized in Hollywood since the beginning of the Cold War.[31] In this case, communism is, somewhat originally, not exclusively associated with the Soviet Union but is also an ideal Oppenheimer, his friends, and even his wife strived for in their youth. Moreover, it is represented through the highly sympathetic depiction of the US Communist Party activist Jean Tatlock, and her complex and tender relationship with the main character. The "Red scare" from Hollywood's past takes both human and *humanized* forms here, thus allowing *Oppenheimer* to establish itself as an apparent criticism of not only the history of the US war involvement but also the history of cinematic representation of various political ideas.

However, even in this case, capitalism triumphs over communism, and not only because it historically occurred that way. More importantly, the film itself resigns its seemingly strong anti-capitalist sentiment from the beginning by allowing Oppenheimer's character to almost unprovoked conclude that such an idea is unattainable, which leaves any communist presumptions to die alongside Tatlock's character. The overall message is that while communism may not be the 'red devil' after all, it simply cannot succeed for reasons that are never explained and can only be grasped in the broader context of the film being a Hollywood production. The most explanation we get within the film's universe comes in the following words of the character of Oppenheimer's wife, Kitty, who is also a former *Communist Party* member:

> "I don't like the phrase *having anything to do with the Communist Party* because Robert [Oppenheimer] never had *anything* to do with the *Communist Party* as such. I know he gave money for Spanish refugees. I know he took an *intellectual* interest in Communist ideas."

Although the main characters relatively quickly move away from communist ideas, the ghost of communism persists within the narrative in a somewhat unusual manner. It becomes a deflection point once

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[31] D. J. Leab (1984), "How Red Was My Valley: Hollywood, the Cold War Film, and I Married a Communist", *Journal of Contemporary History 19* (1), 59-88.

World War 2 comes to an end, and the main villain of the story begins to use communist accusations to discredit Oppenheimer and anyone who stands in the way of his imperialist pretensions. This is where *Oppenheimer*'s previously unapologetic criticism of US imperialism takes an interesting turn. The character of Oppenheimer, who earlier – opportunistically and against the better judgment of his scientific peers – supported the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, suddenly gets the revelation, once plagued by horrifying visions of people burning. The morally gray protagonist becomes a traditional Hollywood hero and a vocal opponent of the further development of atomic and hydrogen bombs.

The trouble with Oppenheimer's epiphany, which otherwise might have worked as a good character arc, is that it comes across as sudden and unprovoked as his previous denunciation of socialist ideas. Scary visions of nuclear demise hardly provide an explanation for his sudden change, given that Oppenheimer knew what the effects of the bombing would be. In one of the previous scenes, as Oppenheimer argues for the bombing of Japan, he states:

"We [the scientists] imagine a future, and our imaginings horrify us. But they [the ordinary people] won't fear it until they understand it and they won't understand it until they've used it."

What is more intriguing than Oppenheimer's sudden change of heart is that the film decides to dedicate its final third to a conflict between his new-found empathy and the ambitions of power-hungry Lewis Strauss, a former chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, who gets nominated for the role of Secretary of Commerce. During his Senate hearings, Strauss reveals all the ugly features of imperialist politics but is fortunately rejected by the decent senators of the US, who are off-screen encouraged by young Kennedy. The lead cause of Strauss's downfall is, according to the film, his unfair treatment of Oppenheimer, whom he wrongfully accused of the communist agenda due to some petty disagreement.

In reality, it is more likely than not that the root of his rejection had more to do with the Democrats not agreeing with his Republican policies, but it is something easily overlooked in the context the film provides. This is especially true for the non-American part of the audience that is not used to viewing politics as a binary relation in a two-party system. It may even work for some native viewers, especially the younger generations who are not familiar with political figures from the past. The truth is, however, that the disagreement ran deeper than Strauss simply

being a bad man – which, without a doubt, he was – and Oppenheimer being a voice of reason – which he may or may not have been.

Nevertheless, the film uses their conflict in a way that minimizes the *collective* responsibility for the war terrors inflicted on Japanese civilians. While this change in approach does not necessarily take away from the overall message in a purely ethical sense – since the use of the atomic bomb is rightfully declared unfortunate – it narrows the scope of criticism, as the blame for the historical misbehavior is overly simplified. What started as a nuanced and general criticism of imperialism quickly deteriorated into a cliched conflict between two *individuals*.

By the time the film ends, the audience is expected to embrace Oppenheimer as a reformed hero and American politics as overall fair, except for some individuals. Although the self-reflection we find in *Oppenheimer* is not lacking in content, it is very narrow in scope and suffers from too much optimism that a morally upright majority will prevent corrupt individuals from carrying out their evil intentions. However, it significantly weakens the criticism of imperialism that the film could and almost did offer. Instead, we are once again reminded that wicked intentions are merely an exception and that decency will prevail, no matter the broader political context or interests at play.

CONCLUSION

Creators of modern blockbusters are in a compelling position in which they both serve the needs of the *current* market and promote the ideas that will shape the *future* market. For their films to succeed, they need to find a proper balance between the ways of maximizing profit, the background political opinions of the audience, and the political ideology they wish to promote in their projects. Profit is, naturally, the ultimate goal, but to maximize it, they cannot be entirely oblivious to the current political climate in society since the movies are as marketable as the audience feels they reflect their opinions and concerns. However, they cannot get carried away in appeasing the harshest critics, as they need to stay loyal to the current capitalist ideology insofar as it enables future profitable projects.

It does not mean that blockbusters do not reflect the current societal and political trends. Moreover, they *need* to be reflective to ensure a sufficient level of legitimacy that leads to wide acceptance and interest of the audience. But only to a certain degree. This limited self-criticism
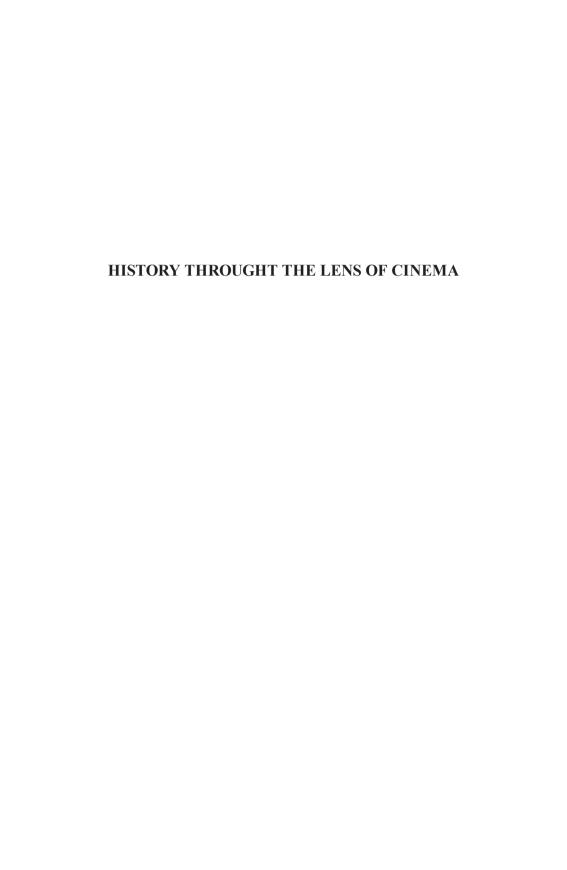
serves the purpose of making films *look* relatable while, between the lines, they continue to justify and perpetuate the same old power imbalance in society. Ultimately, they are here to remind us that capitalism has *no* alternative and that other ideologies are either irreparably flawed or simply unattainable in comparison. Blockbusters will, ideally, come across as 'woke' enough to recognize the social issues but simultaneously remain unthreatening so that they discourage revolutionary thinking among the general public. As long as profit dictates artistic endeavors, art cannot be a source of authentic social insurgence. Moreover, mainstream art needs to persuade the audience to accept the current state of things, as the future of profit depends on the audience's obedience to the global capitalist ideology.

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HISTORY THROUGHT THE LENS OF CINEMA

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SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT AS A TV SERIES HERO: AN EMPEROR, A LOVER, A POET

Abstract

Suleiman I, known in the West as Suleiman the Magnificent, is the tenth sultan of the Ottoman Empire. During his long reign, he organized expeditions to both the east and the west. In addition, he attracted attention with his palace and private life due to his love affair with Hürrem Sultan. This situation formed the framework of the series called "Magnificent Century", which has a large number of viewers in Turkey and around the world. The series, which fictionally portrays the life of Suleiman the Magnificent and his palace circle, was also criticized by the nationalist-conservative audience in Turkey. However, it should not be forgotten that Suleiman the Magnificent, the hero of a political and romantic series, was a ruler, a lover and ultimately a good poet. In this paper, the criticisms towards the Magnificent Century TV series and the poem Muhibbi wrote to Hürrem Sultan as a poet were examined.

Keywords: *Magnificent Century, Classical Turkish Literature, Suleyman the Magnificent, TV Series.*

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INTRODUCTION

Suleyman the Magnificent was born in Trabzon on (6 November 1494). His father is Yavuz Sultan Selim and his mother is Hafsa Sultan. Although today he is known by his title of Kanuni rather than his name, this title dates back to the 18th century. For the first time in the century, Dimitrie Cantemir was mentioned in Ottoman history, XIX. It became widespread by being adopted by Ottoman historians in the 19th century. Contemporary Western writers called him "Magnificent" or "Grand Turc". In addition, in Western sources, it is stated that Süleyman Çelebi, who ascended to the Ottoman throne during the Interregnum period, caused II. He is also described as Solomon. He spent his childhood years in Trabzon, where his father served as a sanjak governor. He received his primary education from the teachers assigned to him in the Trabzon palace. He received his primary education from the teachers assigned to him in the Trabzon palace. According to Evliya Çelebi, while he was in Trabzon, he learned jewelery making from a Greek, together with his foster brother, Kadı Ömer Efendi's son, Yahyâ (Beşiktaşlı Yahyâ Efendi).

When he was ten years old, he had to go to the banner, probably II. Bayezid's appointment was delayed due to the continuous pressure by his sons. He witnessed his father's struggles for the throne; he supported his military preparations to gain the throne. His father's ascension to the throne in 1512 also paved the way for future power for him. As a matter of fact, he was summoned to Istanbul shortly after the accession of Yavuz Sultan Selim. For a while, he followed his father's fight against his uncles from the capital city where he was assigned to protect. and after they were eliminated, he was sent to Manisa as the sanjak lord, as the sole heir to the throne (April 1513). In a document belonging to the first months of his visit to Manisa, it is determined that he was accompanied by his mother, sister, teacher Hayreddin, his lala Kasım and 458 servants. In this list, the names of Mahidevran, the mother of his first son Mustafa, and his close friend Ibrahim, who would later become his grand vizier, are also found. During this time, he learned the functioning of the state and through his teachers he was prepared for the throne. His duty in Manisa ended when he received the news of his father's death (21-22 September 1520) from the messenger sent by Grand Vizier Pîrî Mehmed Pasha. He moved to Istanbul by land with his men and reached Üsküdar on September 30, 1520 and went to the palace and sat on the throne.

SULEIMAN THE MAGNIFICENT'S REIGN

First of all, he allowed about 600-800 artists and scientists who were exiled from the country during the time of his father to return to the country. He made his first expedition to Belgrade, which had a symbolic meaning for the Ottomans, and conquered the city in 1521. During his time on the throne, he organized expeditions to both the east and the west and made conquests. He commanded thirteen expeditions, including Belgrade, Rhodes, Mohaç, Vienna, Alaman, Irakeyn, Pulya, Karaboğdan, Istabur, Esztergon, Iran, Nakhchivan and Zigetvar. He is the fourth Ottoman sultan to die during the campaign. He is the fourth Ottoman sultan to die during the campaign. Suleiman the Magnificent's death on 6-7 September 1566 was kept secret by his vizier Sokollu Mehmet Pasha, with the idea of preventing the conquest from being left unfinished and some confusion, until his son Selim arrived in Zigetvar twenty days later.

Sultan Süleyman is an artistic sultan who sings poetry under the pseudonym Muhibbi. Muhibbi who is poet and started with Murat II, is the fifth of the Ottoman sultans. His great grandfather was Fatih, his grandfather was Mehmet II. like Bayezid and his father Yavuz, he was interested in poetry and wrote around 3000 poems, mostly ghazals. Almost all of his poems are extremely successful within the framework of the classical Turkish literature tradition. Although he wrote many poems, it is seen that he did not fall into carelessness in these poems. His ghazals are full of subtle dreams and figures of speech.

"MAGNIFICENT CENTURY"

The life of Suleiman the Magnificent, who deserved the title of "magnificent" with both the conditions of the period he lived in, his performances and his reign, was brought to the screen with the TV series "Magnificent Century", which aired 139 episodes between January 5, 2011 and June 11, 2014. Throughout the series, it has been one of the most watched TV series in Turkey and around the world. However, in the same vein, serious criticism has also been made against the series in Turkey. The basis of these criticisms was the discomfort of nationalist-conservative segments that the way the Ottoman Empire was handled and represented was not compatible with their perspective. The point where the problem comes to a head is that in the series, the life of our

ancestors, sanctified by the nationalist-conservative segment, is fictionalized with all its human aspects, without glorifying it.

Conservative segments associated this form of representation, which goes beyond their own perspective on Suleiman the Magnificent, with ideological opposition, intent and betrayal. Suleiman the Magnificent's private life in the harem, sexuality, and the portrayal of the sultan as someone fond of pleasure and entertainment formed the basis of criticism towards the series.

Even though it is said that what is told in the series is ultimately a fiction, criticism has never decreased.[1] On the other hand, in terms of the narrative language of television, it is extremely difficult to portray a period with all its political and cultural dimensions in a historical drama. Because the television image is simple and direct. There is no room for detail or exaggeration. For example, if we make a comparison, unlike the image being the determining factor in cinema, it is the sound that fixes the meaning in television; visual descriptions often contain no more than what is provided by sound. While details come to the fore in cinema, in television the background and context are depicted only superficially. Precisely because of this narrative structure of television, if history is represented with a film instead of a written text, pages of historical data can be presented in a short time. At this point, historians sometimes criticize what is not shown or voiced, without taking into account the narrative structure of television. The conservative concerns that came to light with the TV series Magnificent Century stem from the fact that the mythical narrative of their roots, which they describe as "ancestors" and which help them make sense of their own identities, has been deviated from and may be destroyed.

Concerns about the serie are the concerns of the advocates of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, which became more powerful and integrated into the cultural policies of the state after the 1980s. The underlying reason for this concern is that, in the public imagination, the Turkishness of an Ottoman Empire that could be perceived as being dominated by foreign concubines would be questionable, and the sultans who drank alcohol would be detrimental to their Muslimness. This will undermine the "golden age" narrative and the mythic narrative of historical heroes that underpin the Muslim-Turkish identity. The rise of the Ottoman Empire and the conquests and domination of sultans such as Mehmet the

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[1] S. Aydos (2013), "Muhafazakâr Milliyetçi Muhayyilede Kanuni: Muhteşem Yüzyıl'a Yönelik Tepkilere Dair Bir Okuma", *History Studies*, Volume 5, Issue 1.

Conqueror, Yavuz Sultan Selim, and Suleiman the Magnificent over oth-
er states have always been glorified and praised as a "golden age" by the
nationalist-conservative segment. However, especially in line with the
goal of becoming a regional power determined by foreign policy in the
last decade, references to the Ottoman Empire and the mentioned sultans
have become more frequent in various cultural and political channels.
"Fatih Project", "Conquest 1453" movie and various history programs
about the Ottoman Empire are the first ones that come to mind. Ironical-
ly, although it angered some of those who supported the socio-political
vision, the Magnificent Century series also contributed to the increase
in interest in the Ottoman Empire.

  The fact that Turkish TV series have become very popular in the
countries in the Ottoman hinterland such as the Balkans, the Middle
East and North Africa, and the possibility that Magnificent Century will
be broadcast in these countries has raised concerns among those who
react to the series that it will misrepresent the Ottoman Empire not on-
ly at home but also abroad. In this context, the concern valid for nation-
alist-conservatives has actually been seen in many circles in Turkey for
many years. This is a concern that is usually accompanied by the un-
easiness and fear we feel about the "wrong" presentation of Turkey to
the world, especially to the West, whose gaze we assume is always on
us, in the films we shoot. But this time, it is not only the West that we
are afraid of being misrepresented, but also the countries that Turkey is
trying to become a role model in line with its new policies. In the TV
series Magnificent Century, which received a record level of criticism
before it was even released, "the history of our nation is portrayed as
if it consisted of the conflict of a handful of women", "Immoral reflec-
tion of the lives of Ottoman sultans", "the denial of our history", The
reason why familiar "national sensitivities" such as "humiliation of the
Ottoman Empire" came into play in advance, It is the Turkish people's
fear that their perception of the Ottoman Empire will change as well as
being presented as "bad" to the world.[2]

  Despite this, the relationship between Kanuni and Hürrem at the
center of the series is also remarkable. It wouldn't be wrong to say that
the skeleton of the series is built on the love between these two. How-
ever, the reflections of the same relationship on the palace environment
constituted the starting point of all criticisms towards the series, as ex-
plained above. However, the reflections of the same relationship on the

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[2] *Ibid.*

palace environment constituted the starting point of all criticisms towards the series, as explained above. Suleiman the Magnificent's love for Hürrem Sultan can be seen in the sultan's own poems. One of these is an ode thought to have been written by Suleiman the Magnificent to Hurrem Sultan. This ghazal should be examined in terms of showing Suleiman's poetic side:

Celîs-i halvetim, vârım, habîbim mâh-ı tâbânım

Enîsim, mahremim, vârım, güzeller şâhı sultânım

(My best friend, my friend, my only being, my lover, my moonlight. My closest friend, my confidant, my presence, my beautiful sultan.)

Hayâtım, hâsılım, ömrüm, şarâb-ı kevserim, Adn'im

Bahârım, behçetim, rûzum, nigârım, verd-i handânım

(My life, my everything, my life, Kevser is my wine, Eden is my heaven. My spring, my smiling face, my day, my lover, my smiling face.)

Neşâtım, işretim, bezmim, çerâğim, neyyirim, şem'im

Turunc u nâr u nârencim, benim şem'-i şebistânım

(My joy, my fun, my assembly, my light, my candle. My orange, my pomegranate, my citrus, my light that illuminates my night.)

Nebâtım, sükkerim, gencim, cihân içinde bî-rencim

Azîzim, Yusuf`um, varım, gönül Mısr'ındaki hânım

(My delicious plants, my sugar, my treasure, the one who never makes me sad in the world. My saint, my Joseph, I exist, my sultan in the land of the heart.)

Stanbûl'um, Karaman'ım, diyâr-ı mülket-i Rum'um

Bedehşân'ım ve Kıpçağım ve Bağdâd'ım, Horasânım.

(My Istanbul, my Karaman, my Anatolian land, my Bedahshan, my Kipchak, my Baghdad, my Khorasan.)

Saçı mârım, kaşı yayım, gözü pür fitne, bîmârım

Ölürsem boynuna kanım, meded hey nâ-müselmânım

(My hair in curls like the letter Vav, my eyebrows bowed, my seductive lover with eyes full of mischief, my beauty with a languid look. If

I die with my longing for you, O non-Muslim lover, my sins will be on your neck.)

Kapında, çünki meddâhım, seni medh ederim dâim

Yürek pür-gam, gözüm pür-nem, Muhibbi'yim vü hoş hâlim!

(I am a preacher who always praises you at your door. I am a lover with a troubled heart and tears, that is, I am Muhibbi and I am happy with this situation.)

When we look at the translation of the poem, it will be seen that it does not actually express the meaning given by the pronunciation in classical Turkish literature. Despite this, this poem, with its entire universe of meaning, clearly reveals Suleiman the Magnificent's perspective on Hürrem Sultan, who is at the center of his life. In this poem, the sincere inner thoughts and despair of a lover and a statesman who spent his whole life on expeditions and who did not hesitate to kill even his own as a result of palace conflicts can be observed. The beauty of the different themes, proverbs and idioms he puts forward in his poems, the care and attention he shows in language, and the harmony of voice and words reveal how close he is to the great poets. Muhibbî, who often emphasizes the need to be pure-hearted and decent, states that he has a fascinating poetic power and praises himself like every divan poet. He also complains about human conditions such as not being valued and being alone and desolate, which were common in poets of that period.

CONCLUSION

Despite all the controversy, Magnificent Century broke the viewing record both in Turkey and in the societies under the influence of the Ottoman Empire. Although the background of this is the hidden realities of Ottoman harem life and the desire to know this today, it can also be thought that there is a love and amorous adventure of a ruler within society and the palace. Suleiman the Magnificent, a political and romantic figure, was not reflected in the nationalist-conservative Turkish society as desired in the series, and was highly criticized in Turkey at the time it was broadcast.

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CZECH CINEMATOGRAPHY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF NAZI POLICY IN THE PROTECTORATE OF BOHEMIA AND MORAVIA IN 1939-1945

Abstract

The notorious Munich Agreement of 29–30 September 1938 signed by the leaders of Nazi Germany, fascist Italy, Great Britain and France and the subsequent full occupation of the Czech lands by Nazi Germany in March 1939 led to the incorporation of the Czech lands and Moravia into the Third Reich as an autonomous unit called the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. From the very beginning, the protectorate became a specific testing ground where technologies for the complete destruction of the Czech people were tested by the German Nazi authorities and implemented in accordance with the "racial theory" of the German Nazis. The complete destruction of the Czech people was planned to be carried out through a combination of three methods: assimilation, deportation and physical liquidation. One of the effective ways to implement Nazi policy in the protectorate was Czech cinema. Filmed under the control of the protectorate authorities, Czech films conveyed images and ideas designed to help transform the Czechs into obedient labor force for the military-industrial complex of the Nazi Reich. Along with this, Czech

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films actively promoted the Nazi thesis about the Czech lands and Moravia as an original part of the German Reich, thereby preparing the Czech population of the protectorate for the final solution of the "Czech question" planned by the Nazis.

Keywords: *Czech Republic, Nazi Germany, Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Germanization, cinema, collaboration.*

The conference in Munich on September 29-30, 1938, with the participation of the leaders of Nazi Germany, Italy, France and Great Britain, who decided to transfer the German-populated Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia to Hitler's Germany, became the first step towards the final enslavement of the Czechs by the Nazi Reich. The final step in this direction was the direct occupation of the Czech lands by the German Wehrmacht in March 1939 and the transformation of the Czech Republic into the German protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, formed by decree of Hitler on March 16, 1939.[1] From the very beginning, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia became a Nazi laboratory where various technologies for Germanization and destruction of the Czech population were developed, tested and implemented, which was sentenced by the ideologists of Nazi Germany to complete disappearance not only from the political, but also from the ethno-linguistic map of Europe. At the same time, the proclamation of a protectorate was "only a step towards the gradual extermination of the Czech people, which would certainly have happened if Nazi Germany had won the Second World War."[2]

Formally endowed with scant autonomy, the protectorate, however, was only a temporary form of administrative control of the Nazi Reich over the Czech lands, which was due to emergency wartime conditions. After the final German victory in the war and the successful Germanization of most of the Czech population, Berlin planned "the division of the protectorate with the incorporation of parts of it into the neighboring administrative units of the Third Reich."[3] Thus, not even a memory of the Czech people and their former statehood was to remain.

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[1] V. Liška (2018), *Éra hákového kříže. Protektorát*, Praha: Nakladatelství XYZ, 21.

[2] *Ibid*, 14.

[3] M. Hořejš (2013), *Protektorátní Praha jako německé město*, Praha: Mladá fronta, 17-18.

The plans of the German Nazis regarding the Czechs came from the Nazi racial theory, which interpreted all Slavic peoples as racially inferior, and were generally formulated by Hitler in Munich in the summer of 1932. "We will populate the territory of the Czech Republic and Moravia with German peasants. We will deport the Czechs to Siberia or Volyn, giving them reservations... The Czechs must leave Central Europe, Hitler argued. "If they stay here, they will continue the formation of the Hussite-Bolshevik bloc."[4] The policy of Nazi Germany towards the Czechs was later developed in more detail by the leaders of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia K. G. Frank and K. von Neurath. Former leaders of the Sudeten-German movement in Czechoslovakia and Sudeten-German ethnographers and historians played a major role in developing the policy of the Nazi Reich in the Czech issue.

In a document eloquently titled "Plan for the Elimination of the Czech People," sent to Hitler on August 28, 1940, K.G. Frank frankly pointed out that "the goal of imperial policy in Bohemia and Moravia should be the complete Germanization of space and population."[5] At the same time, Frank indicated two possibilities for achieving this goal – the complete eviction of the Czechs from the borders of the empire with the subsequent settlement of the Czech lands and Moravia by the Germans or "changing the nationality of racially suitable" Czechs with the eviction of the "racially unfit" part of the Czech population, the hostile Czech intelligentsia and all "destructive elements". In his plan, Frank spoke in favor of a softer second option, arguing for the technical impossibility of a total deportation of 7.2 million Czechs during the war, the lack of the required number of German colonists capable of quickly developing the vacated space, and the feasibility of using the qualified Czech workforce in the interests of the Nazi Reich. Based on these circumstances, Frank proposed "the separation of that part of the Czech people for whom a change of nationality is possible from the racially inferior part" and planned "through systematically carried out political neutralization and depoliticization to achieve first the political and spiritual, and then the national assimilation of the Czech people."[6]

On September 23, 1940, this plan was supported during a meeting between Frank and Neurath with Hitler in Berlin. In October 1940, Hitler finally formulated the main goal of Nazi policy towards the Czech

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[4] Цит. по: M. Sládek (2002), *Němci v Čechách. Německá menšina v Českých zemích a Československu 1848–1946*, Praha, 69.

[5] E. Beneš (1995), *Odsun němců. Výbor z pamětí a projevů doplněný edičními přílohami*, 76.

[6] *Ibid*, 77.

population, which was "the Germanization of the Czech Republic and Moravia through the Germanization of the Czechs... The policy of assimilation will not apply to those Czechs whose racial qualities are in doubt, as well as to those who demonstrate hostility towards the Reich. These categories need to be eliminated."[7]

The German Nazis assumed that 60% to 70% of the Czech population could be Germanized, since racial studies convinced them that the majority of Czechs had the necessary "racial prerequisites" for successful Germanization. The remaining 30-40% of Czechs were subject to deportation and physical liquidation. The general concept of Germanization of the Czechs initially assumed their "political assimilation" on the basis of the "imperial idea", designed to eradicate the ideas of Czech statehood from the national identity of the Czechs and impose on them the perception of the historical Czech and Moravian lands as an original part of the German Reich. Subsequently, the gradual Germanization of the Czechs was planned by reducing education in their native language, imposing the German language, partially relocating Czechs to Germany, and Germans to the territory of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as through the physical liquidation of nationally oriented Czech intelligentsia and public figures.[8] In the cynically frank expression of one of the leaders of the Sudeten-German movement, "the goal of Nazi policy in Bohemia is to beat the brains out of the Czechs and eliminate the intellectual layer of this nation, which is preventing the establishment of the required relations between the German master and the Czech worker."[9]

From the very beginning, the leadership of the Third Reich paid enormous attention to propaganda. On January 30, 1933, Hitler officially became Chancellor of Germany, and already on March 11, 1933, the Ministry of Public Education and Propaganda was created in Germany, headed by J. Goebbels, who was also the chief of propaganda of the Nazi Party. The Ministry of Education provided general leadership of cultural policy in the German Reich, paying great attention to cinematography, which Goebbels considered one of the most effective propaganda tools. Seeing cinema as the most powerful way to influence public sentiment, Goebbels considered film propaganda one of the priority goals

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[7] *Cesta k dekretům a odsun Němců*, Praha, 2002, 60.

[8] J. Doležal (1996), *Česká kultura za protektorátu. Školství, písemnictví, kinematografie*, Praha, 12.

[9] *German Cultural Oppression in Czechoslovakia*, Memorandum of the Czechoslovak National Committee, London, 1940, 9.

of Nazi cultural policy aimed at strengthening the Nazi regime and its propaganda abroad.[10]

Founded on July 14, 1933, the Imperial Film Chamber was responsible for all activities in the film industry, but the leading role in this area was played by the Ministry of Education and Propaganda, headed by Goebbels, which carefully controlled the film production process from the very beginning, including financing, preparation and approval of scripts, as well as the selection of actors. At the same time, Goebbels was aware of the special effectiveness of indirect propaganda, skillfully integrated into entertaining and seemingly apolitical films as a background or indirect plots. It is for this reason that most of the Nazi film production consisted of feature and entertainment films, which, however, had latent propaganda content. Thus, out of 1094 films made in Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945, only 153 of them (14%) were openly propaganda in nature. Recognizing the importance of entertainment in creating positive emotions and a sense of relaxation and psychological comfort in the public, Goebbels purposefully turned entertaining and seemingly apolitical films into an important part of Nazi cinema propaganda.[11]

In the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which was formally an autonomous administrative unit within the Reich, the main role in cultural policy was played by the Cultural Department of the Office of the Imperial Protector, in which only ethnic Germans occupied leading positions. Although formally this department was subordinate to the Imperial Protector, in practice it was a local branch of the Imperial Ministry of Propaganda. Goebbels's department, therefore, directly managed cultural policy in the territory of the protectorate, including in the field of the film industry.

From the very beginning, the policy of the Nazi authorities was aimed at completely absorbing Czech cinema and turning the protectorate into a market for German films. It is significant that, striving in the future for the complete Germanization of the protectorate, the German authorities every year reduced the number of the Czech feature films produced. Thus, while 41 Czech feature films were made in 1939, in the next year their number dropped down to 31, and in 1941 down to 21 films. In the last years of the war, the number of the Czech feature films did not exceed 10 per year.[12]

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[10] D. Gerstnerová (2022), *Propaganda jako forma komunikační strategie i kinematografie v Protektorátu Čechy a Morava. Diplomová práce*, Praha: UK, fakulta sociálních věd, 7-9.

[11] *Ibid*, 17.

[12] *Ibid*, 20.

However, during the war, the authorities of Nazi Germany did not resort to radical means of solving the "Czech question". The leadership of the Nazi Reich at this time was primarily interested in the uninterrupted and efficient operation of Czech military factories, which formed an important part of the German military-industrial complex. It was for this reason that the Nazi authorities sought to maintain stability, calm and loyalty of the Czech population of the protectorate. This circumstance predetermined the Nazi cultural policy in the protectorate during the war, including cinematography, which was used as a tool of manipulation and as a means of consolidating the Nazi regime in the occupied territory.

Since 1939, the Czech cinema was subjected to an "Aryanization" campaign, during which all persons of Jewish nationality were fired from the film industry; moreover, in the future, all Jews were prohibited from any activity in cinema. Censorship of all films was introduced, which was carried out directly by the office of the Imperial Protector, which indicated the great attention that the Nazis paid to cinema. Direct film propaganda was carried out, as in the Reich, through the demonstration of weekly information film magazines, which were prepared by the Third Reich film concern Deutsche Wochenschau. These film magazines with openly propaganda materials were mandatorily shown in all cinemas before showing feature films; moreover, the administration of cinemas was charged with the responsibility of strictly monitoring the timely arrival of spectators.

Since about 2/3 of the Czech population of the protectorate, according to the plans of the ideologists of the Third Reich, was subject to Germanization, the active phase of which was to begin after Germany's military victory over the USSR, the Nazi authorities began to prepare Czech public opinion for this plan in advance, using, among other things, film propaganda. In the protectorate media and in the field of education, the "imperial idea" was actively promoted, which interpreted the Czech lands and Moravia as the original components of the German Reich. In the field of cinematography, this was expressed in the preparation of a large-scale historical film "Prince Vaclav" ("Prince St. Wenceslas"), directed by František Czap. This film, conceived as a drama about Czech history, was dedicated to the personality of the Czech prince St. Wenceslas, one of the key characters in the medieval history of Czech lands. At the beginning of the 10th century, Wenceslas was forced to recognize his vassalage to the German king Henry the Fowler and undertook

to pay him tribute, which Nazi propaganda skillfully used for its own purposes. In the protectorate film, Saint Wenceslas was portrayed as a prince who initially recognized the need for the Czech state to be an integral part of the German Empire and recognized the leading role of the German people. The main ideological task of the film "Prince St. Wenceslas" was to show one of the key Czech statesmen of the Middle Ages and at the same time one of the main Czech saints as a loyal vassal of Germany and as a sincere friend of the German people.[13] Such a film interpretation of St. Wenceslas was fully consistent with the general course of protectorate propaganda, which strongly emphasized the leading role of this prince in Czech medieval history. Moreover, this film significantly enhanced the effectiveness of Protectorate propaganda by offering a wide audience an attractive visual image of one of the key characters of early Czech history in an interpretation favorable to the Nazis. However, the filming of this Nazi propaganda opus was never completed. Apparently, the authorities of the protectorate planned a wide screening of this film after the final victory of the Nazi Reich before the decisive phase of resolving the "Czech question".

The prevailing majority of the Czech protectorate films were feature films of an entertaining and comedic nature, which, however, had latent propaganda motives. The content of Czech protectorate films is eloquently evidenced by their titles: "Hot Summer" (1939), "Girl in Blue" (1940), "Life is Beautiful!" (1940), "The Masked Lover" (1940), "On Silent Nights" (1941), etc. These films were intended to serve the Nazi authorities in the protectorate, primarily promoting stability and loyalty of the Czech population to the Nazi regime. Moreover, during the war, the population was required, first of all, to work conscientiously in military factories for the benefit of the Nazi Reich. That is why the main motives, popularized in every possible way in Czech feature films, were the motives of conscientious work, loyalty and responsibility, as well as fidelity to traditions. In addition, a popular motive was the contrast between the city as a center of all sorts of vices and shortcomings and the village as a natural and healthy habitat for honest and conscientious workers. There were often anti-Semitic motives when only Jews were portrayed as swindlers and crooks who shamelessly deceived the simple-minded and hardworking Czechs and parasitized on their naivety.

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[13] M. Douděrová (2018), *Obrazy propagandy protektorátní kinematografie. Bakalářská práce*, Hradec Kralové: Univerzita Hradec Kralové, 64.

Notable in this regard was the film "The Big Dam" ("Velká přehrada"), the main character of which, engineer Petr Pavelka, was supposed to personify the ideal hero of the protectorate with a full range of positive qualities sought after by the regime. Pavelka, originally from a village, was distinguished by his hard work, honesty and loyalty to the authorities, and even represented the protectorate in international sports as a boxer. The main test in life for Pavelka was an affair with a frivolous Prague lady Irena, who did not work anywhere and led a bohemian lifestyle, giving preference exclusively to entertainment. Pavelka, however, was able to overcome this difficult temptation and return to his former respectable lifestyle, achieving impressive success in life. This film, using the example of its lyrical heroes, successfully brought to life the idea that conscientious and honest work and loyalty to the authorities will certainly be rewarded, while laziness and irresponsibility will be severely punished.[14]

Another illustrative example of the Czech cinema during the protectorate period was the film "Jan Cymbura", popular among viewers of that time. The main character of this film is a young guy, Jan Cymbura, who returned home after military service in the Czechoslovak army. Honest, law-abiding and hardworking, Cymbura was called upon to become a model of ideal behavior for the inhabitants of the protectorate. A similar role was played by other characters in this film, in particular the owner of the agricultural farm Kovanda, shown as a symbol of reliability, decency and good intentions. It is remarkable that a significant part of the protectorate films, including the film "Jan Cymbura", were distinguished by an abundance of long scenes that colorfully depicted the joys of simple rural labor in the lap of nature, which was intended to convince the viewer that work is joyful and worthy of all respect, and should be celebrated as only those who understand it can.

A significant motif of the Czech protectorate films were local variations on the theme of the Nazi slogan "blood and soil". A number of films glorified the beauty of Czech and Moravian nature, simple peasant labor, rural lifestyle and loyalty to folk traditions, which are often contrasted with the city and urban life filled with idleness and various vices. This focus of the protectorate films was not unreasonably designed to evoke sympathy among conservative and patriotic Czechs, which in the future was supposed to reconcile them with the Nazi regime. Thus, cinematography was skillfully used by the protectorate authorities as

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[14] *Ibid*, 51.

a kind of ideological trap for a significant part of the Czech population of the protectorate, primarily to transmit the values they needed at the moment in order to stabilize the internal political situation in the protectorate and ensure the effective operation of the Czech industry, which was so necessary for the Nazi Reich.[15]

A widespread phenomenon was the collaboration of a significant part of the Czech directors and actors, who consciously collaborated with the occupation authorities. According to modern Czech historians, in most cases the main reason for collaboration was not ideological motives or sympathy for Nazi ideas, but the fear of losing one's high social status and source of income.[16]

One of the most famous examples of collaboration was Lida Baare, a Czech actress popular at the time, who actively starred not only in interwar Czechoslovakia and the protectorate, but also in Nazi Germany since the mid-1930s. L. Baare maintained close contacts with a number of high-ranking functionaries of Nazi Germany, including J. Goebbels himself. It is known that during their whirlwind "romance of the Beauty and the Beast", the American company MGM offered L. Baare a contract, but she refused. For the rest of her life, she regretted her decision, lamenting that she did not leave Europe before the Second World War began. The end of Baare's intimate relationship with Goebbels was put by Hitler personally in 1939, who demanded that his propaganda minister end his relationship with the Czech actress. A relationship with a "racially inferior Slavic woman," as Hitler believed, discredited not only Goebbels who was – *on top of other "delicate matters"!* – married and had three children at that time, but also Nazi ideology in the eyes of the German Reich population. Infatuated with Baare, Goebbels was ready to resign and go with her as the German ambassador to Japan, but Hitler rejected this offer of the Nazi propaganda minister.[17] After her break with Goebbels, Baare was prohibited from filming in Nazi Germany, and she returned to the protectorate, where she continued her acting career. After the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi occupation, L. Baare was accused of collaboration with German fascists and spent 16 months in prison. However, during the subsequent trial, the charges brought against her were not confirmed and the criminal case was strangely dropped. Obviously, Baare had influential patrons since she maintained intimate

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[15] *Ibid*, 62.

[16] *Ibid*, 34.

[17] https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%ADda_Baarov%C3%A1

relationships not only with the Minister of Propaganda of the Nazi Reich. After the Czechoslovak communists came to power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, L. Baare emigrated to Austria, continuing her successful acting career in the West, where she starred, in particular, in Italian films, including one of the films of the famous Fellini.

Another striking example of collaboration was the famous Czech actor and theater figure V. Burian, who, unlike L. Baare, during a lengthy trial was found guilty of collaboration and convicted with a subsequent ban on engaging in theatrical and cinematic activities.

In general, it should be noticed that the Czech protectorate cinema during the Second World War became one of the effective tools of Nazi policy in the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, generating and transmitting the ideas needed by the Nazi authorities at that time and thereby preparing the ground for the final solution of the "Czech question" planned by the German Nazis.

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IDENTITARY SYMBOLS AND SPANISH CINEMATIC DISCOURSE – FROM FRANCOISM TO ALMODOVARIAN CINEMA

Abstract

This paper examines identitary symbols in the context of Spanish cinematic discourse. In the frame of Francoist and Almodóvarian cinema and from the deconstructive and comparative approaches, this article argues that televisual narrative requires close reading in relation to the cultural and political context. Accordingly, each film as a mass medium, inherently transfers aesthetic ethos as well as ideological message. To support this point, this paper will analyze the main features of the Francoist and Almodóvarian cinema. Likewise, by comparing Spanish cinema during Francoist era with the changing cinematographic politics of the Transition period (la transición), this article will reveal that the political shift also enabled a cultural and sociological shift which was reflected in the birth of new cinematographic topics and consequently Almodóvar's new representations of Spanish identity, as well as gender identities. For this reason, identifying and understanding identitarian symbols of Spanish film discourse from the Francoist dictatorship era to a newly established democratic state not only outlines the social, cultural and political evolution of Spain, but also proves pivotal for the interpretation of Almodóvarian unique cinematic expression and its impact on Spanish national identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Bearing in mind that the sole concept of discourse is closely related to the constructivism learning theory and the key role of language in constructing social realities,[1] the film discourse certainly has transformative possibility which affects viewers' value system and esthetic norms inherent to them.[2] As one of the most influential tools of mass communication, cinematography represents a distinctive cultural phenomenon within the media space and film discourse with its global impact is a powerful form that has multi-semiotic characteristics related to the cultural, political and social background of the viewer. Likewise, as a special form of public language, "the media discourse inevitably participate in shaping collective as well as national awareness",[3] so the film discourse as a system of interactive signs delivers unique meaning that undoubtedly affects acquired viewer's ideology and ultimately components of its national *identity*. From this general perspective, we can conclude that just as any media content can be seen as a strategic tool of political communication,[4] the film discourse's semiotic/linguistic dimension always intersects, on one side, with cultural and social structures, as well as with ideological and political, on the other. This further means that, in the form of communicative process: "The symbolic power of televisual discourse as one of the most far-reaching is at the same time the one of the most dangerous due to its capacity to create reality by transforming the prevailing believes, cultural values and practices".[5]

In this research, we define the film discourse as multimodal and intersemiotic structure that transfers the verbal and non-verbal features which by addressing the place and time in which they were constructed enable the viewer's specific approach to film and its historical and cultural contexts. To analyze Spanish identitary features inherent

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[1] Milena Pešić, Sanja Stošić (2019), „Kritička analiza diskursa i politika", *Srpska politička misao 65*, N° 3, 391.

[2] Sanja Stošić (2016), „Sadržaj medijskog prostora u Srbiji tokom 2015. godine", *Srpska politička misao 51*, N°1, 256.

[3] *Ibid*, 253.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] *Ibid*, 266–267.

to the cinematic discourse of Francoism and Almodóvar, we have chosen the following concepts as the most representative: the human body as embodiment of multiple identities; stereotypes or ideas associated with Spanish identity; the family relationship; the specific environment of different Spanish rural landscapes, as well as of the city of Madrid.

Through analysis of the above mentioned identitary symbols of film discourse, in this article we will fist analyze the autocratic nature of *Francoist cinema and its prevailing narrative, and then we will try to explain the evolution of Spanish cinema after Franco's* death in *1975. Namely, during* Franco's 36-year reign (1939-1975) the cinematic discourse was equal to Francoist propaganda, that is to say, the film discourse of Francoist cinema served as a valuable medium for building collective memory of the Spanish Civil War. Additionally, by referring to ideological control and by manipulating history, under Francoist cinema some forbidden topics were transformed into myths. Hence, in order to represent national identity, this mythological discourse of artifice and theatricality aimed to revive the myth of Eternal Spain, Catholicism and family, as well as the elements of popular Spanish artistic heritage related to traditional stories and folklore. In that way, the Francoist film discourse was inherently oriented towards the "naturalization of history",[6] finding its expression mainly through documentary movies.

In turn*, through* the imposition of new narratives regarding social and moral considerations on women's role, sexual *and delinquent* behavior, *and in the context of the Transition period and new political circumstances,* the national cinema *from 1975 until 1996 presented the film discourse substantially different from the* Francoist ideological discourse inherent to controlled narrative of Franco's cinematic process of national mythmaking. Throughout the period of "Democratic Transition" (1975-1983) and "Transformation" (1984-1995) Spanish cinema reflected political changes that occurred during the last period of Francoism, as well as their impact on Spanish society.[7] Nonetheless, it is important to bear in mind that the Francoist system didn't end with a political rupture but rather with a transition. Subsequently, in the era of liberal democracy the film discourse adopted features of an emerging model of deep Spanish cultural transition which rehabilitated previously banned

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[6] Pietsie Feenstra (2011), "From Prohibition to Clear Exhibition: How to Read into These Film-Images?", *New Mythological Figures in Spanish Cinema: Dissident Bodies under Franco*, Amsterdam: University Press, 25.

[7] Natalia Ardánaz (1998), "The Spanish Political Transition in Cinema (1973-1982)", *Communication & Society 11* (2), 153.

cinematographic topics. Moreover, since 1980 and after years of Francoist censorship, Spanish cinema evolved from different ideologies, producing various genres and "representing new social imaginary significations".[8]

Instead of embodying the political unity, due to Spain's transition to democracy, in the 1990s the national cinema developed in different political and historical context introducing new cinematographic concepts and new myths. While Francoist cinematographic discourse ignored the topic of sexuality by replacing it with concepts of love and morality, in the transitional period the concept of sexuality transformed *into the complexities of human body. Namely, as within the new film discourse the human body became essential for understanding various facets of identity,* the transitional cinema reflected how people had changed their bodies in order to adjust to or resist the new sociopolitical circumstances. In that sense, the sexual identity was modernized and not only separated from the traditional structure of family but also represented throughout the homosexual and delinquent body associated with criminalization of youth, Gypsies, prostitutes, terrorists or drugs.

Furthermore, as each film documents cultural and political context, the cinema itself can be viewed as an "archive of the past" that can lead the viewer to new ways of contemplation on a past presented on film.[9] Bearing in mind the above mentioned, we can say that the cinema as well as the written history comprehends "convention-governed narratives" that inevitably consists of imaginary elements or myths,[10] and thus prevailing ideologies of the society. As the film discourse of the Francoist Spanish filmography was not primarily artistically motivated but rather used as a mass medium*,* besides documentaries, predominant cinematographic productions were revisions of melodramatic narratives about heroes, musicals and folkloric comedies. Subsequently, the Transition period propelled the cinematographic discourse of the political cinema diversified in numerous documentary and fiction films made mainly as adaptations of distinguished novels about the Spanish Civil War and the postwar period. Although in the context of democratization peak (between late 1980s and early 1990s) societal views on sexuality and woman's representation changed, within the film discourse

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[8] Stanton McManus (2018), "From Past to Present, Melodramatically: The Politics and Ethics of Democracy in Early *Transición* Spanish Cinema." *Journal of Film and Video 70*, no. 2, 21.

[9] Antoine De Baecque (2008), *L'histoire-caméra*, Paris: Gallimard, 13.

[10] Robert Rosenstone (2010), *A história nos filmes, os filmes na história*, traduit de l'anglais (États-Unis) par Marcello Lino, [éd. orig. *History on Film/Film on History*, Harlow: Pearson Education] São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 22.

the concept of human body was still essentially used like an aesthetic form, especially in the *destape* movies.[11] Moreover, despite the efforts of the Auteurist generation to develop a more democratic framework for national cinematography and modernize the national film discourse as more artistically and free, some genres like pornography, or horror, remained relegated while the discourse of cold realism prevailed.[12] Actually, in the context of Franco's death and newly adopted democracy and socioeconomic system, the Transition period transferred the film discourse of repetitiveness which expressed the feeling of anxiety towards changes and the upcoming future. In that sense, the Auteurist group, which included directors like Carlos Saura, Basilio Martín Patino, Alfredo Matas and Pilar Miró, couldn't accept the "artificiality" and burlesque discourse inherent to Almodóvar's cinema [13]

Nevertheless, throughout the late 1980s to mid-1990s with the rise of Pedro Almodóvar as a central figure, Spanish cinematographic production became more famous abroad. In the 1980s Madrid was transformed into the capital of new urban cultural movement or The Madrilenian Scene known as *La Movida*[14] Influenced by the UK's punk scene, Glam Rock and New York's New Wave, the Madrilenian youth felt the urge to build its own identity by rejecting the political legacy of Spain's right-left division. Instead of the conservatism of Franco's regime, exhibitionism, pornography, hedonism and an aesthetic of "melodrama, kitsch and excess" became the youthful expression of fun and joy, [15] while the artistic expression was linked to drug experimentation and "gender-fluid sex".[16] Carrying the connotation of turmoil and outcry for

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[11] Although referring to sexuality, *destape* movies implicitly treated the topic of the female body, that is, without showing it directly; see: Pietsie Feenstra (2011), *op. cit*., 41.

[12] The group of post-Franco directors oriented towards creating a "New Spanish Cinema" and "films as a reflection on social reality" under the influence of Italian Neorealism, avant garde and European cinema. On this see Núria Triana Toribio (2016), *Spanish Film Cultures: the Making and Unmaking of Spanish Cinema*., British Film Institute: Palgrave, 19.

[13] Paul Julian Smith (2014), *Desire Unlimited: the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar*, Verso, 138-139.

[14] Under the decades-long Franco's repressive rule, homosexuality, abortion and anything that wasn't regarded as traditional was prohibited, and almost all cultural production in Spain was censored. Thus, after Franco's death in 1975 and decades of isolation, the country and Madrid, in particular became alive due to the new youth wave which engendered new forms of expression in art, music and fashion.

[15] Sian Creely (2016), "Melodrama, Kitsch and Excess: The Art of the Movida Madrileña", *The Culture Trip*.

[16] The literal translation of the word *movida* is the verb to move, but the context of *Movida Madrileña* implies "a move to find drugs". Tom Seymour (2020), "La Movida Madrileña: the Punk Movement that Changed Madrid's Arts Scene Forever", *The Culture Trip*.

freedom, *la movida gathered everyone willing to experiment not only physically but also artistically.* Along with various artists, musicians and photographers like Alberto García-Alix, Pablo Pérez-Minguez, Miguel Trillo and Ouka Leele (Bárbara Allende Gil de Biedma), Pedro Almodóvar who collaborated with them and made one of his famous films like *Pepi, Luci, Boom y otras chicas del montón* remained as the movida's standout figure.[17]

In addition, the beginning of the 1990s brought economic boom, Spain's entrance to the European Union, Barcelona Olympics, the Sevilla World Expo '92, the Spanish Socialists Workers' Party (PSOE) political fall and return of the conservative People's P*arty* (PP). Overall, the Spanish national cinema went through significant transformation regarding all aspects – from directors, producers, scriptwriters, actors to audience. Therefore, the early 1990s represented for various reasons "central epocal shift" in Spanish film industry.[18]

By introducing altered images of human body, Pedro Almodóvar's has profoundly changed the history of Spanish cinematography and film discourse. Exposing provocative scenes of bodies reshaped by silicone, man dressed as woman, or eccentric and unconventional female characters, Almodóvar has managed to destroy without textual discourse preconceived stereotypes and taboos of Francoist and post-Francoist cinema. Overstepping boarders of marginality, Almodóvar represents characters like homosexuals, transsexuals, prostitutes, delinquents and drug addicts as normal human beings. In that way, without explicit political involvement Almodóvar sends through his movies social messages that clearly reject the fascist heritage. The analysis of Almodóvar's unique filmography often reveals the mixture of different genres in one movie accompanied by the harlequin and segmented style and perplexing plots. The film maker's use of human body infringe all rules of gender and sexuality, creating in that way new social, sexual and cultural identities. Through his frequent use of feminine characters and maternal figures the director addresses questions about equality and family relationships. In the context of the Almodóvarian world, cinematic metaphors act as an expression of the deepest human desires and fears.

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[17] Pérez-Mínguez's studio was a central place for *movida's* artists and youngsters, where numerous parties took place. Likewise, the studio served as a setting in some of the first Almodóvar's movies, and place where were created early portraits of the filmmaker dressed as a drag queen and punk singer.

[18] Jay Back and Vicente Rodríguez Ortega (2008), *Contemporary Spanish Cinema and Genre*, Manchester University Press: Palgrave Macmillan, 3.

All in all, Almodóvar's movies undoubtedly had a significant impact on the Spanish national identity. Due to his unique style and particular scepticism, Almodóvar has gained commercial and critical success both at home and abroad and hence the position of an "international auteur". As the "ambassador of national culture"[19] and director of exclusively Spanish movies,[20] in his colorful movies Almodóvar plays equally with human passions and cultural reality, or happiness and grievance, promoting worldwide Latin-American culture and Spanish language. Almodóvar's cinematic expression is free of ideology, but fosters religious elements of Spanish Catholicism, represented in opposition to all sorts of human imperfections. Originally using parody and exaggeration along with the Hollywood's intertextuality, the filmmaker manages to present Spain as a motherland, reflecting in his work the evolutionary process of Spanish identity.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL IMAGINARIES OF FRANCOIST FILM DISCOURSE

The evolution of film culture in Spain was marked by Spanish slow industrial growth and cultural zeal of its neighbors. Moreover, from its beginning, the Spanish cinema has been evolving in the context of turbulent sociopolitical climate due to the loss the Spanish last colonies.[21] In the following period of political instability, the monarchical rule approved the dictatorship but eventually, with the victory of the republican and socialist parties the monarchy itself collapsed and a violent Civil War (1936-1939) consumed the country. On 1 April 1939 Francisco Franco took power and his almost forty-year long dictatorship was installed

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[19] Marta Saavedra Llamas, Nicolás Grijalba de la Calle (2020), "The Creative Cinematographic Process at the Service of National Identity: Pedro Almodóvar and the Promotion of Spanish Stereotypes", *Creativity Studies* 13, Nº 2, 371.

[20] Due to inclusion of vulgar language, picturesque representation of urban local spaces and rural landscapes, folk music, flamenco and traditional Spanish songs, as well as of the Latin-American characters and music, especially Mexican boleros, throughout his production company *El Deseo* guided by his brother Pedro Almodóvar has not only internationally promoted Spanish culture and music, but also Latin America.

[21] Edison launched public film screenings in 1894 and in December 1895 Auguste and Louis Lumière inaugurated the Cinématographe and first public cinema. Due to its openness to Europe at that time, only five months after the Lumiére's first moving pictures, the Spanish public also had the opportunity to enjoy in them in one of Madrid's hotels on May 11, 1896. Two years after the first motion pictures were presented in Spain, the Spanish fleet suffered defeat in the Caribbean and the Pacific battles in Spanish-American War (1898) and lost its last colonies – Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines – along with its imperial status.

(1939-1975).[22] Under the dictatorial Franco's regime, the national cinema was under complete censorship, so Spain was isolated from the rest of the world. Thus, in order to see a movie or attend an exhibition, one would have to go abroad.[23] Nonetheless, as Franco placed great importance on film not only as a tool of entertainment but also as a mean of political indoctrination, for the first time the state started to support financially the film production. As a result, Spanish filmmakers began to engage in film industry at the beginning of the 20th century, but under the influence of French, Italian or American cinematography.

After declaring the end of the Spanish Civil War, Franco organized a victory parade in Madrid to celebrate the birth of the "New Spain". In order to emphasize its military, political and providential legitimacy, Franco worn the Laureate Cross of Saint Ferdinand during the parade. With the same goal, Franco organized inaugural ceremony in the Church of Santa Bárbara during which he employed distinct symbols from medieval military, political, and religious sphere, inherent to the "Christian royal coronation". In that way, Franco's totalitarian ideological discourse followed the pattern of "political religion",[24] or "clerical fascism".[25] In addition to using Spain's glorious past and Catholicism as a base for nationalistic films,[26] early Francoist film discourse followed the pattern of political engineering oriented towards constructing the leader's image of moral exemplarity. Hence, with the aim to construct an idealized image of dictator's "imperial grandeur", the Franco's regime presented to Spaniards various images of Franco as a charismatic and

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[22] Due to the loss of its last colonies, Spain experienced political instability which resulted in electoral victory of the Republicans in 1931. As the Republic couldn't resolve problems related with secessionist demands of Catalans and Basques and economy crisis, the military, industrialists, landowners and the Church denied its support to the Republic which led to unsuccessful military coup in 1932, the emergence of right-wing party CEDA and unstable Azana's government. After the electoral victory of CEDA in 1934, left parties and Popular Front organized strikes and riots, taking control of Spain again. Nonetheless, under Franco's leadership, right side politicians decided to support a military dictatorship and in 1936 started the Civil War which ended with the defeat of the Republicans in Madrid.

[23] In order to suppress discourse and images in contradiction with Catholic morality and Francoism's right-wing political ideology, screenplays and movies were submitted to rigid reviews.

[24] Zira Box and Ismael Saz (2011), "Spanish Fascism as a Political Religion (1931-1941)", *Politics, Religion and Ideology 12* (4), 372.

[25] Hugh Trevor-Roper (1981), "The Phenomenon of Fascism", in: Stuart J. Woolf, (ed.) *Fascism in Europe*, London: Methuen, 18-38.

[26] As it happened in Italian cinema under Mussolini, and in German cinema under Hitler, Franco actually used cinema as a popular mass medium to justify his dictatorship. See: Román Gubern (1997), "Los imaginarios del cine del franquismo", *Un siglo de cine español*. Madrid: Cuadernos de la Academia, Octubre, N°1, 157-158.

admirable leader at everyday situations. In that way, the Spanish public could imagine Franco as: caring family man; devoted religious man; meditative or thoughtful head of government, or a resolute and fearless military commander.[27] Actually, the prevailing public discourse was of propagandistic nature and implemented by the government in order to justify the 1936 military coup and ferocities of civil war.[28]

The process of framing Franco's leadership comprehended the notion of a "sacred crusader" by which was built the historical conception of "moral and political legitimacy" of dictator as "the saviour of Spain" or *caudillo*.[29] More specifically, by associating religious and historical iconography of Spanish Reconquista with totalitarian and ultranationalist ideology, the Francoist discourse developed "a kitsch interpretation of Spain's past, or a picturesque and clichéd image of Spain".[30] Accordingly, Franco the victor, entered with his military troops into Madrid as pompously as King Alfonso VI.[31] The final goal of this discourse was oriented towards building the Francoist moral exemplarity[32] and "submissive citizens who would identify with state ideology"[33] Furthermore, to build an appropriate Francoist discourse, the leader was compared also to Napoleon, Alexander the Great, or even Saint Michael the Archangel.[34] In that sense, representing the war against the Spanish Republican government[35] as "a Second Reconquest", some symbols and events from Spanish history were evoked by the Francoist discourse as iconic

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[27] Paul Preston (2004), *Franco: Caudillo de España*, Barcelona: Debolsillo, 14.

[28] The Francoist discourse was forged not only by newsreels and propagandistic movies, but also by parades, commemorations, posters, busts and statues of Franco placed all over Spain.

[29] Hitler was known as Fuhrer, Mussolini as Il Duce, while Franco named himself *Caudillo de España* which meant "great leader of Spain by the grace of God"'. The word *caudillo* originates from the time of the Reconquista and was used in Latin America in 19th century to denote chieftain or authoritarian military power and commander able to exert political control through the use of country's armed forces.

[30] Alejandro Yarza (2018), "The Petrified Tears of General Franco: Kitsch and Fascism in José Luis Sáenz de Heredia's Raza", *The Making and Unmaking of Francoist Kitsch Cinema: From Raza to Pan's Labyrinth*, University Press: Edinburgh, 23.

[31] During the siege of Toledo when Muslims were defeated in 1085, El Cid Campeador followed Alfonso VI, see: Paul Preston (2004), *op. cit.*, 365-367.

[32] As during the Civil war and in the postwar period Franco presented himself as the heroic rescuer of Spain similar to the legendary medieval characters, due to his involvement in the Moroccan colonial wars, before the Civil War Franco was presented as the Hero of the Rif, while after the World War II he was the incarnation of Commander of Numancia, or legendary hero who fearlessly defended his town and people against Romans. Preston (2004), *op. cit.*, 14-20.

[33] Yarza (2018), *op. cit*.

[34] Preston (2004), *op. cit*., 11.

[35] As the armed conflict between fascism and communism preceding World War II, the Spanish Civil War is also historically known as the "Little World War".

ones. To that end, Franco brought to Madrid: the relics of Don Pelayo who supposedly had initiated the Reconquest of Spain against the Muslims; the chains of Navarra as a sign of Christian victory in the Battle of Navas de Tolosa in 1212; the lantern from the Battle of Lepanto during which Juan de Austria defeated the Ottoman Empire in 1571; in the presence of highest military, religious and political figures his sword to the Sacred Christ of Lepanto.[36]

In other words, the Francoist discourse was supported by a scenery adapted to Franco's image as a "worthy coeval of the Duce and the Führer, as well as a fitting heir of the great warrior kings of Spain's glorious past".[37] However, unlike European fascist exemplars such as Hitler or Mussolini, Franco has managed to retain to a certain degree moral exemplarity embodied in the current rise of neofascist or right-wing populist movements. Due to Francoist propagandistic discourse, a legend of Franco the savior still persists in right-wing political parties oriented towards reviving "traditional values" and patriotic exemplarity of *caudillo* as a builder of the unified and insoluble homeland.[38]

The filmmaking in Spain was tightly controlled throughout the Franco's regime which by strict censorship sought to impose its ideology as well as the exceedingly nationalist and Hispanicized discourse.[39] Particularly, the main goals of censorship were to defended moral exemplarism and prevent corrupted language, blasphemy and infiltration of

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[36] Giuliana Di Febo (1999), "Franco, la ceremonia de Santa Bárbara y la "representación" del nacionalcatolicismo", in: Xavier Quinzá Lleó and José J. Alemany (eds.) *Ciudad de los hombres, Ciudad de Dios: Homenaje a Alfonso Álvarez Bolado*, Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de, Comillas, 464-471.

[37] Preston (2004), *op. cit.*, 362.

[38] Franco created a path towards a unified Spanish nation under conservative and monarchic regime, but with the new democratic paradigm in 2007 the Socialist government passed a Memory Law which provided support to the victims of Francoism, opening legal question of massive human right violations under Franco's dictatorship. Thus, the exhumation of executed Republicans from the mass graves changed the narrative of Franco's moral exemplarity to negative exemplarity and Franco was represented as a ruthless fascist and war criminal. However, the global rise of right-wing populism brought to power far-right party like Vox whose campaign relies on national revival and Francoist political iconography; see: Francisco Ferrándiz (2022), "Francisco Franco is Back: The Contested Reemergence of a Fascist Moral Exemplar", *Comparative Studies in Society and History 64*, Nº 1, 219-223.

[39] The film censorship in Spain began before Franco's regime, precisely, in 1913. In order to spread its ideology, in 1937 the Franco regime created the Superior Board of Film Censorship (*Junta Superior de Censura Cinematográfica*). The members of the Board were form the fascist political party Falange, the Church and the Army, and although their decisions were final, their criteria on censorship was arbitrary; see: Jorge Díaz-Cintas (2018), "Film censorship in Franco's Spain: the transforming power of dubbing", *Perspectives 27*, 186.

dissident political ideas,[40] while the prevailing nationalist discourse was mainly oriented towards the following themes: "the origins and glory of Spain, the defensive wars, the imperialist Spain, the Catholic Spain, the romantic-folkloric Spain and the modern Spain".[41]

Generally speaking, during the Civil War and the first half of the 1940's, the process of national mythmaking found its expression in the genre of national epic films or so-called crusade cinema or *cine de cruzada*. This war movies were colored by propagandistic and patriotic discourse with the aim of legitimizing Francoist anti-Communism.[42] The most prominent movies of this kind is *Raza* (1941), based on the book written by Francisco Franco himself but under a pseudonym The movie was directed by José Luis Sáenz de Heredia whose friend Manuel Parada captured the mood of Hollywood movies by composing the music under the influence of Wagner and Strauss and Spanish traditional melodies articulated in accordance with movie's leitmotifs. As an embodiment of the Francoist discourse, *Raza* represented ideological and narrative clichés that served both as a model to Spanish filmmakers and antithetical model to opposition directors over the next twenty years.[43]

During the 50's the Civil War was presented more as a fight between Christians and communists. Thus, as national identity was built primarily on religious beliefs, the Francoist discourse changed under the influence of National-Catholicism.[44] Also, as Church was deeply involved in censorship, religious discourse of Catholic conservativism penetrated historically inspired cinema and the genre known as *cine de sacerdotes*. With the protagonist represented as martyrs, those movies promoted Christian virtues like tolerance, compassion, humility and sacrifice. One of the most famous movies of this kind is art documentary film called *Cristo* (1954), directed and produced by Margarita Alexandre and Rafael Torrecilla. This movie represents the life of Jesus through the work of Spanish paintings like Titian, El Greco and Rubens.

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[40] *Ibid*, 195.

[41] Gabriela Viadero Carral (2016), *El cine al servicio de la Nación (1939-1975)*, Madrid: Marcial Pons, 361-382.

[42] Laura Miranda and Dan Hamer (2010), "The Spanish 'Crusade Film': Gender connotations during the conflict", *Music, Sound, and the Moving Image* 4, N° 2, 161.

[43] Virginia Higginbotham (1988), *Spanish Film Under Franco*, Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

[44] This change in historically inspired cinema was probably the result of greater presence of catholic groups in the government (1946-1957). Likewise, due to the Cold War, Franco wanted to legitimize his fight against Communism, so he signed a Treaty with the Vatican and created a military alliance with USA. Viadero Carral (2016), Ibidem.

Overall, due to the fact that Spanish historical cinema between 1944 and 1950 primarily served to glorify the imperial history of Spain and sublimely impose the collective ideology of national unity within the Franco's autocratic regime, it is frequently defined as reactionary "papier-mâché cinema". The most distinguished movies of the historical cinema are those directed and produced by Juan de Orduña, like *Agustina de Aragón*, *La leona de Castilla*, *Alba de América* and *Locura de amor*. The prevailing discourse of those mainstream movies was not purely propagandistic, but more of an escapist nature, although artistically shallow and conventional. In another words, this genre was adapted to popular taste, and developed under the influence of North American film industry. Likewise, the movie music was used diegetically and in accordance with "cinematographic classicism", mostly composed by Juan Quintero.[45]

Furthermore, by the late 1950s, censorship control was slightly reduced and the prevailing movies were popular ones, denigratory known as *españoladas*, or movies featuring Spanish customa and identitary symbols in excess.[46] This kind of films was very popular in the 1960s and supported by the regime that wanted to incite economic development and thus improve Spain's international image and represent it as the ideal tourist destination.[47] As at that time Spanish film production and censorship were under control of the Ministry of Information and Tourism and Franco decided to open up the country to the outside world, this period is also known as the *aperturista* period. Hence, movies of this kind mainly represented "an image of Spain with a folkloric-romantic air". One of the most prominent examples of *españoladas* is movie called *España insólita* (1965). As profoundly commercial, these movies helped the government to entertain the viewers in order

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[45] Joaquín López González (2009), *Música y cine en la España del franquismo: el compositor Juan Quintero Muñoz (1903-1980)*, Tesis doctoral, Granada: Universidad de Granada.

[46] *Españoladas* grew out of the 19th century literature and theater and forms like travel writings, French novels, comic plays, and the Spanish *género chico*, a subgenre of the *zarzuela* or traditional Spanish operettas. This subgenre wasn't exclusively related to Francoist cinema, but also existed during the Republic and persisted until the 1970's as an alternative or reactionary discourse to regime ideologies. As forms of "folkloristic cinema" *españoladas* represent popular and modern remakes of traditional and identitary discourse through cinema; see: Eva Woods (2007), "Radio Libre Folklóricas: jerarquías culturales, geográficas y de género en Torbellino (1941)", in: J. Herrera and C. Martínez-Carazo (eds.) *Hispanismo y cine*, Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 45.

[47] After the end of the Second World War and Franco's abandoned hopes of an Axis victory, as the only European fascist state Spain was isolated and eager to modernize. Specifically, the 1960s brought to Spain various social and economic changes, like tourist and urbanization boom, shifting gender practices and higher standard of living.

to forget the *harsh reality* of scarcity and lack of freedom. As a symbol of true and glorious Spanish identity, Andalusia had special place in the formation of this folkloric-romantic presentation of Spain, as well as Aragon and Madrid. Main identitary symbols of this folkloric-romantic discourse were stereotyped characters, like *cantadores* or flamenco singers, *bandoleros* or bandits, *toreros* or brave and heroic bullfighters, and *gitanos* or Gypsies.

During the period of late Francoism, also genres known as *comedia desarrollista*, *comedia celtibérica*, or simply *landismo*, dominated in the popular cinema. Without great esthetical value and with the aim of creating an image of a modern Spanish citizen "newly integrated into global consumerism", late Francoist comedies functioned as "*tecnología estatal*" [48] Bearing in mind that national cinematic discourse was oriented towards building identity around tradition, the introduction of modernity and foreign identitary symbols produced a clash of ideas usually embodied in the rural Spanish small town/modern large city dichotomy or genre's recurring metaphors. Through these movies predominated stereotypical humoristic discourse in which the national essence (*lo hispánico*) was in collision with foreign modernity, like in the *macho ibérico-sueca* dichotomy, for example. One of the most prominent of these movies were movies like *La ciudad no es para mí*, directed by Pedro Lazaga (1966), or *No desearás al vecino del quinto*, directed by Tito Fernández (1970).

As a reaction to Franco's "aesthetic of repression", since the early 1950s a new generation of film scholars started to challenge the rigidity of regime ideology and monolithic discourse of Francoist cinema. Under the influence of Italian neorealism, directors like Luis García Berlanga and Juan Antonio Bardem developed an anti-Francoist film aesthetic by promoting an alternative cinema known as "New Spanish Cinema" that will lead to unique Almodóvarian discourse and Madrid comedies' of the 1980s.

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[48] Martin Repinecz (2018), "Spain Is (Not So) Different: Whitening Spain through Late Francoist Comedy", *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World 8*, 92-93.

THE ALMODOVARIAN DISCOURSE AND REDEFINITION OF SPANISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

In the period between Franco's death and Spain's accession to the EU, the Spanish society underwent a sea of change. Politically, after nearly forty years Spain transitioned from dictatorship to parliamentary democracy, organizing the first free election in which Adolfo Suárez became the first Prime Minister. After so many years of extreme-right authoritarianism, Spaniards opted for the center which was formed of: liberals, Christian-democrats, repented Falangists and Juanista monarchists, and The Union of the Democratic Center (UCD).[49] Nevertheless, after the Franco's death, the middle-ground coalition government couldn't refrain its citizens to enjoy their freedom, celebrating everything that was previously denied to them and prohibited under the Franco's dictatorship regime. Specifically during the period of *La Movida Madrileña*, within which was in Spain in the 1980s constituted a rebellious and extravagant cultural movement, where heteronormative behaviors/identities experienced were rejected, while sexual liberation as well as free artistic expression flourished, and explicit ideological and political discrepancies were left aside.

In this respect, despite the proliferation of political movies, literary adaptations about the Spanish Civil War and the postwar period, as well as Franco's false image represented internationally even after his death by the Spanish filmmakers who were unmotivated to portray contemporary society, the landscape of Spanish cinema was exposed to radical changes with the emergence of Amodovar's first movie *Pepi, Luci, Boom y otras chicas del montón*.[50] Declaring in the 1980 "that he made movies as if Franco had never existed",[51] Almodóvar dared to

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[49] Fernand Díaz-Plaja and William W. Cressey (1997), *La España que sobrevive [The Spain that survives]*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

[50] Pedro Almodóvar was born in 1949 in a small town of Ciudad Real, province of Catile-La Mancha, in an ordinary working family. As a child, he was educated by Franciscan and Sicilian friars. At the age of seventeen, Almodóvar moved to Madrid where he worked as administrative assistant at Telefónica, which later became a source of inspiration for his works. As a member of the Madrilenian scene, Almodóvar was writing for alternative newspapers and magazines, participated in film festivals, acted with the independent avant-garde theatre company, led a punk-rock band Almodóvar and McNamara, and invented the character Patty Diphusa, an international porn star whose serialized confessions were published; see: Mark Allison (2001), *A Spanish Labyrinth: The Films of Pedro Almodóvar*, London: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 8.

[51] Marsha Kinder (2013), "Re-envoicements and Reverberations in Almodóvarós Macro-Melodrama". in: D'Lugo, Marvin / Vernon, Kathleen M. (eds.) *A Companion to Pedro Almodóvar*, Wiley-Blackwell, 281-303. 33-44.

erase completely Franco's existence and legacy. The Spanish spirit of freedom had been restricted for four decades, so Almodóvar's films from the early 1980s were rebellious and passionate expressions that "portray a highly uninhibited and deliberately provocative society."[52] At that time, Almodóvar's unrestrained discourse, colorful, transgressive and postmodern avant-garde style offered new stimuli to the audience eager to embrace spontaneity and authenticity and dismiss all taboos and repressions of the Francoist regime. Accordingly, Almodóvar's cinema has created a challenge from its very beginning to conventional societal beliefs and therefore also about gender matters.

Besides evoking the concepts of Spanish empire, glorious military past and Catholicism, Francoists cinematographic discourse was oriented towards traditional values related to woman, sexuality and family. Hence, under rigid visual and cultural style of Francoist cinema the homosexuality was stigmatized and "it was impossible to show it using a serious and honorable image".[53] Likewise, the family was equally idealized and considered sacred as "a micro-cosmos or totem in cinema". As representative of "social order and stability", the family was represented through conventional images of family values, thus any unappropriated behavior was culturally unacceptable and extramarital affairs, contraception, abortion, delinquency and homosexual relations were forbidden and punished as deviations from social norms.[54] In this regard, with the Almodovarian discourse, "Spanish cinema has reinvented itself".

In the Francoist discourse, masculinity depended on service to the nation via participation in the so-called public world of politics, higher education, economics, and the military. True Catholic womanhood, conversely, delineated women's place as the nation builders within the private realm of the family. By upholding the traditional Catholic values of virtue, modesty, and obedience to their husbands—enforced legally through pronatalist policies and women's exclusion from the workforce—women would provide succor to the men rebuilding the strong Spanish nation".[55] In direct contrast, by replacing the stereotype of *ma-*

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[52] Juan Carlos Ibáñez Carlos (2013), "Memory, Politics, and the Post-Transition in Almodóvar's Cinema", In *A Companion to Pedro Almodóvar*, Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 169.

[53] Pietsie Feenstra (2011), "From Prohibition to Clear Exhibition: How to Read into These Film-Images?", *New Mythological Figures in Spanish Cinema: Dissident Bodies under Franco*, Amsterdam: University Press, 46-47.

[54] Pietsie Feenstra (2011), *op. cit*., 40.

[55] Sandie Holguín(2001), "True Catholic Womanhood: Gender and Ideology in Franco's Spain. By Aurora G. Morcillo", *The Journal of Modern History 73*, Nº 3, 214.

cho ibérico and transforming the traditional representation of submissive woman of Francoist Spain with independent and strong female figures capable of destroying lame male characters, Almodóvar managed "to perform a radical sex change on Spain's national stereotype".[56] For that reason, Almodóvar is internationally known as "women's director" whose cinema is brimming with impulsiveness, strong females, emotionally intense situations and archetypal Spanish tradition represented within the comedienne, tragical and farced discourses.

In his first film *Pepi, Luci, Boom y otras chicas del montón* (1980) Almodóvar clearly reflected the transition "from social and sexual repression that constructed Franco's seamless iconography and monolithic values, to a postmodern deconstruction of those values".[57] Furthermore, Almodovar´s work introduces a new notion of gender equality as his cinema intrinsically deals representation and perceptions of gendered identities. Despite the Almodóvar's explicit lack of political engagement, his films articulate social commentaries that "seemed to offer the best path to the reinvention of the subject in a new democratic era".[58] In that sense, Almodóvar sees himself as a promoter of the new way of approaching at things experienced during the eighties: "I represent the most contemporaneous [of Spain]. My films reflect the changes produced in Spanish society, […] because they would not have been able to be made before".[59] For that reason, Almódovar's movies can be regarded as the "representatives of the Spanish Queer cinema and his characters as iconic portraits of contemporary Spanish femininity and masculinity". Almodóvar's movies like *Laberinto de pasiones* (1982), *Entre tinieblas* (1983), *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto!!* (1984), *Matador* (1986), *La ley del deseo* (1987), and *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* (1988) represent characters dominated by their obsessions through hyperbolic camp discourse, hence their emotions are frivolous, extravagant, theatrical and often cross-sexual.

By creating new identities around the theme of human bodies, "In Almodóvar's cinema, identity […] is still unstable and provisional…it is shot through pleasure as well as pain, liberation as well as constraint,

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[56] Marsha Kinder(1997), *Refiguring Spain: Cinema/Media/Representation*, London: Duke University Press. 3; and Mark Allison (2001), *op. cit.*, 5.

[57] Efrat Tseëlon (2000), "Woman and the gaze", in: Fleming, Dan (ed.) *Formations: 21st Century Media Studies*, New York: Manchester University Press, 263.

[58] Juan Carlos Ibáñez (2013), *op. cit.,* 172.

[59] Frédéric Strauss (2006), *Almodóvar on Almodóvar: Revised Edition*. Translated by Yves Baigneres, London: Faber & Faber, 18.

playfulness as well as trouble."[60] With this in mind, in comparison with Hollywood's filmmakers, Almodovarian discourse of sexuality is much deeper. Actually, more than half of Almódovar's movies comprehend the concept of crude sexuality in which passion is related to pain, and sketchy scenes of rape are pretty common. In his movies like *Átame* (1989) and *Kika* (1993) Almódovar deals with dark aspects of sexuality. Reacting to the taboos of Francoism, Almódovar produces new representations of the body, or better said, new identities invisible before.[61] In this regard, homosexual-themed discourse and genre hybridity appear more and more present in Spanish cinema in the late 1990s onwards. Bodies in Almodóvar's cinema are actually "silhouettes in continuous movement"[62], thus their performativity could be regarded as the prevailing discourse of Almodóvar's cinema. Within continuous transformations and the mutability of the body, characters of Almodóvar seek to remove the traditional notions of identity and identification.[63] Hence, challenging the conventional patriarchal and phallocentric discourse, Almodovarian world spins around gender fluidity, identity, homosexuality and the motherhood in order to reconstruct cultural and sexual values and change the social and moral logic of the past.[64] As a result, typical Almodovar's characters are an "ensemble of homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, doper, punk, terrorist characters who refuse to be ghettoized into divisive subcultures because they are figured as part of the 'new Spanish mentality' – a fast-paced revolt that relentlessly pursues pleasure rather than power, and a post-modern erasure of all repressive boundaries and taboos associated with Spain's medieval, fascist, and modernist heritage"[65] Moreover, within Almodóvar's films like *Carne trémula* (1997), *Hable con ella* (2002), *La mala educación* (2004), *Los abrazos rotos*, (2009) and *La piel que habito* (2011) which focus on redefinition of stereotypes and values inherent to traditional norms, both by the feminine and masculine dominated discourse, can be seen the multilayered film narratives rightfully considered as representative of a "New Almodovarian Cinema".

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[60] Isolina Ballesteros (2009), "Performing Identities in the Cinema of Pedro Almodóvar", *All About Almodóvar: A Passion for Cinema*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 97.

[61] Pietsie Feenstra (2011), *op. cit*., 17.

[62] Marsha Kinder (2013), "Re-envoicements and Reverberations in Almodóvarós Macro-Melodrama", in: D'Lugo, Marvin / Vernon, Kathleen M. (eds.) *A Companion to Pedro Almodóvar*, Wiley-Blackwell, 287.

[63] Isolina Ballesteros (2009), *op. cit*., 87.

[64] Efrat Tseëlon (2000), *op. cit*., 264.

[65] Marsha Kinder (1987), *op. cit.*, 34.

Over the course of Almodóvar's career, the autobiographical input into the discursive context of mothering exemplifies Almodóvar's appreciation for female figures. Accordingly, Almodóvar's female representation is crucial for understanding his work because "his motherly figures (male or female) could be seen as a representation of Spain itself or interpreted as the agents of both political and psychic repression".[66] Generally, Almodovarian early mother figures are presented as cruel, resentful and hostile authority figure often abandoned by their husbands and in the need to maintain control over their headstrong children. Bearing in mind that those movies were made within a decade after the death of Franco, the overall representation of authority figures as dysfunctional and pathological parental figures was understandable. Following on from this, "the mother represents the law, the police… When you kill the mother you kill the law, you kill precisely everything you hate, all of those burdens that hang over you".[67]

Contrary to the Francoist discourse on women's identities as pious housewife or mothers as examples of moderation and subjugation to their families, in his movie, *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* Almodóvar articulates the social remarks on working class housewife, struggling to feed herself and her children in an oppressive and unhealthy family environment. On the contrary, ih his later movies such as *La ley del deseo* (1986) and *Tacones lejanos* (1992) the mother figure is unaffected by gender, age and sexuality and families can be formed by casualty or necessity which brings alternative and unconventional portrayals of motherhood through the images of: single mothers, lesbian mothers that address the question of homosexual family, the change of roles between mothers and daughters, and so forth. Therefore, in Almodovarian discourse the concept of motherhood acquires new notions and maternal figures may appear in diverse forms or frequently as biologically unrelated outsider who is capable to substitute a child's absent or abusive mother. Consequently, "Mothering is constructed through men's and women's actions within specific historical circumstances. Thus, agency is central to an understanding of mothering as a social, rather than biological construct"[68]

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[66] Lesley Heins Walker (1998), "What Did I Do to Deserve This: 'The Mother' in the Films of Pedro Almodóvar", in: J.T.a.S. Zunzunegui (ed.) *Modes of Representation in Spanish Cinema*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 274.

[67] Marsha Kinder (2004), "Reinventing the Motherland – Almodóvar's Brain Dead Trilogy", *Film Quarterly 3*, N° 2, 9-25.

[68] Glenn Evelyn Nakano, Grace Chang and Linda Rennie Forcey (1994), *Mothering Ideology. Experience and Agency*, London & New York: Routledge, 3.

Unquestionably, in Almodovarian discourse mothers are reinvented women who want "to name the nameless so that it can be thought... as mothers who struggle towards responsible thinking, they will transform the thought they are beginning to articulate and the knowledge they are determined to share".[69] Hence, as in his movies mothers act as amalgamation of family and often have direct impact on children's behavior, Almodóvar emphasize the importance of mother's love and support. In his movies *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer eso? La ley del deseo, Tacones lejanos*, prevails the discourse of invincible mother or happiness related to encountering substitute family members and simply being mothered. In that sense, *La flor de mi secreto* is a movie that reflects Almodóvar's new sense of maturity towards motherhood. Colored by the influence of Almodóvar's childhood in rural area and his own mother, the film represents the auteur's wish to examine his mother's life while living far away from her children in a provincial setting.[70] The discourse of nurturing mother present in *La flor de mi secreto* is developed also in Almodóvar's movies like *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999) and *Volver* (2006). Regarding the motherhood exemplified in *Todo sobre mi madre*, it can surely be interpreted as a silent tribute to a mother's all-consuming and unconditional love as the most cherished, magical and sublime thing in world.[71]

Furthemore, the strength of this feeling is particularly presented in *Tacones lejanos*, where the separation of a mother and a daughter appears due to the distance, both physical and emotional. In this regard, the discourse of an absent mother reflects Almodóvar's incipient indifference towards old Spanish values, as well as the "the old tension of rural versus urban Spain, tradition versus modernity [which] again threatens the unity of the family".[72] In this respect, in Almodóvar's movies the burden and anxiety provoked by the harsh urban life often is presented a the cause for rupture of the family bonds which leads to the quest for an alternative mother substitute, while a return to the rural roots appears as the milieu for restoring a relationship between mother and child. In this respect, in *Tacones lejanos* "the placement of the character's childhood

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[69] Sara Ruddick (1994), "Thinking Mothers/Conceiving Birth", in: Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan (eds.), *Representations of Motherhood*. New York: Routledge, 40.
[70] Frédéric Strauss (2006), *Almodóvar on Almodóvar: Revised Edition*. Translated by Yves Baigneres, London: Faber & Faber, 18.
[71] Wilson, Emma (2020), "All About My Mother: Matriarchal Society", *The Criterion Selection*.
[72] Marvin D'Lugo (2006), *Pedro Almodóvar*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 90.

trauma in the transitional national phase, near the end of Franco's regime, gives the melodrama an allegorical angle".[73]

Certainly, for Almódovar the urban milieu has always been an indispensable setting that enables him to naturally develop the particular film narratives and the cinematic discourse he aspires. Hence, whereas his movie *Laberinto de pasiones* explicitly presents Madrid as the world's most important city where anything is possible, the movie like *Mujeres al borde de un ataque de nervios* uses Madrid primarily as background setting that enables the overlapping narratives.

In conclusion, within Almodorvar's work the Spanish identity is being internationally promoted, so his cinematic discourse has the function of national branding. By emancipating Spanish stereotypes, Almodóvar emphasize the role of family, but in a modem sense, and also identifies Madrid both as the iconic symbol of his artistic universe and the symbol of Spanish identity. Through his cinematic discourse Amodóvar manages to annihilate the repressive past of Franco's regime. By virtuously rehabilitating the Francoist discourse and thereby turning it paradoxically against itself via the concept of new Spanishness, the auteur uses epitomes of traditional patriarchal order like the Church, the family and law, and present them in his film discourse as "the agents of ushering in new cultural desires". In particular, by realigning the center with the marginal and by replacing the traditionally central figures with the marginalized ones, Almodóvar both deconstructs and reimagines the dominant ideology.[74] For that reason, despite the assertion of the auteur's lack of political compromise, "Almodóvar's films reappropriate and recycle the cultural markers of Spain perpetrated by Fascist iconography under Franco's rule".[75] By using the cinematic discourse "Almodóvar not only trains his caustic vision on the ill-effects of Francoist society but also, and above, on all deeper cultural processes never fully debated in the context of transition and post-transition culture, with the result that these new demons […] continue to act upon the contemporary Spanish psyche".[76]

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[73] Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz (2007), *op. cit*., 135.

[74] Efrat Tseëlon (2000), *op. cit*., 264-266.

[75] Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz (2007), *op. cit*., 2.

[76] Juan Carlos Ibáñez (2013), *op. cit.,* 157.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The evolution of Spanish cinematic discourse is deeply conditioned by the Civil War and Franco's fascist-catholic dictatorial regime that aspired to implement its totalitarian ideology on the cinematic medium. As ideology is by nature "opaque" and "naturalized" through language use, the Francoist film discourse is surely representative of "explicit political perspective".[77] Accordingly, films are by nature bearers of ideology[78] and Spanish cinematography, as historiography, is closely linked to Francoist narrative which has been the subject of reminiscence as well as of blundering. In that sense, the concept of historical memory is crucial for understanding the nature of cinematic discourse in Spain. In other words, Francoist national cinema sought to impose "homogenizing fictions of nationalism"[79] and a totalitarian aesthetic of "truly Spanish", framing the cinematic discourse of coherent traditional identity.

Nonetheless, assumptions of what "Spanishness" entails have always been closely tied to imaginations and ideologies of the society. Consequently, with the death of Franco and the Democratic Transition, the Spanish culture entered into a new, transformative period. Although censorship was abolished and cinematic discourse of the Post-Franco years brought visual liberty regarding sexuality, the woman's position, delinquency and consciousness of Spain's socio-historical traumatic past, the traces of Francoism were still present, holding back the country and its society to evolve. Hence, even in today's Spain, under a democratic and parliamentary system, ghosts of Francoist past are alive. This is clearly visible in the controversy related to the *Valle de los caídos* (Valley of the Fallen) or Civil War Memorial built under Franco's order by the prisoners. Despite the Historical Memory Law approved in 2007, by which all monuments and street names recalling Francoist past had to be removed, there are divided opinions regarding the mausoleum of Franco's remains. Actually "the funerary treatment of the Civil War dead is key to understanding the deep impact Francoism has had, and continues to have" on Spanish society.[80] Moreover, these events clearly reflect

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[77] Milena Pešić (2022), "Critical Discourse Analysis as a Critical Social Study: Norman Fairclough's Approach", *Politička revija 74*, Nº 4, 90–91.

[78] Sue Thornham (1999), "Taking Up the Struggle: Introduction", in: Sue Thornham (ed.) *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader*, Edinburgh: EUP, 12

[79] Stephen Crofts(1993), "Reconceptualizing national cinema/s", *Quarterly Review of Film & Video 14*, Nº 3, 57.

[80] Ferrándiz, Francisco (2022), *op. cit*., 2014.

that popular metaphor of the "two Spains" related to the winners and the defeated during the Civil War, prevails in the popular and collective memory of contemporary Spain where some people still consider that life under Franco's regime was better.[81]

Nonetheless, with Almodovar as its crucial figure, *la Movida Madrileña* as a rebelious and countercultural movement represented "an instantaneous break with repressive social norms and regulations".[82] This complete rupture with the Francoist past didn't refer to political opposition to the dictatorship regime, but rather to an explicit eradication of it. Therefore, this position has often been defined as "radical apoliticism or *pasotismo*".[83] Combining elements of European cinema, Spanish and Hollywood traditions of camp and melodrama, Almodóvar has made his marginalized characters into authentic and complex ordinary people. Reflecting cultural memory of Spanish tradition and reinterpreting the cultural symbols of Francoist discourse like flamenco dance, and bullfighting, Almodovarian discourse found the way to represent the most complex human emotions using contrast, religious iconography, theatricality, "kitsch", grotesque humour and blurred film's narrative structure. As one of the most famous internationally known filmmakers, through his movies Almodóvar has facilitated a greater understanding of Spanish culture, empowering its unique values and portraying the social evolution of his county from the 1980s to the present. Due to the Almodovarian discourse and his peculiar cinematic expression, Almódovar has actually internationalized Spanish cultural identity and by modernizing its national stereotypes, he has also managed to redefine the national identity of Spain.

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[81] Finally, after the 1953 agreement with the United States that ended Spain's diplomatic isolation, Franco came to be seen as the Father of the Nation; see: Paul Preston (2008), *Ibidem*, 20.

[82] Mark Allinson (2001), *op. cit.*, 13.

[83] Marvin D'Lugo (2006), *op. cit.*

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THUNDEROUS SILENCE – CHRISTIANITY AT THE TIME OF PERSECUTION IN JAPAN

Abstract

Although Japan has been primarily identified in Western cinema with the Hollywood hits of the last twenty years – The Last Samurai (2003), Memoirs of a Geisha (2005) and Clint Eastwood's films Flags of our Fathers and Letters with Ivo Jima (2006), this country, through the achievements of the Tenth Muses, has actually been present for almost hundred years. This image changed for obvious reasons – not only has knowledge about Japan evolved, due to the political conditions through which the West viewed this country, but also the approach of the observers themselves, who initially researched Orientalism, characteristic of the beginning of the 20th century, but over time they more or less took care to replace the works of their own imagination with the author's impressions and observations (in A. Vosinjska, Japan and the Japanese in Western Cinematography, in Views – Japan in the eyes of the West, the West in the eyes of Japan: 2015: 115).1 The creation of an image of Japan (sometimes fresh and sometimes stereotypical) certainly contributed to the screen adaptation of books by Japanese authors, although even then the directors could more or less stick to the book and insert their own view of the topic in their film or, on the other hand, they openly side with "one side" by looking at

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[1] A. Vosinjska (2015), *Japan and the Japanese in Western Cinematography, in Views – Japan in the eyes of the West, the West in the eyes of Japan*, 115.

an event from the point of view of Westerners, thereby losing objectivity.

Keywords: *Japan, Christianity, Silence.*

It is necessary for us to be spiritually awake while there is still time, so that we do not lack capability of finding what we are looking for.

St. Nectarios of Aegina

In 2016, the American director Martin Scorsese filmed the historical drama *Silence* based on the novel by the Japanese author Shusaku Endo.[2] The story follows two Portuguese Jesuit priests who struggle with various forms of persecution, including torture, as they travel through Japan to reunite with their teacher, who they hear has renounced the faith. According to the director himself, he prepared for the filming of this film for 30 years; the film was shot in Chinese Taipei, and deals with the issue of Christians in Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries. After first reading Shyusaku's novel in the late 80s, the director read that novel countless times. Scorsese's Silence is the second adaptation of this novel, as a Japanese version directed by Masahiro Shinoda was previously filmed in 1971. In an interview on the occasion of the premiere of Scorsese's Silence, he said: "I knew right away that I wanted to turn the book into a film. I think it was instinctive, because when I was doing research for The Last Temptation, Streets of Evil, Raging Bull and all the other films, I was going towards crystallizing and sensitizing into this story."

On the other hand, Shusaku Endo was a Christian and was the first Japanese writer who tried to write objectively about the Christian faith. "I was baptized as a child and Catholicism for me is like a ready-made suit that I had to wear and didn't even have the chance to try on. When I grew up I had to decide whether to keep the suit on or take it off and find something more suitable. There were really times when I just wanted to throw my faith away. But after much hesitation, I was unable to do so. She penetrated so deeply into me that she became a part of me. Today, however, precisely because of that, I think that in fact my true self does not exist, because a large part of my personality is entangled in my Catholicism."[3]

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[2] Šjusaku Endo (1988), *Ćutanje*, Sloboda, Beograd.

[3] *Ibid*, 215.

Silence is a novel that at the time of its publication in 1966 caused a storm and excitement among Japanese readers because in those years Japan was still recovering from the Second World War and the newly healed complex of a defeated country rushing to meet the West with great strides. The first successes of Japanese agriculture restored confidence to the Japanese, and they felt the same in Endo's novel, where the "Japanese swamp" defeats the seemingly strong missionary faith. A million members of the Christian community in Japan protested, but many more thanked Endo for his "objective writing" precisely because they remembered that he was also a Christian.

The theme of the novel, and therefore of the film, is certainly deep, it raises centuries-old questions – tricky, but also susceptible to politicization and manipulation. *Since* it is a historical drama, the film/book is an excellent depiction of life and the socio-political situation in the Japanese state of the 17th century. On the other hand, the emphasis is on the internal struggle and development of the main character – priest Sebastian Rodriguez. Also, the story and message of the film can be understood in many ways precisely because it shows a difficult period in Japanese history, but without showing what preceded it and what led to it. In this sense, the goal of this paper is to describe the socio-political circumstances of the period before the persecution of Christians and what, according to the available data, led to it, through a brief presentation of the book and the film (which, surprisingly, until the very end, faithfully follows the book).

THE BEGINNINGS OF CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

Christianity was brought to Japan by Francisco Xavier (1505-1552), a Jesuit who later became known as St. Francis. In the Middle Ages, the Jesuits had penetrated deeply into Asia and had a strong foothold in Goa. Xavier landed in Kagoshima in 1549 and was quickly captivated by the Japanese. He called them "the joy of his heart".[4] He singled out the Japanese from all the Asian peoples, claiming that with their gentleness and intelligence, they were the closest to God of all the non-Christians he had met until then, despite the language barrier – in a short time he had baptized several hundred Japanese. Thus, the seeds sown quickly bore fruit. Thirty years later, the Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano found 150,000 Christians in Japan.

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[4] Šjusaku Endo (1988), *Ćutanje*, Sloboda, Beograd, 217.

In Japan, the 16th century was an age of civil wars in which the incessant clashes between nobles, without a strong central government to restrain them, literally destroyed the country. The age of insecurity contributed to the fact that faith in a god who promises a better life after death made Christianity attractive not only to the peasants and citizens who suffered the most because of the wars, but also to the nobility itself. Christian missionaries brought with them goods from Europe that attracted feudal lords, especially firearms whose possession could decide the outcome of a battle. The first Japanese magnate who managed to 'pacify' the missionaries and achieve some sort of central government was Oda Nobunaga. Missionaries gained a decisive influence on the military government in Edo (today's Tokyo) so that Catholic priests argued equally with the shoguns and their officials. That is why the letters and notes of missionaries from that era are the most important sources for historians studying events in Japan at the end of the 16th century. The military strongman, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, was the first to sense the danger posed by the influence of foreign clergy and ordered the expulsion of Christians from Japan. The central government was not strong enough to fully implement his order, so many missionaries managed to stay in the country. In 1597, Hideyoshi suddenly ordered 26 Christians, Japanese and European, to be publicly crucified on crosses in Nagasaki. Strong persecution of adherents of a foreign faith began. After Hideyoshi, shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu continued the persecution of missionaries and the 'hunt' for Christians, and his 'mission' was continued with even greater ferocity by his son Hidetada and grandson Iemitsu, who forbade the entry of foreigners into Japan and the departure of Japanese from the island. In forty years, out of 300,000 Christians in Japan, no more than 5-6,000 hidden believers remained.

Christianity freely returned to Japan only in the 19th century when the young samurai movement managed to transfer power from the shogun to the emperor and open Japan to the world. Then, under Emperor Meiji, the so-called Restoration took place. After almost three centuries, Japan was back on the world map.

THE POLITICAL SCENE IN JAPAN AT THE END OF THE 15TH AND THE BEGINNING OF THE 16TH CENTURY

The period from the end of the 15th to the end of the 16th century in Japanese history is known as the ***Sengoku jidai*** – the Warring

States Period. It begins with the Onin War (1467), when in a few years there was almost no province in Japan that was exempt from the armed conflict of feudal lords or church leaders, until 1568, when Oda Nobunaga marched victoriously into Kyoto. Until the end of the 15th century, Japan exhibited a kind of truncated feudalism. The regional hierarchy was complete, but the national hierarchy was topless, since neither the emperor nor the shogun could impose their will on regional lords who, although they might profess allegiance to the throne or shogunate, were in fact autonomous princes, holding their own land, governing their vassals, maintaining their armies and enforcing their laws.

In the first half of the 16th century, a process of destruction took place in Japan. The previous groups were broken up, their units rearranged, if not destroyed. As the weaker elements were removed from the struggle, some reunification took place (before 1560), the conflict broke down into rivalries of some six groups, and ended (by 1600), with the supremacy of one (the Tokugawa clan). The restoration of a stable central government was carried out by great men who were gifted with the talents needed at the time: Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616).

In order to establish a centralized government, Oda Nobunaga began to deal with rivals, but also to subjugate and appease some warlike Buddhist sects. Although there is very little record of persecution in Japan based on the doctrine itself, the entire medieval history of the country shows that its feudal statesmen would never allow religious institutions to interfere in major political matters.[5] Having stopped, if not completely crushed, the resistance of the (Buddhist) clerics, Nobunaga and his lieutenants were left to subdue the great chieftans in central and western Japan. One of the reasons why Nobunaga was favorable towards the Jesuit missionaries is certainly that they shared intolerance towards the Buddhist monks.[6] The missionaries were useful to him and indulged him, he was more interested in their lay teaching than dogma, he talked with them about the opportunities in the West and liked to receive gifts from them (of course, products from the West).

After Nobunaga's sudden death, the task of unifying Japan and bringing it under central government was continued by Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He did not change in his treatment of the Jesuits, but in 1587 he suddenly issued a decree expelling them all from Japan (although he

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[5] Džordž Sansom (2023), *Kratka istorija Japana*, Kokoro, Beograd, 341.

[6] *Ibid*, 351.

carefully emphasized that Portuguese merchants could continue their work), and in 1588 he passed the famous Law on Confiscation of Arms (the so-called "Hunting for Swords") thereby disarming peasants throughout the country. His sudden attitude about changing sides must have been political – the missionaries were rapidly winning over feudal lords, and some of the strongest and most capable military leaders. This "caused Hideyoshi to fear that Christianity would unite his vassals against him".[7]

After Hideyoshi's death, his system of government fell apart due to the conflict of ambitious vassals. The most powerful among them was Tokugawa Ieyasu. At first, he showed the same tolerance towards the Jesuits, and for the same economic reasons. Nevertheless, over time, as the ruler of Japan, he had the opportunity to witness the intrigues by which the Jesuits excluded the Spaniards, and the pressure exerted by the Spanish to exclude the Dutch. He learned of bitter quarrels between the Franciscans and the Dominicans. He discovered that one of his officials was conspiring against him with some converted feudal lords and foreigners; he heard of a fleet of Spanish warships anchored in Manila; learned about the spies who were sent to Europe and about the ambitions of the Christian monarchs and the pride of the Roman Church. Then he decided to act decisively.

The Tokugawa **Shogun**, as the most powerful figure in the military regime, supervised local lords and religious temples, established military and financial policies, and thus kept the entire territory of the country under his rule. The shogun himself was responsible for implementing foreign policy measures such as negotiations with other countries, banning Christianity, controlling foreign trade and limiting the departure of Japanese people abroad. His most important right was that he was the supreme owner of the entire territory. The shogun rarely interfered in the internal affairs of the area, but he strictly demanded that all lords adhere to several basic political principles and regulations, which was clearly stated in the Warrior Code, which states: "All problems in the country must be solved in accordance with the laws of Edo." Ieyasu increasingly suspected that Christianity might pose a political threat to the Tokugawa regime, an attitude held by Japanese rulers for centuries (and confirmed by Nobunaga's crackdown on warlike Buddhist sects). Japanese rulers did not interfere with religion as long as religion did not interfere with government. However, the persecution of Christians intensified over time, and although foreign missionaries were tortured and

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[7] *Ibid*, 352.

killed only years after the edict (the first priest was executed in 1617), Japanese converts had a much harder time. Thus, this persecution began mildly and cautiously, and in the end, unfortunately, "in its ferocity it rivaled, if not surpassed, any such horror that took place in the West".[8]

POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL IN THE 15TH AND 16TH CENTURIES

The Venetian traveler Marco Polo was the first to arouse the attention and curiosity of Europeans for the Land of the Rising Sun. His mention of Japan (or Cipangu, as he called it) is the first mention of this country in European languages, and his Oriental Travels were translated into Latin in 1298. Being a prisoner of Kublai Khan (1275–1292) for 17 years, he had the opportunity to witness the failed Mongol invasion of Japan when their fleet was swept to the bottom of the Genkai Sea. Because of the exaggerated descriptions of the treasures in Japan (luxurious palaces encrusted with gold, lots of pearls with which to bury their dead, etc.) greedy European kings placed Japan on their map of countries to be conquered and exploited. Some believe that even Columbus was inspired to undertake his epoch-making journey by studying the work of Marco Polo in his desire to reach China and Tsipanga (i. e. China and Japan).

One of the Western peoples to whom Marco Polo gave an additional, if not the main, incentive for his political and commercial activities in the East, were certainly the Portuguese. After that, the connection between Portugal and Japan became fruitful, to their mutual benefit. Although Portugal was reluctant to help Columbus, who then found his benefactor in the Spanish court, this tiny kingdom was at the forefront of European progress and trade with its maritime discoveries for the next two centuries.

At the time when the subjects of Portugal in the East came into contact with Japan for the first time (through two Japanese who accompanied Mendez Pinto to Malaga) Portugal was ruled by one of the least tolerant kings who ascended his throne. It was João III (1521–1557) who introduced the Inquisition into his kingdom in 1536, and the same 'religious' fervor prompted him to impose the Christianization of his subjects in the East. In order to carry this out, a strong, fearless and effective missionary organization was necessary.

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[8] *Ibid*, 356.

It was at this point that Ignatius Loyola presented to the Pope his draft of regulations for his proposed Society of Jesus. When he was refused, the Portuguese king asked Loyola through his ambassador in the Vatican that he and some priests from his Order work for Portugal and its possessions in India. In March 1540, the Portuguese Rodríguez and the Spaniard who was later canonized as Saint Francisco Xavier were sent to the Portuguese king who put the latter in charge of the Indian Mission. While in 1542 Mendez Pinto was on his way from Tanegashima to the court of Bungo to impress the feudal lord and his subjects with the potential of the matchmaker, the famous Jesuit was on his journey to Goa (an Indian city on the Malabar coast where, at his persuasion, the king would introduce the Inquisition in 1560). He stayed there until 1545, when he came to Malaga. He met a converted Japanese, and with several Japanese converts and his assistants, he landed in Kagoshima in 1549, which was the first arrival of missionaries in Japan. Thus, in the so-called 'Age of Discovery' Portugal was a great economic, political and cultural power, creating the Portuguese Empire that stretched from Brazil, through Africa, India and China to East Timor in Indonesia.

From the very beginning, the desire for Western novelties was the main reason why the Japanese welcomed Christian missionaries. Over time, the not-so-good intentions of some missionaries were revealed – a strong rivalry developed between the Jesuits and the Franciscans and Dominicans who plotted against each other; then a Spanish admiral, desiring to intimidate the Japanese interlocutors, showed on a map a vast area in the dominions of Philip II, saying that their king in the foreign countries he wished to conquer first sent missionaries to induce the people to embrace their religion, and then sent military troops who easily perform further work; then a Spaniard recklessly discovered the existence of a large number of ships that had then sailed to Manila from New Spain (that the entire fleet contained only weapons and soldiers for the conquest of the Moluccas), as well as the fact that a defeated Dutch ship on which the chief helmsman was docked in Japan Will Adams, an Englishman from Kent who further conveys news of the battles between the Spanish and the Portuguese to the Shogun. Thus, during the time of the second Tokugawa Shogun Hidetada, there was a real danger in the empire that he perceived, if not in the presence of Christians, then in the presence of Europeans.

By then the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, and English were all competing for trading privileges, each group all too ready to slander

the other's countrymen and point it out to the Shogun's officials. "It was true that the English nation harbored aggressive intentions towards the Eastern countries. The Spanish had the Philippines, the Portuguese – Macau, the Dutch – Formosa, the English had a stronghold in Malaysia. The English merchant Cox describes in one of his letters how in 1616 he obtained a "confirmation from the Spaniards" in Edo, which indicated that they were counting on the rebellion of some Christian daimyos whose views would be supported by all the "papist" Japanese and thus gain some foothold and which they could defend until reinforcements arrived from the sea. He pointed out that the Spaniards had ships suitable for this, loaded with soldiers and treasures, so that they did not lack money or men to implement such a strategy".[9]

Thus, when Japan in the 16th century came into contact with a new form of civilization – when they were visited by the so-called 'Southern Barbarians' as they called the Spanish and Portuguese, with their attractive novelties in the arts of war and peacetime, their attention was directed in addition to the use firearms, to the art of building castles, the production of gunpowder, cotton, tobacco, etc., to the significant art of healing, and the early Christian fathers opened a new world of medicine to them (an area that was unknown to Chinese medicine). Missionaries and converts, with the support of feudal lords, founded hospitals, built Christian churches, and established a pro-Gallic medical school.

Nevertheless, according to George Sansom, "on the whole it cannot be said that the intellectual influence of Europe on Japan in the 16th and early 17th centuries was neither deep nor lasting. If we judge from further [Japanese] history, the most lasting impression was left by the natural sciences – astronomy, cartography, shipbuilding, mining and metallurgy; and it seems as if until recently the East always welcomed our mechanical devices and was cold towards our philosophy".[10]

"JESUIT PERIL"

The second half of the 16th century is, according to Lafcadio Hearn, the most interesting period of Japanese history for three reasons. First, three powerful captains appear: Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu. Secondly, this period is significant because in it the old social system was fully integrated – the definitive unification of the clan lords under the

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[9] *Ibid*, 376.
[10] *Ibid*, 364.

central military government was carried out. And finally, the period is particularly interesting because of the attempt to baptize Japan for the first time – it is the story of the rise and fall of Jesuit power.[11]

According to many, the introduction of Christianity by the Portuguese Jesuits was the greatest danger ever to threaten Japan's national integrity, except perhaps the division of the imperial house within itself in the 14th century. Xavier comes during a period of great unrest that preceded Nobunaga's attempt to centralize power. He landed in Kagoshima in 1549 and by 1581 the Jesuits had built 200 churches throughout the country. This speaks volumes about the speed with which the new faith spread. The Japanese religious government was received in Rome in 1585 and since then no less than 11 daimyos ('kings' as the Jesuits rightly called them) were baptized. The new faith became popular.

When Oda Nobunaga came to power he was sympathetic to the Jesuits for several reasons, not so much out of sympathy for the religion (he himself never converted to Christianity) but because he thought their influence would help him in the fight against Buddhism. But, "the aid and protection which, for purely political reasons, he afforded to the foreign priests allowed them to develop their power to a degree which Nobunaga soon gave reason to regret".[12]

The period of tolerance towards Christians was probably prolonged by Nobunaga's assassination in 1586. He was succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi who was then busy with the big problem of centralizing military power to bring peace to the country even though he judged the influence of foreign priests as dangerous. However, the Jesuit order is one of the most aggressive, and this is evidenced by their support and praise of baptized daimyos, one of whom burned a thousand Buddhist temples, destroyed numerous works of art and slaughtered Buddhist priests, and Jesuit writers praised this as a crusade and evidence of holy zeal. As some missionaries became coercive over time, a violent backlash against the Christian faith followed a year after Nobunaga's death. Namely, in 1587, Hideyoshi destroyed the missionary churches in Kyoto, Osaka and Sakai, called the Jesuits from the capital, and the following year ordered them to gather in the port of Hirado and leave the country. They disobeyed him and scattered across the country, placing themselves under the protection of various baptized daimyos. Since the priests were quiet

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[11] Lafkadio Hern (2013), *Japan – pokušaj tumačenja I i II*, Kokoro, Beograd, 75.
[12] *Ibid*, 76.

then and did not teach publicly, Hideyoshi left them alone. However, that 'peace' was disturbed by the arrival of the Spanish Franciscans.

These Franciscans arrived with an embassy from the Philippines and received permission to remain in the country on condition that they did not preach Christianity. Having broken the vow, they incurred the wrath of Hideyoshi, who ordered that in 1597 six Franciscans, three Jesuits and several Japanese Christians be taken to Nagasaki and crucified. However, Hideyoshi's sudden death in 1598 allowed the Jesuits to hope for better days. His successor Tokugawa Ieyasu was busy preparing for the Battle of Sekigahara where the ruler and future fate of Japan were to be decided. He allowed them to resettle in Kyoto, Osaka and other cities. However, when he consolidated his power in 1606, he issued an edict forbidding further missionary work and ordering the baptized Japanese to renounce their foreign faith. Despite everything, the preaching continued. Although some believe that there were "almost two million Christians" in Japan at that time,[13] Ieyasu did not take harsh and repressive measures until 1614, when it can be said that the great persecution of Christians began. "From the year 1614, when in only eight (out of 64) provinces in Japan, Christianity was not introduced, the ban on foreign religion became official, and the persecution of Christians was carried out systematically and continuously until every external trace of their faith disappeared".[14]

REASONS FOR IEYASU'S DECISION

Tokugawa Ieyasu was one of the shrewdest, most promoted, and considered by some to be the most humane Japanese statesmen up to that time, so it is necessary to consider from the Japanese point of view the nature of the evidence on the basis of which he was driven to act. He was certainly well informed about the Jesuit intrigues in Japan, and several of them were directed against him.[15] Religious intrigues were common among Buddhists and did not attract the attention of the military government unless they interfered with state politics or public order. However, the religious intrigues of the Jesuits aimed at overthrowing the government. Ieyasu judged that they had a political goal of the most ambitious kind, but he was more patient than Nobunaga. By 1603,

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[13] *Ibid*, 78.

[14] *Ibid*.

[15] *Ibid*, 80.

he had put all areas of Japan under his yoke, but he did not publish his final decree on the expulsion of Christians for another 11 years. In that decree, the Christian fathers were blamed for two things: for a political conspiracy to overthrow the government, under the guise of religion; and for intolerance of Shinto and Buddhist forms of native religion. Until then, Ieyasu must have heard a lot of bad things about Roman Catholicism: about the Spanish conquest of America and the extermination of the Indian people; about the persecution in the Netherlands and the work of the Inquisition in other countries; about Philip II's attempt to conquer England and the loss of two large armadas. Ieyasu had another important source of information. It was the already mentioned English sailor Will Adams who arrived in Japan on a Dutch ship. As the ship was immediately captured upon entering the island of Kyushu, Adams and his companions were taken into custody by the feudal lord of Bungo Province, who informed Ieyasu. The Portuguese Jesuits were afraid of these Protestant sailors and were afraid of their conversation with the Shogun. They persistently tried to have the sailors executed. But the more they insisted on it, the more Ieyasu favored Adams, saying that these new prisoners had done nothing to him so far and that it would be unwise to execute them. Ieyasu asked Adams about his travels and the state of his country. He was satisfied with the answers; Adams received property and numerous servants, but was never allowed to return to his native England.

As for what was going on in Japan, Ieyasu had the most perfect espionage system and knew everything that was going on in the country. When he first took harsh measures against the Christians, they were not directed against the Jesuits, but against 'a more unreasonable order'. Thus, in 1612, the Franciscan sects were disbanded, and the Jesuits were privileged and remained in Nagasaki, where they were the only ones allowed to have their own school. Roman Catholicism was in good graces for another two years after the episode with the Franciscans.

According to Lafcadio Hearn, Christianity was fundamentally opposed to all the beliefs and traditions on which Japanese society was based. "The Japanese state was an alliance of religious communities, with a god-king at its head – the customs of all these communities were supposed to reinforce the religious laws, and ethics were identified with observance of customs; Ancestral piety was the basis of social order, and loyalty itself came from ancestral piety. But this Western religion which taught that a husband should leave his parents and be faithful to

his wife, made the loyalty of offspring a lower virtue. It proclaimed that duty to one's parents, master and ruler remain duties only when that obedience does not contradict Roman teaching and that the highest duty is not obedience to the heavenly ruler in Kyoto, but to the Pope in Rome. Didn't these missionaries from Portugal and Spain call gods and Buddhas devils? Surely such a doctrine was subversive, no matter how cunningly its defenders could interpret it. In addition, the value of faith as a social force can be judged by its fruits. In Europe, this faith was a constant source of unrest, wars, persecutions, and ferocious cruelties. This faith started great unrest in Japan, fueled political intrigues, and forged many evils. In the course of future political troubles, it would justify the disobedience of children to their parents, wives to their husbands, subjects to their masters, masters to the Shogun. Now the most important duty of the government was to impose social order, and to maintain the conditions of peace and stability without which the people could never recover from the exhaustion after the thousand-year war".[16]

This must have been the thinking of the ruler of Japan at the time, who in 1611 received information that Christians were plotting on the island of Sado, whose governor Okubo was baptized and was supposed to become the ruler of the country if the conspiracy succeeded. Still, Ieyasu waited. By 1614, there were no more baptized daimyo who could carry out the plans of the Jesuits because most of them were either dead, or their possessions were confiscated, or they were exiled. Foreign priests and catechists were not immediately treated harshly. Approximately 300 of them were put on ships and sent out of the country along with the Japanese who were suspected of religious-political intrigues. However, there are stricter measures undertaken after the event that took place in 1615. That year, Tokugawa Ieyasu officially took the place of Hideyoshi's son - Hideyori, whom he took care of, but whom he did not want to trust to rule the country since he was only 23 years old at the time. In addition to a significant income, Ieyasu also left him one of the strongest fortresses in Japan – the mighty Osaka Castle. Hideyori loved the Jesuits and Osaka Castle became their refuge. Ieyasu decides to attack that, until then, almost impregnable fortress after he heard that a conspiracy was being hatched there. The castle was conquered and burned. 100,000 lives were lost in the siege and fire. Ieyasu died the following year (1616), and was succeeded by his son Hidetada, who fought even more valiantly than his father against the Jesuits – he banned all their

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[16] *Ibid*, 85.

Orders, under the threat of death, none of the subjects were allowed to be Christians, and in order to prevent the spread of the faith, he banned foreign merchants to reside in any large city. Since many expelled priests preached the faith in secret, Hidetada issued a decree in 1617 condemning to death any Roman Catholic priest found in Japan.

The persecution was, of course, terrible. It eventually led to, or helped to bring about, a Christian rebellion on the feudal estate of Arima – known in history as the Shimabara Rebellion[17]. In 1636, a multitude of peasants, driven to despair by the tyranny of their masters (areas of converts – Arima and Karatsu), took up arms, burned all the Japanese temples in the area and declared a religious war. Their banner had a cross, and they were led by baptized samurai. They were soon joined by Christian refugees from all over the country, and their number grew to almost 40,000. They established themselves in a castle on the coast of the Shimabara peninsula, in the town of Hara. The local authorities were helpless, and the rebels were defeated only after the government sent 160,000 troops. After a brave defense that lasted 102 days, the castle was captured in 1638 and its defenders were all killed. Japanese historians claim that the rebellion was designed and started by Christians who wanted to conquer Nagasaki, subjugate Kyushu, call for foreign aid and force a change of government, and if foreign aid could indeed have been sent, the result could have been a prolonged civil war. According to Lafcadio Hearn, "the massacre represented the application of Japanese law: the penalty for peasants rebelling against their master, under any circumstances, is death. As for the politics of such slaughter, it should be remembered that Nobunaga, because of a lesser provocation, destroyed the Tendai Buddhists on Mount Hiei. We have every reason to pity the brave men who lost their lives at Shimabara, and to sympathize with their revolt against the horrible cruelties of their masters. But it is necessary, in the light of justice, to look at the whole event from the point of view of Japanese politicians".[18]

With the massacre at Shimabara, the history of the Portuguese and Spanish missions ends. After that event, Christianity was slowly, firmly and inexorably suppressed from visible existence. It was tolerated, or

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[17] It is sometimes difficult to separate the spiritual from the economic factor in certain religious movements in Japan. It is therefore difficult to say to what extent the fanatical (Ikko) rebellions of the 15th century can be classed as a peasant revolt, and this is also true of the so-called Christian rebellion of Shimabara, which broke out in 1637 and was among the immediate causes of Japan breaking off relations with the outside world.

[18] Lafkadio Hern (2013), *op. cit.*, 89.

partially tolerated, for only 65 years, and the entire history of its propagation and destruction occupies a period of barely 90 years. Seen from a political rather than a religious angle, and judging by the outcomes, many are of the opinion that the Jesuit effort to baptize Japan is "a crime against humanity, a devastation, a calamity comparable to an earthquake, tsunami or volcanic eruption".[19] The rebellion was followed by the policy of isolation – closing Japan to the world, adopted by Hidetada, and maintained by his successors. Not only were all foreigners, except Dutch merchants, expelled from the country, but all foreigners from the West were openly distrusted. The Dutch traders had their factory on the small island of Deshima where they were strictly supervised. The question remains for another paper: how could a foreign religion penetrate so quickly into a society based on ancestor worship and which apparently has a tremendous ability to resist external influences? Certainly, the missions could have been more successful if there had not been unnecessary attacks on the ancestor cult (which was alive in Japan in the 16th and 17th centuries), which are actually attacks on social order, and Japanese society instinctively opposed such attacks on its ethical basis. Unlike the finer and incomparably more humane faith of India, which had learned the secret of successful missionary work a thousand years before Loyola, the religion of the Jesuits could never adapt to the social conditions of Japan, a fact which predetermined the fate of the missions in Japan. Because all the repressive and cruel measures that the Japanese ruler took against the foreign religion was because he believed that the victory of the foreign religion would bring about the complete disintegration of society and the submission of the empire to foreign domination. Isolation for more than 250 years brought to Japan the long-desired peace, but also from the point of view of culture, an incredible development, especially plebeian art, which preserved its authenticity.

And Yoshisaburo Okakura believes that the early Westerners who visited Japan in the 16th century were a little wiser and less intolerant in their behavior towards the Japanese, they would have done their work better and spared the Japanese people the terrible disadvantage of being closed to the world. "The fact remains that, owing largely to their fatal lack of compassion and their inability to make use of traditional beliefs, they have failed to do much good, despite their efforts to do so, for, as is the case with the furthest idleness in one's home, so with the *sanctum sanctorum* of the nation's heart – cannot be reached unless

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[19] *Ibid*, 90.

one passes through the passage leading to it. Any attempt to break into it will surely bring down the house itself".[20]

SILENCE

Our place in eternity depends on how much we loved,
on the quality and strength of our goodness.

St. Nectarius of Aegina

Martin Scorsese's film Silence shows the journey and search of two Jesuit priests for their teacher Ferreira, who, according to rumors, renounced his faith and remained living in Japan. Not believing the rumours, the two young men decide on a difficult and dangerous journey to Japan, being aware that the persecution of Christians had already been carried out in Japan for a long time and that all foreigners, especially missionaries, were strictly prohibited from entering the country. However, the film (like the book) shows a much more important and perhaps more difficult journey –the inner, personal journey of priest Rodriguez (and perhaps every believer) who finds his faith shaken after many trials, doubts and suffering (especially seeing the suffering of others – those of Japanese converts who were tortured and killed even though they had previously renounced the faith, but were not pardoned because Rodríguez himself refused to formally renounce the faith by trampling the fumie / crucifixion).

The main character, besides the priest Rodriguez, is certainly the anti-hero Kichijiro – a coward, a weakling, someone who publicly renounced Christ several times, and in whose hands they were supposed to place their fate at the beginning of their journey – he was supposed to be their guide. Already at the beginning of the journey, Father Rodríguez shows a kind of disgust towards Kichijiro, marveling at his cowardice and fear of death, in contrast to the then image of the Japanese as brave and courageous heroes, who fearlessly face death.

From the very beginning, Father Rodríguez feels first contempt for this poor fellow, and then fear – fear that he will betray them when they come to Japan. His apprehension comes true – indeed Kichijiro betrays him – he sells him out for 300 gold coins, but tormented by a guilty conscience, he constantly follows him and begs for forgiveness. In the film, Japan is shown as an extremely inhospitable place, a country

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[20] Okakura, Jošisaburo (2014), *Život i misao Japana*, Kokoro, Beograd, 117.

where the peasants live terribly under the yoke, burdened by excessive taxes. Also, government officials are cruel and ferocious. Seeing the suffering of those people, Father Rodríguez asks several times during the film why God remains silent – both to the suffering and the martyrdom of the converts. He feels an obligation to stay alive to keep the flame of Christianity burning in the "Japanese swamp" where nothing succeeds. In fact, an internal, personal drama unfolds – many questions arise, he even questions his own courage. The responsibility for all Japanese Christians is transferred to him. He meets with a samurai who explains to him the reasons why Christians were expelled and their religion banned and he was given an ultimatum – to renounce his religion and the peasants will be spared. Rodríguez is still followed by Kichijiro who admits his weakness – he is actually the embodiment of guilty conscience. He asks the priest for confession. Father Rodríguez cannot reject him, but now he already feels repulsion and disgust towards the ugly and smelly Kichijiro.

He meets again with the lord of the province, Inoue – he compares that meeting to that of Pilatus and Christ. He listens to the story of a man who had four concubines who quarreled because of jealousy, so he threw them all out of the house. The man is Japan, and the concubines are Spain, Portugal, Holland and England. He has openly said that the authorities consider missionary work to be an imposition of love. By then, Father Rodríguez has lost his courage (he thinks this is because of the comfort he was in before that conversation) and he realizes that it is the temptation and suffering that harden us, that give us the opportunity to be better and persist in defending our beliefs and ideals. He was then taken to meet his former teacher, Ferreira, who had renounced Christianity twenty years earlier and had since translated books on astronomy and medicine – becoming a useful member of the Japanese society. He convinces him to renounce his faith as he realized that the Japanese actually believed in their own version of the Christian God; he reproaches him for doing nothing for the suffering Christians. Father Rodríguez breaks down and steps on fumie (icons of Christ and the Virgin Mary).

Since then, he lived in a house in Nagasaki, was given a Japanese name, and assigned the wife and children of a deceased person. He lost all the rights of a priest; had a job in the magistrate's office – he evaluated things that arrived from abroad. Kichijiro comes to him again and asks for forgiveness and confession. At that moment, Rodríguez hears a voice saying that God was not silent but suffered with him. He then

for the first time understands and accepts the man in front of him, and confesses him sincerely. Everything that happened to him up to that moment was necessary in order to reach that love. In the end, he realizes that the Lord was not silent, and even if he had been, his life would have spoken about Him until that day.

Therefore, the film can be understood in two ways – on the one hand, as a political propaganda of the Roman Catholic faith and a condemnation of a country that did not listen to their view of the truth. Certainly, the moment in which the plot is set is isolated from the wider political and social context, and the film is somewhat inclined to emphasize the crazy fanaticism of the natives (although it is not that such fanaticism was not previously present in some members of the missionary order). Choosing a side in that story is a lost battle in advance because we need to be affected by everyone's suffering.

However, that personal level, finding your own faith, is much more important, the free choice of which path we will take in time and circumstances that we may not be able to influence ourselves and avoid or change. In the film, it was shown how the priest Rodriguez was buried in Japan according to Buddhist custom – he was cremated, but his wife secretly put a cross in his hand (which deviates from the book), alluding to the fact that he remained a Christian at heart until his death. And it is the heart that leads the conversation with God, even if it seems that He is silent on the outside.

CONCLUSION

We cannot even imagine the way in which the history of Japan would have developed if the Christian missions in that country had continued to be successful as at the beginning. Their complete success would probably wipe out the wonderful world of Japanese traditions, beliefs and customs, because everywhere the development of art is to some extent connected with religion, and as much as art reflects the beliefs of the people, so much is it hateful to the enemies of those beliefs. In particular, Japanese art of Buddhist origin is an art of religious suggestion – not only in terms of painting and sculpture, but also in decoration.

Driven above all by the fear of losing power and sovereignty, by closing Japan to the rest of the world, the Japanese rulers certainly decided to deny their country all the gifts that the West could offer them. However, Japan managed surprisingly well in this new situation – it

turned to itself and devoted itself to perfecting and improving its own culture. And that culture is certainly exceptional and unique and enabled it to enter the period of industrialization on an equal footing with European countries and be the 'economic miracle' of the East more than 2.5 centuries later, when it reopened to the world. Although the charming art world of ancient Japan was inevitably destroyed by Western industrialism, this industrial influence was not so fanatical, and the destruction was not carried out at such a galloping speed, "so that the fading beauty was allowed to be written down for the future benefit of human civilization".[21]

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BETWEEN HISTORY AND DREAM: DECODING FELLINI'S "AND THE SHIP SAILS ON"

Abstract

In this paper, we aim to explore the cultural and historical dimensions of the film "And the Ship Sails On", with a particular emphasis on the collective role assigned to the Serbian people. While the importance of the film may initially appear to lie solely in its artistic expression and surreal metaphor, we argue that Fellini's version of historical events deserves special attention. Therefore, in addition to presenting the most important symbolic messages, we undertake a comparative analysis between the historical narrative and the representation crafted by the Italian director. We conclude that Fellini's vision perfectly correlates with contemporary geopolitical trends, and we emphasize the need to initiate a historical revision for a better understanding of the role and place of the Serbian people in European culture.

Keywords: *Federico Fellini, "And The Ship Sails On", Belle Epoque, Great War, Young Bosnia.*

Premiered in 1983 at the Venice Film Festival, the film received standing ovations and represented Italy in the Oscar competition. Despite grand announcements, a successful premiere, and the high expectations of the director himself, "And the Ship Sails On" will never achieve the

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fame of previous classics such as La Strada, 8½, Amarcord... There will be no specific debate or controversy about the film. The relative lack of success will testify to the sad reality of Fellini's final stage of work – the audience no longer cares about the art of the Italian master; they are solely interested in his personality. For Fellini's biographer, this is a clear proof that "Italians talk much more about culture than they think about following its product".[1]

Classified as a drama-comedy, "And the Ship Sails On" is primarily a historical documentary about the European establishment and the social atmosphere just before the Great War started, with an epic allegory of the Sarajevo assassination. The event, closely related to Italian historiography, especially due to the presence of numerous political assassins among its own ranks. As in the case of Serbia, Italy's struggle for national unification was directed toward Vienna, the imperial family, and everything it represented. In this context, it is entirely understandable why Italy perceives the national aspirations of the southern Slavs as its own. After Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Italy, despite its neutral stance, dispatched volunteers to Serbia, who would become the first Italian casualties of the Great War.[2] Italian solidarity with Serbia was mutual. One of the most popular public journal in prewar Belgrade was named "Piemonte", after the region that played a decisive role in Italian unification. Also, the revolutionary Garibaldi was an idol among the Serbian youth. However, despite the historical affinity between the two nations, Belgrade in the early 20th century was no more than a provincial center, particularly when compared to Rome – the primary hub of European bourgeoisie and the epicenter of Renaissance art since the 15th century. Due to its geographical position, Italy had a unique historical background, equally influenced by European enlightenment and Balkan rebellious spirit. Consequently, there was a profound understanding of the root causes of the Great War, an intuitive perception that "the Serbian terrorist targeted not only Franz Ferdinand's chest but the very heart of Europe".[3]

In his own distinctive manner, Fellini presents to us the Italian 'cultural memory' regarding the causes of the Great War, what the 'heart of Europe' truly symbolizes, and against whom the 'Serbian terrorist'

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[1] Tulio Kecig (2013), *Federiko Felini zivot I film*, Novi sad: Kiša, 481.

[2] Antonio D'Alessandri (2018), "Italian Volunteers in Serbia in 1914", *Balcanica*, Institut for Balkan Studies 17-27.

[3] Luigi Albertini (1980), *The Origins Of The War Of 1914*, Wesport Connecticut: Greenwood press.

is actually fighting. The use of the journey metaphor enables him to portray the entire historical era in its most dynamic and intense manifestation. Consequently, we can grasp the spirit of the times with all its contradictions. The audience rapidly discerns the prevailing value system, interpersonal dynamics, and the class-based social hierarchy embodied by the ship's captain, crew, regular workers, and rich passengers.

FELLINI'S TITANIC

Fellini's aim to provide us with essentially a documentary becomes apparent in the opening scenes, devoid of sound and color, purportedly captured using a first-generation film camera. The black and white images depict the boarding of passengers on the cruiser Gloria N individuals who "represent the highest values in the fascinating world of show business and art". This initial impression of social inequality and discord between the bourgeoisie and the ordinary people will persist until the very end of the film. Meanwhile, through the journey itself, we will be guided by a charming journalist assigned to "report the news, tell what happens". Only as the ship leaves the port, does the film gradually gain color and sound. However, the colors in the film will never reflect the contrasts of pure reality; instead, they chromatically present a blurred reality that primarily resembles a pale memory, akin to a dream. "A voyage through life is not told, it is made", notes the journalist. It is essential to have in mind that Fellini has long abandoned neorealism, and he is interested in psychoanalysis, Carl Jung, and the unexplored depths of the collective unconscious. Only in this context, we can understand the extravagant role of Pina Bausch, the renowned German neo-expressionist ballerina. In the role of the blind countess, she reveals to us that every note, every voice has its color. While listening to music, she actually sees a rainbow.

The action of the film takes place on the open sea, which, according to the director himself, is meant to symbolize a cosmos through which Gloria N cruises, resembling a cosmic ship. Indeed, Gloria N, with its impressive appearance and size, gives the impression of unstoppable technological progress. The interior of the ship, dining rooms, evening salons – everything is at the highest level, elegant and luxurious. The crew of the ship is accustomed to tirelessly working and fulfilling every request with swift movements. The highest achievements of human civilization in the realm of transportation and service are fully at the

disposal of first-class passengers. With graceful and aristocratic bearing, they appear as modern deities. At first glance, Fellini's ship gives the impression of perfect organization, an ideal blend of tradition and modernity, a socio-technological harmony in pursuit of utopia – a remote paradise island, where the recently departed singer with a 'divine voice' finds eternal repose.

However, when we scratch the surface and get to know the passengers better, we realize that the grandiose external appearance is just a mask hiding various forms of frustration and repressed traumas. We quickly discover that the "people from the fascinating world of show business" are actually mentally disturbed individuals. "Foolishness, arrogance, and conceit reek from them. Their physical and spiritual deformities evoke a sense of disgust. They keep an eye on each other, gossip, slander, and hate one another".[4] It's evident that social and cultural development hasn't kept pace with technological progress, that financial prosperity doesn't have a positive impact on personality, and that European society is in a profound crisis.

Fellini's ship is, in fact, an allusion to the famous Renaissance painting "Ship of Fools" by Sebastian Brant. The difference is that "Ship of Fools" symbolizes the end of the Middle Ages with its clergy and ecclesiastical establishment, while "The Ship Sails On" symbolizes the end of the modern era and its bourgeoisie. Comparable to the shift from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, we observe the decline of the modern times. Of all passengers, only the Austro-Hungarian grand duke feels that the world is heading towards an abyss and that "we are sitting on the mouth of a volcano". The other passengers, completely oblivious to the historical moment the world is in, are solely focused on their performance, which they enthusiastically demonstrate to the ship's staff. Captivated by the extraordinary musical talents of the guests, the workers don't contemplate rebellion or a strike, even though they work in exceptionally inhumane conditions.

The monotonous routine of the Gloria N is disrupted when, one day, Serb refugees appear on the ship's deck, fleeing the Austro-Hungarian pogrom due to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. The new passengers, dressed in their traditional attire, hungry and thirsty, are desperate and disoriented, unsure of their whereabouts. Their presence on the ship symbolizes "close encounters of the second kind", a dialogue

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[4] I. S. Makarova (2008), "Ritualy dal'nego plavaniya Goldinga v fil'me Fellini I korabl' plyvet", *Izvestiya Rossijskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta im.* A. I. Gercena, 235-238

between two different worlds, the Western and the Oriental. The encounter with the unknown frightens the European bourgeoisie, leading them to believe it's necessary to hide valuables under the beds and draw curtains during meals to shield themselves from curious glances. When asked what the Serbs will eat, some respond that it's "God's will", not theirs. There's even expressed concern for their safety, suspecting that among the Serbs are "anarchists and professional killers". They demand the captain to expel the refugees and return them to the open sea. In response to this absurd request, the ship's crew states, "The captain must rescue shipwrecks following the basic principle in the Naval Code". As a compromise, they decide it's best to restrict the movement of the Serbs to a small part of the deck. The taut rope, which separated the Serbs from the other passengers, symbolized racial segregation and apartheid, something that was entirely normal at the beginning of the 20th century.

The ship's atmosphere remains tense until one evening when the Serbs, accompanied by the sounds of traditional instruments, start a dance and celebration. It's not a traditional circle dance but rather a mystical dance resembling a dervish's whirl. Regardless, passengers feel the rhythm and gradually join the dance. Initial reservations and distrust transform into a completely different extreme. Individuals from the entertainment industry become relaxed and jubilant, displaying a natural behavior for the first time instead of an artificial one. A passenger, visibly thrilled, suffers a heart attack. Experiencing no immediate danger to his life, he reveals that the Serbs are presently participating in a "spiritual dance of friendship". The magical night under the clear sky and the sounds of ancient musical instruments have erased the divisions between the rich and the poor, the civilized and the barbarians, attesting to the shared nature of all people.

Unfortunately, the newfound friendship didn't last long. The next morning, an Austro-Hungarian cruiser appears on the horizon, demanding the surrender of the Serbs under the threat of force. Unable to resist, the captain of the Gloria N is compelled to hand over the Serbs, and the European bourgeoisie begins the performance of Traviata, an opera symbolizing the lost and discarded individual. On the other side, the Serbs have no plans for a peaceful surrender. As the hostile cruiser approaches, one of the bravest Serbs pulls a bomb from his sleeve and, with a precise shot inspired by Gavrilo Princip, hits it right in the center. The cruiser begins to sink, unleashing firepower from all available weapons. With a musical crescendo, fireworks, cannons, and the evacuation of

the passengers of the Gloria N, this epic epilogue foreshadows not only the Great War but an inevitable apocalypse and the end of civilization.

IN THE END, ALL PASSENGERS WERE SAVED

"And the Ship Sails On", similarly to "Titanic", can be viewed as a disaster that could have been avoided if more attention had been paid to Serbs – the terrorists. Additionally, it can be seen as a promotion of colonial orientalism employed by the West to justify dominance over allegedly threatening and uncivilized peoples. In this context, Fellini's film would serve as an introduction to anti-Serbian propaganda and NATO intervention during the 1990s. However, the Italian director is actually trying to convey something entirely different, and one Serbian cultural historian is on the right track: "The Serbs on the deck are Serbs in Austria-Hungary, the only people capable of spiritually transforming Austria-Hungary at that time."[5] Undoubtedly, in the Serbian vitality and sense of the natural rhythm, Fellini perceives the sole escape from a mechanized and dehumanized civilization.

As we mentioned, in the final stages of his work, Fellini abandons realism and turns to avant-garde. In the cultural landscape of the 19th century, this meant abandoning faith in the enlightening mission of reason and seeking solutions within oneself. Intensifying this subjective sense of reality, avant-garde artists attempt to awaken the audience and encourage a reexamination of the human nature. In the struggle against European rationalism and positivism, they find allies in the peoples of the Orient, those who have preserved their 'elan vital'. That's why renowned artists like Paul Gauguin and Pablo Picasso venture to Polynesia and Africa, while Louis-Ferdinand Celine believed that the "only salvation for the white man is a return to the state of the caveman".[6] In the case of Fellini, examining the Sarajevo Assassination, he indicates that the creative energy is located in close proximity, right on the borders of the European continent.

Fellini does not attribute responsibility for the Great War to the imperialism of any particular nation but rather to the parasitic and consumerist bourgeois culture that fosters chauvinism and pettiness. Like other representatives of the avant-garde, Fellini sharply criticizes the so-called Belle Époque – the historical period between 1880 and 1914,

[5] Žarko Vidović (1999), *Romani Djordja Ocića: poetofilozofija I komentari*, Beograd: Znamen.
[6] Selin Luj-Ferninad (2016), *Bagatele za jedan pokolj*, Beograd: Ukronija, 169.

often described as a time of flourishing culture and science, and a period in which "European civilisation achieved its greatest power in global politics, and also exerted its maximum influence upon peoples outside Europe."[7] By demystifying the Belle Époque, Fellini actually reveals that the true cause of the Great War lies in modern culture and that the "gentlemen from European palaces", collectively deserved the fate of Franz Ferdinand.

After watching "And the Ship Sails On," an Italian critic concludes: "Thanks to Fellini, I start thinking again about the origins of that war which did not end in 1914 and which will not end even in 1984. It is our hundred years war."[8] Certainly, the title suggests that even though the ship, along with the jewels of the European Belle Epoque, sinks by the end of the film, in truth, the Ship perseveres on its journey. By chance, the passengers we got to know are rescued by another ship named the "North Star" (a symbol of constancy and unchangeability). Fellini is trying to say that the socio-cultural causes of the Great War have not been eliminated and that the final epilogue is yet to come. Criticizing the past, Fellini is, in fact, criticizing the present, especially considering that the film was made during the "Years of Lead" – a social crisis that shook Western Europe, characterized by a low-intensity civil war primarily centered in Italy. Drawing historical parallels with the pre-war and contemporary crises, we come to the conclusion that challenges of modern society are deeply rooted in the fundamental understanding of civilization and what it represents.

THE SERBIAN ROLE

Capturing the essence of Europe in the early 20th century, Fellini conveys, much like Svetozar Marković, that "Serbia is in the East", among the unawakened nations of the Orient who should not follow the 'evolutionary path' of Europe but forge their own way. In this context, the Serbs from the deck who symbolize Young Bosnia have a world-historical mission – to create a new world on the ruins of the old. They are neither liberal republicans nor conservative monarchists; the Young Bosnians are barbaric heroes of untamed masculinity who refuse to integrate into the decaying bourgeois civilization. Fellini's film shows us

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[7] L. Kramer et al. (2013), *A History of Europe in the Modern World*, McGraw-Hill Education.
[8] Cantisani Ludivico (2022), "Fellini alla fine del mondo – E la nave va secondo Italo Calvino", *Birdmen*.

that the assassins of Franz Ferdinand should not be identified with other movements of Young Europe active during the 1830s. Their counterpart in Serbia are pro-western politician Ilija Garasanin, United Serb Youth in the 1860s, while Young Bosnia is a unique movement, part of an avant-garde culture ideologically rooted in Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and other left-wing radical thinkers. It's not without reason that the Bosnian youth named their movement after geographic rather than ethnic origins. For them, Bosnia is a mystical territory that brings together people of three different religions, thus resisting colonialism and bourgeois culture. For Austria-Hungary, Bosnia is "the key to the Orient", the first obstacle in its further "Drive to the East." Fellini's orientalist portrayal of Serbs is further supported by a 1912 Young Bosnia manifesto: "While other parts of our nation entered culture, we were being whipped (...) in our depths, we are primitive, harsh, and barbaric. We bear the marks of the young and unawakened".[9]

Contrary to Fellini and the Bosnian youth, contemporary Serbian historiography, inspired by the Western model, constructs a myth about the Serbian Belle Époque – an elite high culture lasting from 1903 to 1914. The main reason of the Serbian revival is seen in the Serbs' openness to French and English influences. "Democratic and republican models of these countries were adopted by the Serbs to counter German and Hungarian political conservatism".[10] Fellini's film illustrates the absurdity of such conclusions and prompts us to think that the true strength of the Serbian people lies in its spiritual foundations. If we can talk about a Serbian cultural revival,[11] it certainly does not stem from the French-English liberal political model but rather in spite of them and against them. The May Coup and the Sarajevo Assassination symbolized resistance against bourgeois-colonial culture. For some, they were expressions of savagery and a lack of culture, while for others, they were a source of inspiration and evidence of Balkan 'elan vital'. The dilemma is resolved by the innocent and beautiful Dorothea (gift from God), who, in the end, falls in love with the brave 'Serbian terrorist' and, along with other Serbs, leaves the Gloria N.

After nearly half a century since setting sail from the film studio, Fellini's Ship still sails. "Years of Lead" and the seventies seem naive and

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[9] Vladimir Gaćinović (1956), *Ogledi i pisma*, Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 70.

[10] Miloš Ković (2015), Srbi 1903-1914: *Istorija ideja*, Beograd: Clio, 15.

[11] A highly controversial thesis with which cultural figures of that time, such as Radoje Domanović, Branislav Nušić, and Vladislav Petković Dis, would strongly disagree.

democratic when compared to what we have today. Culture and art are reduced to social margins, while vulgarity and primitivism take center stage. The demand for what is human, essential, and natural has never been greater. In these cultural and historical upheavals, when "the old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born", the role of the Serbian people remains ambiguous and controversial. It is certain only that Fellini wants to awaken humanity, find the 'lost paradise' within it, and point out that modern society is moving in the wrong direction. The rhinoceros milk mentioned by the charming journalist at the very end of the film symbolizes the fluid of eternal life and fertility. It brings to the forefront some primordial aspects of human existence and creative energy that have the potential to resist a sterile and robotic society.

Now that we've decoded the ideological background of the film, it is clear why "And the Ship Sails On" is one of the most underrated films ever made by Fellini. The corpus of progressive ideas within this artistic work goes beyond the limits of European political correctness and earns the epithet of anti-civilizational. Fellini's satire, surrealism, and strategic culture pose a dangerous threat to contemporary society and represent the most effective model for resisting Western cultural hegemony.

Unfortunately, Federico Fellini's masterpiece remains unknown to the broader Serbian public. While everyone is familiar with "La Dolce Vita", very few have heard of Fellini's Ship. Quite often, during Fellini retrospectives in Belgrade, "And the Ship Sails On" is not even included in the program. It is evident that our cultural and academic elite is not comfortable with the image of 'barbaric and wild' Serbs intentionally starting a war against 'civilized' Europe, and they strive to justify Gavrilo Princip and highlight the alliance with the hypocritical Entente. One way to achieve this is by expanding the European myth of the Belle Époque onto Serbian cultural history, aiming to demonstrate that Serbia was already a full-fledged member of the European cultural community at the beginning of the 20th century. This wouldn't be a problem if those same historians weren't against Euro-Atlantic integrations and the collective West today. They lack the understanding that the cultural memory they reproduce does not align with current geopolitical shifts, such as Serbia's pivot to the East and the rise of economic giants in other parts of the world. Luckily, we have Fellini's masterpiece in front of us, which guide us toward a revision of traditional historiography and a search for the deeper causes of the Great War, a war that has yet to receive its epilogue.

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SCIENCE AND JOURNALISM COMBINED IN EXPOSING THE HIDDEN MESSAGES OF FILM

With a selected bibliography of scientific works

A large number of scientific papers have been written in Serbia on the topic of creating and analyzing film art. Nevertheless, by reviewing the professional literature, we came to the conclusion that there are numerous topics that researchers have not covered to date, above all when it comes to politics on film. Film is a very powerful (if not the most powerful) means of implementing soft power. That means there is a real need in modern Serbian science to pay more attention to exactly that topic.

Hollywood films are the ones most often analyzed. It is completely justified considering they are the most translated and watched in the Serbian-speaking world. However, when it comes to film criticism and public alarm regarding the same, the journalistic profession leads the way. Journalists are usually the ones who warn about mutual positive or negative influences in cinematography[1]; the influence of films on the life of modern man[2]; film as an integral part of popular culture[3]; the influence of films on the mental and physical health of a person[4]; but also

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on the entire society[5]. Let's not forget that journalism was one of the pioneers in exposing the harmful influence of cartoons for children, especially Disney films[6]. They are full of hidden messages[7] and inside jokes of their creators[8] and certainly not suitable for children.

Hollywood films are a mirror of American politics[9]. It best shows the hypocrisy of their foreign policy towards other nations and countries, among which are the Serbs (in Serbia or Yugoslavia)[10]. Although the American government officially insists on democratic values, freedoms and 'truth'[11], the fact is that they market films that contradict the principles they promote at the state level. Beginning in the 1930s, these were films that: justified British colonial policies[12]; films that portrayed the Indian (Native American) population as aggressive savages[13],[14]; films that justified the aggression against Vietnam and presented it in such an unrealistic and unnatural way that war veterans themselves objected[15]; justifying the aggression against Iraq and Vietnam by presenting American

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[10] Kako su Srbi postali negativci u američkim filmovima // Како су Срби постали негативци у америчким филмовима? – Available at: https://www.intermagazin.rs/kako-su-srbi-postali-negativci-u-americkim-filmovima/?lang=cir Accessed on 11/4/2023

[11] Human Rights and Democracy // The United States Government. – Available at: https://www.state.gov/policy-issues/human-rights-and-democracy/#:~:text=Supporting%20democracy%20not%20only%20promotes,can%20advance%20its%20national%20interests. Accessed on 11/4/2023

[12] 1930s imperial propaganda: How star-studded western films justified British colonialism // Indian Express. – Available at: https://indianexpress.com/article/research/1930s-imperial-propaganda-how-star-studded-western-films-justified-british-colonialism-4783908/ Accessed on 11/4/2023

[13] The Real History Behind Hostiles: Discovering deeper insights into the American-Indian Wars and U.S. policies on Native American assimilation // ProQuest. – Available at: https://about.proquest.com/en/blog/2018/The-Real-History-Behind-Hostiles/ Accessed on 11/4/2023

[14] The White Man's Indian: Stereotypes in Film and Beyond / Charalambos Vrasidas. – Available at: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED408950.pdf Accessed on 11/4/2023

[15] A Guide to The Study Of Vietnam War Films // Mark Freeman Films. – Available at: https://markfreemanfilms.sdsu.edu/film_resources/guide-to-the-study-of-vietnam-war-films/ Accessed on 11/4/2023

soldiers as heroes and liberators[16]; as well as films that deliberately portray Muslims as the enemies, terrorists, abusers and murderers[17], etc.

At the same time, the Slavic peoples (especially the Orthodox, Russians[18] and Serbs[19]) are presented in a negative light. Hollywood is assigning to them the characteristics that the American people possess and the crimes that the Americans committed against other peoples in their numerous wars. Typical male negative characters are criminals and murderers, abusers of women and children, war criminals, spies and psychopaths[20]. Typical female negative characters (this is very characteristic in the representation of women of East Slavic origin!) are fraudsters, spies, strippers, prostitutes, etc.[21]

Because of the entirely unfair political propaganda that we mentioned in the film industry, the international conference "Film and Politics" is extremely important. Especially one of this content and size, organized by the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade. Distinguishing truth from propaganda is crucial in today's time of dizzyingly fast news, spinning of information and sanctions on one's own opinions and attitudes. Also, sanctions on one's patriotism and awareness of national, religious and historical affiliation. Not to mention the 'breaking' of language awareness, which under the influence of the American pseudo-culture happens mainly among children and young people. Therefore, the native language is damaged[22], as well as the overall sense of morality.

We will also mention the issue that Asian film is insufficiently researched in the Serbian scientific space. The proceedings of this

[16] Hollywood War Films Propaganda: Framing Iraq and Afghanistan Wars / Raghed Majed // SSRN. – Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3781041 Accessed on 11/4/2023

[17] Hollywood's anti-Arab and anti-Muslim propaganda // Middle East Monitor. – Available at: https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20150129-hollywoods-anti-arab-and-anti-muslim-propaganda/ Accessed on 11/4/2023

[18] Russians are Hollywood's go-to film villains — that's unlikely to change / Shelly Tan // The Washington Post. – Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2022/04/22/russians-are-hollywoods-go-to-film-villains-thats-unlikely-change/ Accessed on 11/4/2023

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[22] Видици једног Белоруса – Белосрбина / Иван А. Чарота. – Београд : Институт за политичке студије, 2023. – стр. 92.

conference represent the beginning of that research. Conference participants from Asia Minor, Asian Russia, China and Japan make their great contribution in this regard. We hope that cooperation in the field of Asian film research will continue even after the mentioned conference. All the more, the Institute for Political Studies also has a Center for Asian Studies[23], which is recognized as necessary and relevant in today's time.

The following pages will be devoted to a selective bibliography of scientific works. They concern political messages in films and were published on the territory of Serbia or in the Serbian language. Their number is not final, but it will certainly give the readers an insight into the previous research on the given topic.

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