Horror Genre and Balkan Cinema:

The Fluidity of Croatian and Serbian Cinema

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ABSTRACT

Even though Hollywood is often recognised as a genre cinema, and despite "the signs of a significant revival of interest in the topic"[1], that does further suggest that this is not the case with other cinemas around the world. For example, European cinema has often been associated with the art house, usually depreciating its genres rather than the opposite, which became noticeable when the auteur theory, with its development in France, and expanding later to the West, "gave those wanting to take film seriously a seemingly legitimate way to do so."[2] On the other hand, the Eastern European Cinema is commonly recognised as a cinema of artistic expressions and challenges that serve to deliver political propaganda above all else.[3] Because of this, most academic work on genre in the Eastern European cinema is scarce, especially in the Balkans, where it is, virtually, non-existent. Any scholarship on horror to date in the Eastern part of Europe, was virtually neglected by the rest of the world. That was also the case with the Balkan cinema. There was not any kind of historical mention of horror as a genre in the Balkans, although examples of it existed, even since the 1930s. Accordingly, no one saw these films as horror when they were made, due to the problematic point of displacing a genre, depending on the period. Those were films of amateur nature, films that explored everyday life and human nature, influenced by popular literature, film directors, and culture. Genre was the term reserved for Hollywood rather than for small national cinemas across Europe. Horror has nonetheless found a way to leave a mark on Balkan cinema. Tracing the horror genre since the beginnings of film art in Croatia and Serbia (Yugoslavia respectively) in this research project will show that horror was always present in the Balkan context in one way or another. Whether in news and articles in film journals and magazines from the 1920-30s, or later seen in the works of some of the most prominent directors in Yugoslavia, and later Croatia and Serbia, the mentioning of horror and usage of its elements, mixing other genres (science fiction, fantasy) with these elements, as well as the fascination with horror genre aspects has positioned the genre within the complicated national context in Balkan cinema, outlining a potentially bright future of the genre in contemporary Balkan film.

[1] Neale, Stephen. Genre and Hollywood, Psychology Press, 2000, Intr, p.1.

[2] Lazario-Reboll, Antonio. Willis Andrew. Willis, Andy. Spanish Cinema, Manchester University Press, 2004, p.4.

[3] One of the themes covered in Jakiša, Gilić. Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture, Transcript Verlag, 2015.

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INTRODUCTION

Since its emergence, film history has mainly been focusing on Hollywood film industry, not giving much attention to the development of the same in the rest of the world. Even though Hollywood industry has been the focus of most of academic literature on film, like in Thompson and Bordwell's books on the subject, still there was a rising interest in Europe about the way film developed there over the years. Most countries covered in this kind of literature were the ones with an already established and influential film industry, like France, Germany, Italy. Nonetheless, smaller national cinemas were discussed as well, although only scratching the surface, without going into any depth of research on them. That was the case with Balkan cinema, a cinema of Otherness that has been neglected in academic world, rarely getting any traction on the Western film scene. Mostly mentioned through the significant film movements that made an impact outside of the territory or were modelled on so called "new waves" that formed in other countries, film movements that occurred in the Balkans, the Yugoslavian Black Wave (more on this in Part One, Ch3) being the most intriguing and most talked about, made a huge impact on a new generation of filmmakers who were searching for a way to express themselves freely through their work. Despite that, there was no mention of horror as a genre in any academic literature, deeming it almost non-existent in Balkan countries. That did change in contemporary times, when Balkan filmmakers, Croatian and Serbian respectively, turned to a more genre oriented expression in their films, horror still being one of the obscure ones without much value, and therefore it represented a huge risk for contemporary filmmakers to use in their work, as it was considered as not a financially viable genre. Thinking about the beginnings of film in the Balkans, specifically in Croatia and Serbia, as these two countries share the same mentality that was shaped by the political and cultural history and formed a distinct relationship of love and hate between them in the process, horror genre has been present since the beginning

of film art (1920s-30s) in both regions. Archival materials that were analysed and used in this project came from a research trip to the Croatian Film Archive in Zagreb. The vast amount of archival film magazines and documents were of great help to outline and pinpoint the presence of horror genre from 1930s onwards, a gap that needs to be filled in Balkan and Yugoslavian cinema in order to make more sense of the cinema works that were quite creatively created later on, in the 80s, 90s and 2000s. These archival materials which will be presented in Part One, Chapter 1 alongside appropriate context, explanations and possible new conclusions show the emerging popularity of the genre in the Balkans presented through notable film journals and magazines that often covered the life and work of big names in horror at the time, names like Fritz Lang, Boris Karloff, Lon Chaney, Konrad Veidt, F.W. Murnau etc. There was a collective awareness and fascination with the genre early on, mostly coming through the filter of Hollywood studio system and stardom, which was celebrated and highly respected as a trend at the time, not neglecting the highly respected works from Germany and France. These influences, that brought horror genre to Balkan borders and to the art of film, inspired the filmmakers to start exploring horror using the elements of the genre, usually in short film form. Amateur filmmakers like Oktavijan Miletić often dived into the depths of horror genre to get inspired, making a few short films that depicted stories from everyday life with a dark, but comical twist. This use of horror and comedy/parody in film unintentionally laid the foundations for a specific Balkan style of filmmaking, which will get fully developed later, after the 1950s, through the process of so-called self-balkanization, rising from the phenomenon of balkanization. The story around the terms started forming itself more clearly in academic terms in Maria Todorova's work, quoted quite often by others:

"In 1997 a Bulgarian historian and philosopher, Maria Todorova, published Imagining the Balkans, which launched many debates among academic, political, journalist, and other circles. Her study deals with the region's inconsistent (but usually negative) image in Western culture as well as with the paradoxes of cultural reference and its assumptions. In it, she develops a theory of Balkanism or Nesting Balkanisms, similar to Edward Said's Orientalism and Milica Bakić Hayden's Nesting Orientalism."[4] Upon further reading of Todorova's approach to this topic in

[4] Zemon, R.: Us, Them and the Problem with Balkanization, accessed 5 June 2023, https://globalejournal.org/global-e/march-2018/us-them-and-problem-balkanization

her book Imagining the Balkans, the central idea of these terms has become more evident, as Todorova has said of the book herself (also qtd. by Zemon in his work):

"The central idea of Imagining the Balkans is that there is a discourse, which I term Balkanism, that creates a stereotype of the Balkans, and politics is significantly and organically intertwined with this discourse. When confronted with this idea, people may feel somewhat uneasy, especially on the political scene... One of the prejudices and stereotypes related with Balkans and Balkanisms is the presumed relative innocence of Western Europe, placing responsibility for all accidents and mistakes that happened in the Balkans in the 20th century on the Ottoman heritage and Turkey."[5]

It is a highly self- conscious process of dealing with stereotyping that came from within the Balkan territory and nested inside the minds of Western cultures.

According to Bakić-Hayden, the term Nesting Orientalism or the "gradation of Orients" she refers to in her article is: "…a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised. In this pattern, Asia is more "East" or "other" than eastern Europe; within eastern Europe itself this gradation is reproduced with the Balkans perceived as most "eastern"; within the Balkans there are similarly constructed hierarchies. I [Bakić Hayden] argue that the terms of definition of such a dichotomous model eventually establish conditions for its own contradiction."[6]

That established self-made contradiction in itself was a solid foundation for stereotypes about the Balkans to develop and become common, stereotypes such as the territory and the people being too violent, barbaric, non-civilised - at least less civilised than western countries, which created a certain outlook about these countries being perceived as the "Other" of the world. Bakić-Hayden and Todorova noticed a lingering issue with the perception of the Balkans to be mainly because of the lack of knowledge about these countries, about their history, culture, mentality and social and political issues, which in turn gave the rest of the world the portrayal of a backward, non-civilised identity based on recurring nationalism which was, and still is, a very strong trait of the

[5] 4 Zemon, R.: Us, Them and the Problem with Balkanization, accessed 5 June 2023, https://globalejournal.org/global-e/march-2018/us-them-and-problem-balkanization

[6] Bakić-Hayden, M. Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia, Slavic Review, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Winter, 1995), pp. 917-931, Cambridge University Press, p. 918.

Balkan nations. Nesting Orientalisms (Bakić-Hayden) and Nesting Balkanisms (Todorova) both explore the negative stereotyping of the Balkans, usually coming from 'inside' the Balkan countries first, however, they both do it from a slightly different angle, which in turn paints a more coherent picture of the Balkan mentality:

"Bakić-Hayden argues that Balkanism is a concept of Orientalism, where the Balkans, because of their militant and bloody past, but especially because this part of the world was four/five centuries under the domination of the oriental Ottoman yoke, they differ from the Europe proper. Todorova's explanation about the negative stereotyping about the Balkans is not specifically a result of the past Ottoman domination, but instead she stresses that the pejorative stereotyping about the Balkans is a result of aggressive and passionate nationalism, not religion, referring to the fact that Balkanism emerged independently from Orientalism. Not only that; in their works, Todorova and Bakić-Hayden provide explanation and justification for the Balkans' civilizational and cultural "backwardness," a paradigm existing in the Western European perceptions, in addition to the fact of internal stereotyping of the Balkans among each other dominantly emphasizing its superiority over other less civilized people in the neighbourhood."[7]
Understanding these terms and the way the Balkans see themselves, as well as how western countries see them, is crucial in understanding the films that will be analysed later in this project. Understanding and knowing the mentality and the identity, and how and with which events they were shaped during certain periods of time in Balkan history will offer a clearer picture when trying to make sense of the films such as *Strangler Vs. Strangler* (Šijan, 1984), *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010), *T.T. Syndrome* (Zečević, 2002), and an overall relationship between the countries in question here (Croatia and Serbia), as all Balkan horror films usually base their themes and storytelling on current events, social and political issues, and points of view and concerns about the problems that have been so embedded into the culture, that they inadvertently started to influence and change the positive aspects of it and started turning them into negative ones, which in turn reflected gravely on people's lives and how they perceive themselves, their countries, and the Balkan territory. These, alongside the term self-balkanization which refers to

[7] Vishinova, M. Contemporary Nesting Orientalism in the Western Balkans on their path toward EU integration, accessed June 10, 2023, https://www.fomoso.org/en/mosopedia/research/contemporary-nesting-orientalism-in-the-western-balkans-on-their-path-toward-eu-integration/

the fact that all the negative stereotyping mentioned earlier is, in fact, internal, are the results of western perception of Others, which is usually a negative one with the purpose of having the equal opposite, the West, which is everything that the Balkans i.e., the Other, are not. Having said that, it would be wise to clarify that no blame has been passed on either of the sides in question, as there are so many outside influences that shape our perception on the world around us, or as Todorova says herself:

"By reacting against a stereotype produced in the West, I do not wish to create a counterstereotype of the West, to commit the fallacy of "Occidentalism." First, I do not believe in a homogeneous West, and there are substantial differences within and between the different "western" discussions of the Balkans. Second, I am convinced that a major part of Western scholarship has made significant, even crucial contributions to Balkan studies. Biases and preconceived ideas, even among those who attempt to shed them, are almost unavoidable, and this applies to outsiders as well as to insiders. Indeed, the outsider's view is not necessarily inferior to the insider's view, and the insider is not anointed with truth because of existential intimacy with the object of study. What counts in the last resort is the very process of the conscious effort to shed biases and look for ways to express the reality of otherness, even in the face of a paralyzing epistemological scepticism."[8]

Self-balkanization, as the acceptance of the western perception of the Other, in which the Balkans are seen as violent and barbaric, has been consistently present in this shape and form in many Western films and TV shows to date, and has also been exploited in creative spheres of life in the Balkans, especially visible in film and TV. It is the concept that many prominent Balkan filmmakers used in their work as a form of parodying their mentality to the point that it becomes the Other that the rest of the world perceives it to be. This concept has become so embedded in film art in the Balkans, that it became a crucial part of the filmmaking process in most genres, not just horror, and has been used consistently, and continues to be used today, although in contemporary times, filmmakers are slowly trying to distance themselves from this concept. This specificity of Balkan filmmaking is often utilized to critique the political, social, and cultural issues, as well as the mentality and the identity of Balkan nations, especially in Croatia and Serbia, two countries which are the focus of this research project. Traces of horror genre in the

[8] Todorova, Maria. Imagining The Balkans, Oxford University Press, 2009, pref, p.ix.

Balkans faded in the 1940s and 1950s, which was a period reserved fully for propaganda films and partisan epics, glorifying Marshall Tito, and his leadership of Yugoslavia. However, the play with the genre started again around 1970s-80s, leading to the fall of Yugoslavia (1991 – 1992) and civil wars and violent conflicts in countries of Yugoslavian union, called Yugoslav wars (1991- 2001). Disappearing again during that time due to the real horrors of war, horror came back to the Balkans in early 2000s, making an enormous impact on now independent Croatian and Serbian cinema. Today, horror genre in these countries is not a stranger anymore, as the value of the genre as a useful and creative, not-abiding-by-censorship-rules tool which can be used to express social concerns and to criticize politics, society and culture has been recognized by young, prolific filmmakers from both countries.

Problematic points

There are a few points I would like to make: this is the most exhaustive academic attempt in positioning horror as a genre in the Balkans, and in Yugoslavia (focusing on Croatia and Serbia more specifically). It is not a comprehensive study, as there is a serious lack of academic literature written on this specific subject on horror in the Balkan context. Lazarević Radak, Ognjanović, Turković, Gilić[9], among others, have all written works on specific films and the respective periods, however, these are written with specificity in mind, rather than offering a study of horror genre as a connected whole. For example, Lazarević Radak identifies the slasher and psychological horror as terms, however, she does not go into deeper analysis, nor is she trying to define or position these subgenres of horror in the Balkan context. She does, however, offer an overview of the most significant films, which was of immense help for my analysis. I approached the topic from a point of view of existing source materials that analyse horror genre and its subgenres in general, then applying those to the Balkan context and horror films that fit into horror genre parameters. There are some problematic aspects about the topic that have been shown and pointed out in this research project. The titles of films have been offered in their original form (in Croatian and Serbian) and translated in English. There are two options for this part that I am using: when there is an official English translation of the films, I am using those appropriately, and when the translations are ambiguous, meaning not necessarily official, but rather generated by users, reviewers and critics, I have opted in for the most appropriate ones

[9] Croatian and Serbian critics and academics, whose work will be addressed and referenced later in this project.

using my knowledge as a translator, choosing the best possible option that fits the film content (this is mainly the case with older films, from 1920 to 1980 respectively). Another problematic aspect that I am analysing is the positioning of horror as a genre in the Balkan context; Balkan context is in itself a complicated notion when it comes to any genre, not just horror, however that notion poses certain challenges in correlation with horror genre because of the said lack of academic literature on this specific combination. Having said that, in recent years, some prominent and young academics (Iordanova, Grgić…) working within the Balkan studies have acknowledged the significance of Balkan cinema, and put in efforts to point out the problematic aspects of positioning Balkan cinema on the world film map, as well as the possible similarities that this rich cinema has with the cinemas of the world, which in turn results in reducing the gap between the Balkan cinema as a part of European cinema, and world cinema. To make this argument clearer, using the words from Thomas Elsaesser will help put my claims in perspective. Elsaesser stated in his work "that there is no such thing as European cinema, and that yes, European cinema exists."[10] Expanding on this statement, Grgić in turn, in her work, argues that "there is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yet it still exists, and it enriches our understanding of cinematic landscapes at the crossroads of film and area studies."[11] Taking these statements into account, by extension, I would then like to support Grgić's statement and argue that the same principle and view of Balkan cinema, and horror genre in the Balkans for that matter, is accurate, which will be shown with the analysis of Balkan films and historical periods, including the ones that we now consider as horror films, and the genre's subgenres, where appropriate. I argue that it is relevant to understand this kind of western attitude toward the Balkans, in order to connect it with other European cinemas by way of similarities Balkan cinema shares with European countries: "If 'European cinema' is recognisable for 'its reflexivity, inward turn', 'its unique form of ruminating, speculative self-scrutiny' and philosophical tendencies, 'Balkan cinema' attests to 'a specific artistic sensibility, possibly coming from shared history and socio-cultural space', and can be defined as 'an entity of clearly discernible thematic and stylistic affinities'. Despite linguistic and religious barriers, the Balkan countries share the same issues: 'turbulent history and volatile politics; a semi-Orientalist positioning' seen as either

[10] Elsaesser, Thomas. European Cinema, Face to Face with Hollywood, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, pp. 13-32.

[11] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021: 19–26.

'marginality' or 'a bridge between East and West;' confrontation between Christianity and Islam; and 'a legacy of patriarchy and economic and cultural dependency.' These resulted in some common themes in twentieth century Balkan cinema…"[12], which will be discussed in this project through the analysis of films, theory, and history. Topics like war narratives, political propaganda, social and cultural issues, self-balkanization, crass and dark humour as part of the "Balkan National character"[13], diaspora, these are all prevalent in the understanding of Balkan cinema and in the analysis of its films – the analysis of which will show the true horror hiding behind the metaphorical, humoristic and often times absurd storytelling, and great quality filmmaking. As far as genre theory is concerned, I share the opinion and claim made by Altman at the very start of his book Film/Genre that the "historical study of genre theory can hardly be characterised as a satisfying enterprise," and that the "history of genre theory thus traces a particularly zigzag trajectory"[14], much like the history of Balkan cinema. Already at the starting point, it is evident that Balkan film and horror genre have this generic trait in common, especially in historical terms. Debates have been raised, discussions have been made, the originality and quality has been acknowledged, however, both the Balkan film and horror genre have been scrutinised because of the portrayal of violence, often cheesy scenes, and dark humour, in which no one saw any real value…until today. With the emergence of the so called elevated horror – a category of the genre to which films like *Hereditary* (2018), *It Follows* (2014), *The Witch* (2015) and the like belong to, where the emphasis is on topics like grief, trauma and mental health, and a general attempt to distance these kinds of post-horror films from the earlier history of horror using more art devices rather than jump scares and gore, that is, "the further that post-horror films deploy art-cinema devices to break from the generic templates popularized by more conventionally Hollywood-style horror films, the more affectively powerful their narratives about traumatic to the familial line can be felt."[15] However, this distancing from earlier artistic tendencies of film as an art form in contemporary times to elevate the genre does not make much sense, at least not in the Balkan context, as Balkan cinema has always been

[12] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021, pp. 19–26.
[13] Iordanova, Dina. Cinema of Flames: Balkan Film, Culture, and the Media. London: British Film Institute, 2001., pp. 6-7.
[14] Altman, Rick. Film/Genre, London, BFI, 1999, pp.1-2.
[15] Church, David. Post-Horror, Art, Genre, and Cultural Elevation, Edinburgh University Press, 2021, p.70.

viewed as an art cinema since its beginnings.[16] We can then talk about the stylistic tendencies of horror genre, that have been present since the time of German Expressionism, for example, or the literary Gothic in the 18th century, where the discussion of horror genre has its roots, so we can follow Hantke's trail of thought that horror genre might focus on "thematic genre markers" (the monstrous, the abject, the uncanny…), or on "stock characters"(Byronic hero, young heroine as an object of the hero's obsession…), or on "recurrent settings"[17] (haunted house…), or around different motifs that visually and aesthetically explore the darkness, as night time and in terms of human nature alike. Since Balkan cinema (in Yugoslavia, Croatia and Serbia respectively, as the focus of this project) drew early influences in style from the Hollywood studio system and other European cinemas, forming its own style of filmmaking in the process based on the artistic aspect of film and the auteur, these themes fit well within the Balkan context, which will become apparent when analysing Kadijević's opus of Gothic and horror themed films in the 70s - 90s.[18] In terms of narrative as a discourse, storytelling in Balkan cinema has been very important – it is the story that makes the film, and the filmmakers from the Balkans were aware of that, and in their own way, by way of horror, as well as incorporating the distinctive Balkan filmmaking style into the process (self-balkanization, dark humour, violence…), they creatively expressed themselves using the known elements of style in order to tell a story, important on a national, and as of recent, on a global level. Nevertheless, in recent times, Balkan filmmaking is increasingly steering away from the self-balkanization in filmic expression, but still keeps the artistic part as a tradition of the past visible in the contemporary film works, even the ones that fall within the horror genre, and elevating it through stylistic aspects in filmmaking. Loosely, one can talk about the post-horror film era and elevation of horror genre[19] in the Balkans, if the art devices that Church mentions are utilised properly, and the themes that are now characteristic to this subgenre of horror (grief, mental health…) are understood not just on a personal, familial level, but also on a national, social and cultural one. Felt, and seen, the view on horror has changed and it started its own zigzag trajectory toward its elevation in the future. How long will this last or whether Balkan cinema will follow, is yet to be seen. As Altman discusses in his book

[16] See Part One: Ch1.
[17] Hantke, Steffan. Horror Film: Creating and Marketing Fear, Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2004, p.vii.
[18] See Part One, Ch 3.
[19] Church, David. Post-Horror, Art, Genre, and Cultural Elevation, Edinburgh University Press, 2021.

Film/Genre[20] while mentioning Horace and Aristotle's work and more classical modes of genre theory, a thought coming to light in terms of genre is that we should understand and perceive every genre as separate entities with their own prescribed rules, classical or not, and as we are able to understand that each genre can be treated like this, so can our understanding of small national cinemas of the Balkans point in that direction, in order to understand the connection, the relationship between both, as well as their separate values in the demanding and everchanging world of cinema. What I would add as a third problematic notion is the attempt to portray the equally complicated Croatian – Serbian national relationship through these horror films, a relationship that is nonetheless crucial to properly explain, in order to make sense of the films used, as well as the historical and cultural issues that most of these films tend to talk about in one way or another. This is especially relevant for the second part of this project which talks about the contemporary Balkan cinema and horror genre. Pinpointing the specific style of Balkan filmmaking is part of this process as well, since it has been developed over the years in a more recognizable and typical style in these regions: the significant aspect of this way of making films uses violence, horror and humour for the purpose of self-balkanization, which is a part of Todorova and Bakić-Hayden's concepts Nesting Orientalisms and Nesting Balkanisms. As I have already mentioned, this is a specific notion that has developed over the years and is now a distinctive and important part of Balkan mentality and identity. Croatian-Serbian national relationship has always been a complicated one, often not strictly bound to these two countries alone, however, this relationship evolved, or devolved if you will, in contemporary times, starting with the civil wars and continuing well over 30 years after the wartime. It is imbued with mentality and identity issues, political and social problems, and violent events, as well as nostalgia for the so called good old days of Yugoslavia, and hatred, corruption and repression that came with celebrating the independence of these countries from the union.[21] As noted on a few occasions, this research project is divided in two parts: Part One tracks horror genre since the beginning of film in Yugoslavia (1920 – 1992) through the exploration of film history in Croatia and Serbia (as parts of Yugoslavia), and the events that occurred during that time that were significant for the evolution of film in both countries. Part Two explores the presence, the

[20] Altman, Rick. Film/Genre, London, BFI, 1999.

[21] Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1992) I am referring to here was the union of today's countries Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia).

possibility, and the value of horror genre in contemporary films in these two countries, in the post – Yugoslav period (1992 – present).

PART ONE: Politics, horror, and the fall of Yugoslavia

There were a lot of factors that influenced the journey of horror genre in former Yugoslavia. The western influence in the 1920s and 1930s, focused more on the Hollywood studio system, and the influence of other major European cinemas brought elements of horror closer to the amateur filmmakers of the time, who used them in their work to experiment with and to create a different kind of film art. The emergence of new wave movements such as the most prominent the Black Wave (or the Yugoslav Black Wave, 1960-70s), which started in Serbia and soon expanded to Croatia and other territories, in its original form, and its appropriated form, depending on the country. This movement started off in 1960s and late 1970s as a form of rebellion against the political system. It fortified the expression of horror and terror that were lingering in the collective reality, only to become a form of free expression adapted to the distinct filmmaking style in Balkan cinema. These films of experimental nature were of great quality and very popular in their expression of dissatisfaction with political situation, but they were looked at from an adverse point of view: "Some of these films originally received unfavourable reception in local political circles and media outlets supporting the establishment, such as Belgrade's daily newspapers *Politika* and **Borba**, film journal *Filmska kultura* from Zagreb and similar publications. However, they still received important awards at the Pula Film Festival, the central cinematic event in Yugoslavia, and accolades from more politically independent film critics. Films and authors of this provenance, including Živojin Pavlović[22] and his work, faced scrutiny and suffered from accusations of anti-government and anti-socialist sentiments…"[23], which endangered their own freedoms as well as their freedom of expression and speech. Despite the danger surrounding the filmmaking activity during the Black Wave, films made in that period

[22] Živojin Pavlović and his work will be mentioned more closely in Part One, Chapter 2 regarding the era of propaganda and partisan films in Yugoslavia.

[23] Gilić, Nikica. The Rats Woke Up – On Figures of Dissent in Belgrade's Underbelly in Pavlović's Vision, SIC Online Journal, NO. 1 - YEAR 12 - 12/2021.

were of high quality and of even greater significance for the development of film art in Yugoslavia, from 1970s onward. Later events, the fall of Yugoslavia and Yugoslav wars, brought a delay in horror's journey to become a more prominent and serious genre in the Balkan regions; however, horror endured and developed further, leading the genre into a new, contemporary, and exciting world of Balkan film.

Chapters

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the history of film as an art form in Yugoslavia, focusing on Croatian and Serbian film history, since the film format first appeared in these countries of the union, which were both part of Yugoslavia. Film as an art form in the Balkans first appeared in the 1920s and 1930s, when some of the amateur film enthusiasts procured the available equipment for filming, brought from France. Although amateur in nature, films that were made during that time were showing a promising future of film in the Balkans. Oktavijan Miletić and Maksimilijan Paspa were the two influential figures often mentioned in connection to film art, as they were the ones who actively started learning about this novelty and educating other cinephiles and the public about film, also forming ciné clubs and filming short films that depicted everyday life. Film was at that time considered an art form, and filmmakers who were actively involved in its development were called auteurs, claiming the artistic aspect of film and the professionalism with which this art form was treated. Ciné clubs enabled filmmakers to share their existing knowledge of film and the filmmaking process, and the natural progression from that point on was publishing their works in film journals and magazines. First film magazines and journals were heavily concerned with the topics connected strictly to film as an art form, however, as they gained popularity, the audiences asked for a more entertaining content to complement the educational one. Thus, film journals like *Cinema Magazin*, *Kulisa* and *Filmska revija*, which were some of the most popular ones at the time, shifted their focus from topics solely covering film to adding entertainment value to the content, modelled on the news and trends from Hollywood and European countries that already had an established film industry.

The shift in content and the audience's fascination with Hollywood is shown in this chapter by analysing the content of archival materials from the Croatian Film Archive. This process includes the already mentioned film magazines and journals, and alongside the analysis of the archival materials, I am trying to find any existing traces of a mention of horror genre in the official documents. Despite the general contemporary opinion that horror was first mentioned in the 1970s and again later in 2000s[24], the analysis of archival material showed a completely different story. It showed that horror genre was indeed, in various forms, present in Balkan filmography from the beginning of film art in the Balkans in 1920s-30s. It was mostly present in film magazines that borrowed, adapted and created new content from the trends that came from the West and the rest of Europe, also following another crucial aspect that was visible in most countries, which was the displacement of the genre, an aspect of genre that is quite visible and relevant for the analysis of film in the Balkans in the early period. In this chapter, I have outlined and analysed the points of the fluctuating genre theory, in order to better understand how genre works in general and how it can be embedded in a certain culture, using the theoretical approaches from Jancovich, Tudor, discussions from Altman and briefly referring to Lowry's analysis of genre and enunciation, in which he claims that enunciation might be the only proper way to analyse films in terms of genre, in order to make sense of them. I will further expand on this topic in the Methodology and Literature Review part of this Introduction. However, this is where the existing traces of horror start to fade, because of political occurrences of the 1940s and 1950s, covered in Chapter 2. This was the period of heavy propaganda enforced by the leader of Yugoslavia, Marshall Tito. His influence and power were so great that he singlehandedly decided to only make films that will glorify his own persona. 1940s and 1950s were a time for only one genre: propaganda films and partisan epics that portrayed the heroism of partisan armies and Marshall Tito as a national hero. In this chapter, I am laying out the facts connected to the period, offering historical background, to better understand why at this time there was only one genre that filmmakers could work in, and logically concluding the reasons for the absence of horror during that time, using the historical overview as outlined in Jakiša and Gilić's work on Partisan era and film. Following the historical timeline of film evolution in Yugoslavia, Chapter

[24] In the 1970s with the popular films made for television by Đorđe Kadijević (covered in Chapter 3), and in the 2000s, when a more extreme form of horror cinema came into existence, especially with the release of A Serbian Film (Spasojević, 2010) (covered in Part Two, Chapter 4).

3 describes the turbulent times that followed the 1950s forced propaganda, and the reappearance of horror genre as a statement against the times in which it re-emerged. The 1960s and 1970s marked the shift in the collective mindset toward the political and social situation in Yugoslavia. The rebellion against the system and asking for the right to exercise freedom of speech and creative expression were the prevalent points in this period. Young filmmakers rebelled against the oppressive situation; expressing their own opinions and viewpoints without censorship, making films of often experimental nature in order to depict their own state of mind and the madness the oppression caused in the general national mindset, during the turbulent times of the Yugoslav Black Wave (1960 - 70s). Horror reappeared again in the seventies, following the consequences of the Yugoslavian Black Wave in the works of Đorđe Kadijević, now considered to be a pioneer of horror genre in Yugoslavia. He expressed himself through a cycle of Gothic and horror themed films that depicted vast desolated landscapes representing the landscapes of the mind and he played with the elements of the Gothic genre, such as ghost stories and haunted mansions. He often turned to the adaptation of folklore and literature works (1970s-1990s). Kadijević was responsible for making the first Yugoslavian, and Serbian, horror, *She-butterfly* (Leptirica, 1973). With his cycle of genre themed film adaptations, Kadijević laid the foundations for the genre in following years, and his work in film inspired future generations of Balkan filmmakers to follow in his footsteps, in horror and other genres that he worked in - as horror was still being considered as an exercise in making films rather than having firm foundations as a genre. Later decades generated a couple of films that fall within the horror genre framework, and in that period, first mentions of the Yugoslavian horror genre[25] occurred, following Kadijević's work. These were the films that were used to parody and mock political, social, and cultural issues, using folklore (vampires) and Western horror influences like Hitchcock's films, for this purpose. Hence the 1980s and 1990s horror films were horror comedies – they used the exchange of horror and humour to emphasize the shock, and the notion of self-balkanization to ridicule the mentality, as well as to express shared concerns about the period; a period that saw the beginning of the fall of Yugoslavia and the consequences that came after in the form of civil wars between the countries of Yugoslav union. Films like *Bloodsuckers*

[25] Mentioned in Lazarević Radak, 2015.

(Krvopijci, Šorak, 1989) and *Strangler vs. Strangler* (Davitelj protiv davitelja, Šijan, 1984) marked this period of heightened anxiety and fear about the future and what it might bring.

PART TWO: Horror in post – Yugoslavia

Part two analyses the existing contemporary Balkan horror films, most of them made in the early 2000s onward, in order to make sense of the Balkan context within horror genre, the changes that occurred in recent times, the influence of the rising popularity of the internet, and to show the value of the genre and the potential it has within the same context.

Chapters

After the 1990s wars that destroyed and devastated the countries of former Yugoslavia, the time of independence turned the Croatian and Serbian national relationships upside down, all countries still suffering the consequences of the 1990s wars. Croatia was one of the first countries of former Yugoslavia that gained its independence, and that affected the national relationships within the former union. Consequences of these events brought about the dark times for every country involved. The descent into corruption, hate, poverty formed a completely different reality for the people, their lives barely manageable to live due to the lack of basic needs and means for a decent life. Sadly, this situation is still present in these countries, and that was the sentiment and the message that most horror films made in the 2000s tried to convey. Unfortunately, most of the films were misunderstood on a national, regional, and international level.[26] Nevertheless, horror made its way through to the audiences, although not in the glamorous fashion as it did in the West. Most horror films in the Balkans were made with low to no budget, and without any (or very little) backing from official film funding bodies or the government. The love for the genre and film as an art form were some of the main reasons that Croatia and Serbia now have a few very distinct and recognizable first horror films ever made in those countries. Chapter 1 plays with the idea that independently made horror films and series streamed online might be a way forward in terms of marketing the genre in the Balkans in the future. I argue that apart for having a fertile dark thematic background in history, and a rich tradition of film, the Balkan cinema has the potential in the future to become more than simply a

[26] This is clearly visible with the example of A Serbian Film (2010), Part Two, Ch 4.

set of small regional cinemas of the Other, especially with the growing popularity of internet based streaming services like Netflix[27] and Amazon Prime. The web series *Croatian Files* was used as one of the case studies to explore this argument. This independent YouTube series revolves around the ever-so-popular creepypasta[28], the legend of the Slenderman. For the most part, *Croatian Files* were set in Zagreb, Croatia. Filmed entirely with the Slenderman myth in mind, and using the elements of the same to create a disturbing story in a setting that has a rich and dark history, which is observed in the remnants of the wars in the form of abandoned buildings, this web series gained popularity very quicky and is now officially listed on IMDB.[29] The particular argument that is of interest in this chapter is the use of the term *digital campfire*, utilized by Chess and Newsom in their book Folklore, Horror Stories, and the Slender Man: The Development of an Internet Mythology (2015), where they use the *digital campfire* term to "position the Slender Man in the lineage of traditional storytelling, identifying key elements of oral folklore that the stories recall."[30] Although based on the premise of traditional storytelling, which was for the most part in oral form, this online character however made the leap from oral to transmedia storytelling, into the realm of digital horror[31], interactively jumping from one media format to another (from a user post, to a digital short story, to film, video games etc.), creating new stories and building a repute of an urban legend through user generated content. In this form, and with so much space to create and transcend boundaries due to its digital nature, Slenderman can be adapted to any culture, or, as I argue, any culture that will have him. The hype around this creepypasta, other than the said *Croatian Files*, and a handful of newspaper articles, was seriously lacking in the Balkans. Due to the general understanding that violence is

[27] In the past couple of years, there has been a rise in the presence of cinematic content on Netflix, in both film and TV formats, coming from Croatia. This might be the case for Serbia as well in the near future.

[28] Creepypastas are internet short horror stories and urban legends shared online for the purpose of scaring other users and readers.

[29] https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2740610/. Listing on IMDB is significant, because this, and other web series, when they appeared were not officially imagined to be in films, series, short film format. As this was an interactive format of visual content, the viewers were a part of storytelling and based on their comments, they were steering the stories of this kind in certain directions. These kinds of web series, especially the ones based on the Slenderman myth, had that collaborative part embedded in them as an important part of the creative process. Listing on IMDB creates an air of authenticity and gives credibility to user generated content of this kind.

[30] Chess, Shira. Newsom, Eric. Folklore, Horror Stories, and the Slender Man: The Development of an Internet Mythology, Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015., p.76.

[31] Aldana Reyes, X. Blake, Linnie. Digital Horror: Haunted Technologies, Network Panic and the Found Footage Phenomenon, I.B. Tauris, 2016.

the most used form of communication in the Balkans, as it will be argued later in the subsequent chapters, and as Rebecca West admits after spending most of her life there: ”Violence was, indeed, all I knew of the Balkans: all I knew of the South Slavs”[32] and Balkan's dark and troublesome history, horror and chills coming from the shadows that the Slenderman offers did not resonate on this territory, and hence it wasn't accepted or adapted as successfully as it was in other parts of the world, even though the accessibility of the source material and low to no finances needed for making a web series like the *Croatian Files* are remarkably easy and cheap. However, there are greater monsters in the landscape of the Other (the Balkans) than a digital creepypasta that came from other people's imagination. Following the discussion about independently made films in the Balkans due to the lack of official funding and "bad reputation" of horror as a genre, in Chapter 2, I am trying to answer a question whether there are enough case studies to define rural horror in the Balkans. I argue that there is a huge potential for rural horror to be explored and positioned within the Balkan context, especially in terms of "amoral familism" (Banfield, 1958), or "amoral familiarism" (Gribaudi, 1997), where the lack of morals and the presence of backwardness disables the rural communities to function as a part of extended families or communities; as complete opposites of a nuclear family (cannibal family in *Zagorski specijalitet* (2012) for example), an idea that formed itself during this research and has shown that there is a huge potential in exploring these concepts in contemporary Balkan horror, as some of the most prevalent themes revolve around family, culture, identity, and national emotional states.[33] Another way could be looking at the landscape and the dichotomy of the rural idyll and anti-idyll (Bell) which can be used to depict the emotional states of the inhabitants, and visitors of the rural. I included this chapter because of the consistent role that the idea of the rural landscape has had in horror and Gothic films made to date; I am referring to films made by Kadijević in the 1970s, 80s and the 1990s, which were all set in the rural landscape, a countryside, creating the notion of anti-idyll, as countryside was considered to be a place of calmness, positivity and a happy simple life. However, Kadijević transformed that landscape into

[32] West, Rebecca. Black Lamb and Grey Falcon (Penguin Classics), Penguin Classics; Reprint edition, 2007, p. 21.

[33] Since seeing the potential in the concept of nuclear family and its criticism, as well as its significance in horror film (Jackson, 2016) regarding the patriarchy, and gender studies in general, I am hoping to expand on this idea in the future using the case studies from Balkan horror genre, as they show the connections and similarities with the concepts and themes that are most often analysed in Balkan cinema. It would be exciting to see where this idea would lead the research and what it would discover in relation to horror in the Balkans.

desolate and isolated areas that depict the inner state of one's mind, that had the potential to quickly become places of danger and fear. My intention to position contemporary Balkan horror films inside the rural landscape context seemed to be quite a daunting task. There is only one film that fully fits into this context: Matanić's *Ćaća* (2011), a horror film set in Lika, the cold and vast mountainous area that offers only isolation, loneliness, and madness. However, it would be interesting to point out that this part of Croatia also illustrates "a sense of melancholy for a lost rural idyll"[34], as social and political circumstances over the years have driven out the young generations from the rural parts of the country in search for a better life in urban settings, and what was left were older generations with nothing else to do but simply existing. There was a switch in recent times, when the young generations started seeing the economic potential of the rural in terms of tourism for example, and that sense of melancholy for a lost rural idyll that imbues Hoskins' work[35] becomes more visible, although it is still represented as cold and unforgiving in films set in rural landscapes in the Balkans. As will be shown, these Balkan landscapes might be seen as the portrayal of the inner struggles, pain and turmoil caused by the wounds of the past, broken familial and romantic relationships, overall desire for revenge in order to make things right, and in the end, the never-ending search for identity within the confines of a national landscape, and the sense of belonging that it offers. Endesor remarks that "the 'national' remains 'the pre-eminent spatial construct"[36], fit for the birth of identities, myths and legends – "we know that national identities are informed by landscapes and their stories, traditions, myths and legends"[37] which makes for a fertile ground for stories told inside the landscape of horror genre, as could well be the case in Matanić's *Ćaća* (2011). Another argument I am making, that this, and other films do indeed belong to the category of rural cinema, will be further clarified by contrasting[38] the term rural cinema and the so-called heritage cinema (according to Dyer).

[34] Newland, Paul. British Rural Landscapes on Film, Manchester University Press, 2016, p.3.
[35] Referring to Hoskins, W.G. The Making of the English Landscape, 1954, as mentioned in Newland, P. British Rural Landscapes on film, Manchester University Press, 2016.
[36] Edensor, Tim. National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life, Oxford, and New York: Berg, 2002, p. 37.
[37] Daniels, Stephen. Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993, p. 5.
[38] This comparison and showing the importance of contrasting these two cinemas will be written in Part Two: Ch2.

"Both utilize the rural milieu and its inhabitants as models for a wider national identity, and both are attempting to represent (or to re-create) archaic customs and rituals practiced within the rural milieu", but the distinguishing trait, and quite important in this context, is that heritage cinema often deals with "the nation's past", while rural cinema is more focused on being "set in the present...While the rural idyll creates rural space as an object of desire because it is not urban, rural space may also be presented as an object of dread for the same reason,"[39] which is also apparent in other films that I am mentioning in the context of exploring the slasher film in the Balkans. These films can also be understood as showing the traits of rural anti-idyll[40] (films like *Zagorje Specialty* (*Zagorski specijalitet*, Kapac, 2012) and *Forest Creatures* (*Šuma summarum*, Vitez, 2010)), even though they have more in common in narrative and style with the slasher film. This just goes to show that the concept of rural is present in most films of Balkan cinema, no matter the genre, and that there might be at least a vague connection between these two subgenres in the Balkans. While rural settings in these kinds of films can accomplish ideological functions that offer a certain analysis of a nation, and their national identities, these films do use apparent elements of the slasher film taken from Western examples (like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974)), that seem to fit more with the storyline than the concept of rural horror. Nevertheless, the attempt of positioning these films into the rural horror realm revealed an interesting connection with Chapter 3 on this timeline of horror. Chapter 3 analyses the first slasher film made in Serbia, *T.T. Syndrome* (*T.T Sindrom*, Zečević, 2002), which uses the slasher film subgenre formula to make sense of this film made in the Balkan context, a film that even Balkan audiences were confused about. Safe to say, *T.T Syndrome* is a pure genre film, made only to explore the slasher film subgenre in Balkan context, even though the director allowed himself certain deviations from the original formula of the slasher film, which makes this film even more interesting to analyse. Since slasher films are characterized by their portrayal of blood, gore and excessive violence, the timeline of horror in the Balkans takes its natural turn, by creating a phenomenon popularly called the extreme cinema phenomenon, synonymous with films made in Serbia in mid 2000s. Chapter 4 is an extensive analysis of two most notorious films that came out of Serbian cinema: *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010) and *Life and Death of*

[39] Fowler, Catherine. Helfield, Gillian. Representing the rural: space, place, and identity in films about the land, Wayne State University Press, 2006, pp.5-6.

[40] The concept explored by Bell, David. Anti-idyll: Rural horror. In Contested countryside cultures: Otherness, marginalisation and rurality, ed. P. Cloke and J. Little, 94 – 108. London: Routledge, 1997.

a Porno Gang (Đorđević, 2009). The two films fall into the category of torture porn, or the extreme horror cinema, depending on who is labelling it. Immediately, issues arise with the categorisation of these films, as they mix pornography with extreme violence, which is controversial in itself when shown on screen. Still, this is not the most problematic part of the analysis of these two examples of torture porn films; the problem lies in the portrayal of a nation and the real horrors it has endured by using the said scenes of extreme violence mixed with pornography, moving the boundaries of taboo and overall good taste. In both films (more in *A Serbian Film* than in *Life and Death of a Porno Gang*), this portrayal of a nation does not become visible and clear to the viewers, especially to the ones who are not familiar with the Balkan context. Using extreme violence as a metaphor for the suffering of a nation needs to be clear and supported with at least basic cultural information that run through the film, creating a narrative that is concise, understandable, and clear enough for the audiences to be able to connect it with the violent scenes performing in front of their eyes. The greatest criticism of *A Serbian Film* (2010) was precisely that: not being clear enough about the message the film was trying to convey to the rest of the world. However, in this chapter I propose the alternative to the problematic issue: both films are connected in and with their message, only a few years apart when it comes to political and social events that occurred and that were referenced in the films. Therefore, looking at both films as a whole, might offer a different point of view on the portrayal of Serbian people and the suffering they have been forced to endure. Jones, Aston, and Roche have helped me elaborate and explore complicated categories of hardcore horror (Aston), exploitation cinema (Roche) and torture porn (Jones), as both films share some similarities with all three categories. However, it was interesting to discover where do *A Serbian Film* and *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* might fit. Fifth, and the concluding chapter, is looking at the most recent examples of horror films made in both countries, with an outlook on a better and a more prospective future of horror genre in the Balkan context. It was hard to get out of the shadow of notoriety that *A Serbian Film* created, however, it has been successfully done by contemporary directors like Matanić and Ličina, who understand the potential of the horror genre, both financially and creatively. Matanić made the first horror film about exorcism in Croatia, *Exorcism* (*Egzorcizam*, 2017)), and Ličina followed with another first, this time for both Croatia and Serbia, because the first zombie comedy film *Last Serb in Croatia* (*Posljednji Srbin u Hrvatskoj*, Ličina, 2019) was made in collaboration between both countries, both in financial and

creative areas. As previously mentioned, most horror films were made independently, with a low to no budget, and without any (or very little) financial help from official film institutions, so this film marks a turning point in that sense, and in portraying the let's say the love-hate relationship between the two countries in a light-hearted, humorous way. Matanić's *Exorcism* (2017) steers away from the standard formula of Western exorcism films and very skilfully adapts the story to the Balkan context using the excerpts of a real-life story as the inspiration for the script. Williams' work on Friedkin's *The Exorcist* has given me more grounds to explore the exorcism cinema, as analysed by Olson and Reinhard, who focused on cultural tensions within this particular subgenre, and Schlobin and Geary's exploration of the so-called deep horror put some things related to the inner state of the characters in Matanić's film in perspective. Analysing these two films brought me to new, fresh conclusions about the whole matter of whether horror genre exists in Balkan context, about the filmmaking style specific to the Balkans and how it is used within frames of horror genre, about the rocky historical relationship between Croatia and Serbia and the overall portrayal of these two nations through the "only" form of communication that the Balkans know how to do best: violence, for the purpose of entertainment.

Methodology and Literature Review

Trying to trace the horror genre within the Balkan context is no easy task. Having to look at this topic from different angles, with the lack of more specific literature on the subject, going through and incorporating works from both horror genre and Balkan film studies to try and make a sensible connection posed quite a lot of issues in the approach to and the analysis of case studies. For example, Balkan film studies scholars to a good extent explore and position the Balkan cinema in general within the European cinema and draw connections, and lack of those, with the Western cinema, and in recent times, what one calls, the world cinema. The fact that Balkan cinema can be talked about in the context of world cinema is a major accomplishment, because, for a long time, Balkan cinema wasn't seen as relevant, or relevant enough to be talked about in academic terms as being a part of Europe, or the world. It has always been seen as a violent, barbaric, unknown part of the world mostly due to its own perception of self, which in turn resulted in becoming the Other, and being perceived as such by the rest of the world. The relevance of Balkan cinema however, in recent times, has become more apparent through

contemporary works in film and TV, and having those works frequently presented at numerous festivals around the world makes this apparent, as Grgić informatively mentions in her article: "That the cinema of the Balkans is still relevant is evident by: the Oscar nomination for the Bosnian film *Quo Vadis Aida?* (Jasmila Žbanić, 2020), the Golden Bear at Berlin for the Romanian film *Babardeala cu bucluc sau porno balamuc / Bad Luck Banging or Loony Porn* (Radu Jude, 2020), and the Camera d'Or award at Cannes for the Croatian film *Murina* (Antoneta Alamat Kusijanović, 2021) to name a few. Balkan cinema continues to be showcased in sidebars at film festivals, such as Thessaloniki, Sarajevo, Sofia, and Tirana, and is the thematic focus of festivals such as the Balkan Film Festival in Rome, the Balkans Beyond Borders Short Film Festival, and Balkan New Film Festival in Stockholm."[41] On top of that, there was a rise in developing film co-productions within the region, evident as one of many examples, in the last chapter of this project, where a co-production between Croatia and Serbia, and with the support from artistic institutions from both countries to film the horror comedy *Last Serb In Croatia* (Ličina, 2019) clearly shows that regional connections are far from waning and are only getting stronger, "which point to developing cross-border collaborations and cultural networks."[42], making the view of the future of Balkan horror film and cinema in general a very positive one. Horror genre in the Balkans seems to be following a similar path to Balkan film studies: practically non-existent in the early days of 1920s in terms of mention and presence on the world cinema stage, the sudden rise of relevance after, and the emergence of great quality films, equally controversial for most viewers and audiences. Of course, there was still no definition of horror as a genre within the Balkan context as such, only glimpses and fractions and appropriations of already existing definitions of the genre, borrowing the elements of it in filmmaking, usually for specific purposes (such as criticism of politics and society for example) and mixed in with other genres such as fantasy and science fiction. Following this path, I argue that this general and global view of horror genre in the Balkans not existing as such is inaccurate, as there is evidence that early years filmmakers, amateur auteurs like Miletić, have been producing short works of horror usually inspired by Western films and stars who worked within the confines of horror, including Hollywood star system, which was an immensely popular

[41] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021: 19–26., p.21.
[42] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021: 19–26., p.22.

theme with Balkan audiences.[43] As far as horror as a genre is concerned, there was no talk of it in the early days of film in the Balkans, which is not surprising, noticing that genre theory, when it emerged, has been and still is a very fluid and complicated notion to speak about. Horror as a genre has been defined by multiple scholars in the field, which resulted in different views on the same thing. That in turn created confusion when writing this project because as applicable as those definitions might be, the displacement of the genre itself in those early days of film made defining the horror genre in the Balkans quite problematic, especially if one takes into account that most academic work that was written on this topic, including the films that today fall into that category and appropriate subcategories was dated late 90s and onward.[44] Defining horror varies from scholar to scholar, however, they do have a thing in common: "Horror has often been seen as both the most peculiar and the most predictable of all film genres."[45] This predictability for example, may be the result of constant repetitiveness[46], as it can be observed on the examples of the sequels and remakes of certain horror films. This repetitiveness, although not strictly reserved only for horror, does seem like it is more present within horror than any other genre. It poses only one of many issues that come with defining horror as a genre (other issues that Hutchings explores in his book The Horror Film include pleasurability of horror, role played by the monster, otherness etc.). Hutchings creates an interesting discussion around horror and its problematic points, looking at the said existing issues, and points out that horror is not simply a scare tactic genre, but a part of the existing cultures and it holds a greater value than the critics believe: "Horror might well be a distinctive part of our culture but for most of the time at least it operates firmly within the cultural mainstream rather than existing in some dank back-alley into which 'normal' people venture at their peril."[47] He uses historical overview to "help clarify its historical specificity, its changeability and its open-endedness."[48] His methodology clarifies my approach to this project, as historical overview that I am offering will hopefully shed some light on the misconceptions around Balkan horror genre, which is a bigger part of this culture than just looking at it within the confines of *A Serbian Film* (2010) - most critics and reviewers had that

[43] Finds from the Croatian Film Archive will support this claim, as it will be shown in Part One: Ch 1.
[44] Based on own research in the Croatian Film Archives and online sources.
[45] Hutchings, Peter. The Horror Film, Routledge 2014., pref.
[46] Hutchings, Peter. The Horror Film, Routledge 2014., pref.
[47] Hutchings, Peter. The Horror Film, Routledge 2014., pref.
[48] Hutchings, Peter. The Horror Film, Routledge 2014., pref.

kind of approach to the film when it was released.[49] I am also counting on the genre's open-endedness and its changeability in order to better analyze the case studies I am using, as one needs to be of an open mind when horror is in question. Furthermore, Jancovich creates a discussion around the genre using Tudor's claims around 'criticisms of structuralist and poststructuralist accounts of genre', where Tudor's claim that 'the search for 'factor x' is an entirely wrong place to start in an attempt to understand genre'. He lead the discussion away from films and more into classificatory systems of genre 'within which films are understood', contemplating in this way what genre is on a more general, collective level: "…the crucial facts that distinguish a genre are not only characteristics inherent in the films themselves; they also depend on the particular culture within which they are operating…The way in which the genre term is applied can quite conceivably vary from case to case. Genre notions-…-are not critics' classifications made for special purposes; they are sets of cultural conventions. Genre is what we collectively believe it to be."[50] He further proposes, as Jancovich summarizes: "Instead of asking what a horror film is, Tudor therefore sets out to analyze what films have been understood as horror films, and the relationship between these films both within a given period and over time."[51] Altman's claims coincide with Tudor's view and Jancovich's explanation of the genre and its value and complexity, although in a somewhat different manner, suggesting 'a problem with Tudor's solution'[52]. Jancovich states that "for Altman, it is doubtful whether any sense of 'collective belief' or consensual agreement over the definition of a genre can ever actually be identified. As genre criticism itself shows, there may be very different conceptions of whether particular films are, say, horror or not."[53] However, they all agree that genres are not just located in textual bubble of criticism and analysis, but instead, they are the veil that encircles the different cultures and films, and they change their elements and systematic notions depending on that culture's influence. One might say that genres have the ability to travel, much like monsters

[49] Most reviews concerning A Serbian Film (Spasojević, 2010), apart from having issues with the violent and taboo scenes, also positioned a whole Serbian culture within the world of A Serbian Film, some because of its name, and some because of the lack of background on Serbian political, social, and cultural issues that the film so violently tried to criticize. More information and analysis offered in Part Two: Ch4.

[50] Tudor, Andrew. Genre, in Jancovich, M. Horror, The Film Reader, Routledge, 2002, p.30.

[51] Tudor, Andrew. Genre. In Jancovich, Mark. Horror, The Film Reader, Routledge, 2002., p. 31.

[52] Jancovich, Mark. Horror, The Film Reader, Routledge, 2002, p.31.

[53] Jancovich, Mark. 2002, p. 31.

of contemporary horror, based in the online world, such as the Slenderman, for example, across borders and geographical territories, only to try to adapt to a particular period of time and culture. Balkan horror genre then may be pointless to try and define as such, as horror genre itself cannot be defined in one or two sentences, or even a paragraph, because of many issues that the said process of defining it entails, and Balkan culture, rich and complicated in its mentality, politics and history, is as fluid as the genre theory, and equally unstable in its own right. Instead, using genre theory and the issues revolving around defining horror genre, I would like to try to explain and analyse what would be one of the main issues why horror wasn't relevant or mentioned as a genre prior to 90s and 2000s. Displacement of the genres fits quite well into this argument, as it is present in genre theory, and it depends on different cultures and the point of view of understanding a certain genre. Historical overview and film analysis will offer background around my argument and strong examples to support it. As Lowry so blatantly claims: "Whatever taxonomy scholars may choose; the fact remains that the study of genre cannot be limited to the identification of icons or structures but must be conceived in terms of film discourse. Specifically, in regard to the topic at hand [horror genre], it must be said that, while stories of monstrosity may constitute a narrative formula, horror in the cinema is a process which can best be examined at the level of filmic enunciation."[54] My analysis and the overall approach to this research project was guided by archival materials collected from the Croatian Film Archive during a research trip to Croatia, and the appropriate academic sources that have helped shape this research project accordingly. I will describe these in more detail below. As mentioned above, for part one of this research project, that draws on the film history of the Balkans (Yugoslavia, Croatia and Serbia specifically), I analysed archival material that I collected from the Croatian Film Archive during my research trip to Croatia. It was a daunting task because the number of magazines and journals from the 1920s onward was overwhelming. Focusing on the most prominent film journals and magazines of the time (*Cinema, Filmska Revija, Kulisa*...), I managed to track some of the first mentions of horror in Balkan film history, which also gave me an insight about the type of content that the 1920s audiences preferred to see and consume. I was paying attention to specific words used that suggest the "presence" of horror genre (fantastic, terror, horror, scary...), and the names of famous actors, actresses, directors

[54] Lowry, Edward. Genre and Enunciation: The Case of Horror, Journal of Film and Video, Spring 1984, Vol. 36, No. 2, SPECTATORSHIP AND NEW TECHNOLOGY (Spring 1984), pp. 13-20, 72.

usually affiliated to horror, used in the articles and news (Fritz Lang, Boris Karloff, Lon Chaney, Konrad Veidt...), which revealed interesting pieces of news and coverage connected to the said personas – these have demonstrated the fascination with the actors who frequently acted in horror films of the period, and an admiration of their lives outside of the film set. Same was for the directors as well, the news focusing slightly more on their directorial work. Vjekoslav Majcen's book Hrvatski filmski tisak do 1945. godine[55] enabled me to put all these findings in perspective and appropriate order. Majcen's book consists of information about world film journals and magazines, information about cinema in Croatia, lists and critical overview of film journals and magazines from 1941-45, cinema publishing and so on, based on the same archival materials that I was using for this project. For the subsequent chapters (Partisan films, 1960-70s, 1980-90s), works of Croatian and Serbian film academics and film critics (Gilić, Turković, Jakiša, Vidan, Crnković, Daković, Radak...) came in handy, because they provided me with more historical background about the emergence of film in the Balkans, focusing on significant events in history that influenced the development of film art. For the case studies in these chapters, I was mainly using textual analysis to critically analyse their content and to draw conclusions about how horror genre was used as a tool to criticise the political, social and cultural issues in Croatia and Serbia in each period. Part two was more focused on the exploration of the genre within the Balkan context seen through the lens of horror films, exploring fresh, new ideas that might benefit the overall making of films on this territory. Looking at this topic more closely, there is certainly more than meets the eye, which I think is important to demonstrate to get the Balkan horror out of its slumber and to put it on the path to a brighter future in contemporary times. Chess and Newsom's Folklore, Horror Stories and the Slender Man emphasized the textual analysis of case study in Chapter 1, concerning the independent web series on YouTube named *Croatian Files*. They analyse the origins of the Slender Man myth in detail and mark the path of its popularity via online spaces. The concept digital campfire is particularly useful in this sense, as it positions the tall dark figure in the space of traditional storytelling, which evolved into telling stories from different cultures around a digital campfire, i.e., online, where there is a strong sense of community, and each of the stories represent these communities from different cultures. This enabled me to explain in more detail how the Slenderman myth could have been appropriated to Balkan context, and would this appropriation even make sense, considering the

[55] Majcen, Vjekoslav. Hrvatski filmski tisak do 1945.godine, Hrvatski državni arhiv, 1998.

Balkan own monsters and its violent history. From the point of view of Balkan film studies, it is interesting to note that the emergence and popularity of streaming services and online activities have influenced the overall current situation in the Balkans regarding film and cinema, and there are traces of horror films and series that could certainly use that to their advantage. Grgić, and I, in this sense, are asking a relevant question that this project will explore further and in relation to the horror genre in Part Two: "Since the digital turn, the exponential rise of streaming platforms, the conflating of television, film and digital media giving rise to new and hybrid forms of audio-visual works, and the weakening status of film festivals impacted by the global pandemic, where do the small, 'peripheral' and low-production capacity cinemas of the Balkans stand? Does it still make sense to talk about 'regional cinema' and by extension 'Balkan cinema' within the global cultural economy of moving images? And the question still remains: has Balkan cinema - this imaginary entity, a newly consolidated concept – withstood the test of time?"[56] And what about horror genre in the Balkans? Does it have the same fate as Balkan cinema in general, a bright future in the territory of the Other, or is it destined to slowly disappear, after making a mark in 2000s with embracing the extreme cinema phenomenon after the release of *A Serbian Film* (2010), that confirmed the way the rest of the world still perceives these countries, and moved on to more comedic films but with a strong social and cultural commentaries like *Last Serb in Croatia* (2019)? Will the one small part of the legacy of Balkan cinema live on through horror, or will it perish in contemporary times, despite the elevation of the genre in recent times in the West? I argue that there is a huge potential for horror genre to become more than it was in the past, precisely because of the past occurrences and films that we can now call horror. This argument will be explored through the analysis of contemporary horror films that were released before, and during the global pandemic (Part Two). Chapter 2 is trying to define the concept of rural horror in the Balkans, with only a few film examples as case studies; they do have the concept of the anti-idyll in common, introduced by David Bell in his article Anti-idyll: Rural horror, where he makes the distinction between the countryside in different countries, and differences that might be noticed within that concept, at the same time giving the rural idyll its dark counterpart, the anti-idyll. This concept helped answer the question whether it is possible to define rural horror in the Balkans, as there is still not enough evidence for it. Mendik claims that

[56] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021: 19–26.

the narrative (that can be found in rural horror) usually depicts a psychological state of the characters. He is also referring to Banfield's concept of amoral familialism, a term that signifies a certain kind of behaviour whose central argument is the good of the family, through which Mendik tries to explain for example regional rejection of the cultural, social and political attachments associated with contemporaneity, while Banfield uses this concept to explain the backwardness of the rural and to add to the theory of nuclear family and point out the absence of complex social forms within that context, according to Gribaudi. These approaches have been very helpful in this process of exploration of rural horror in the Balkans, as there is only one case study that fits this subgenre, Matanić's *Ćaća*, whose themes are suitable and work well with theoretical approaches used here. Rockoff's Going to Pieces: The Rise and Fall of the Slasher Film: 1978-1986 provided a useful framework for analysing the first slasher film made in Serbia[57], *T.T. Syndrome* (Zečević, 2002). He dissects this subgenre into pieces, explaining each of the elements that make a slasher film a slasher film, and gives an account of the development of this popular subgenre of horror. Rockoff's book contributes to the research of slasher film in many ways, elevating the subgenre off the ground and away from the margins of horror films. In his approach, he explores the minds of actors, producers, and other industry professionals to give a balanced view on the subgenre and to find an appropriate reasoning for the violent nature of slasher films. Rockoff documents the slasher films made between 1978-1986 using rare stills from the films, and interviews with film industry professionals who were involved in the making of slasher films, which adds credibility to his arguments and exploration of the slasher film question. Using his slasher formula, I analysed the first slasher film from Serbia step by step, as outlined in Rockoff's book. The analysis revealed some insightful conclusions about the background and the setting of the film and offered a new way of looking at it. By far, one of the most challenging chapters to write was Chapter 4, about the extreme cinema phenomenon in Serbia, analysing the notorious *A Serbian Film* and its equal in ill fame, *Life and Death of a Porno Gang*. Steve Jones' book Torture Porn: Popular horror after Saw was a valuable source of information and approaches available for the in-depth analysis of these films. Jones offers an in-depth critical analysis of torture porn category, a subject that caused a lot of controversy and commentary. The term was missing the critical approach to the topic of torture porn, as it was

[57] Technically, the film was made in Yugoslavia, in a sense: it was filmed in 2002, and Serbia got its independence in 2006. I will refer to it as coming from Serbia, for more clarity in writing.

used mostly by film critics and journalists who have no intention to approach a movie from a critical standpoint – the fate of both above mentioned films of the so-called extreme cinema in Serbia. Analysing reviews from users and film critics from prominent foreign newspapers, as well as Balkan ones, revealed the opposing nature of the experiences from both with these films, particularly *A Serbian Film*. Trying to position these films inside the extreme cinema phenomenon (Roche), torture porn category (Jones) and even hardcore horror (Aston) was quite complicated, as the film shares elements of all of these. However, torture porn category might be the most suitable one to place the films in, because of the nature of the content and critical approach. Next chapter in this part consulted the Olson and Reinhardt's contribution to the exorcism cinema, as they call it - Possessed Women, Haunted States: Cultural tensions in Exorcism Cinema: "The analysis presented in this book considers how exorcism films reflect, reinforce or challenge this traditional exorcism narrative. Using various cultural and critical theories, this book examines how representations of possession and exorcism reflect, reinforce or challenge prevailing social, cultural, and historical views of women, minorities, and homosexuals. In particular, exorcism films appear to explore tensions or fears regarding empowered and sexually active women, and frequently reinforce the belief that such individuals need to be subjugated and disempowered so that they no longer pose a threat to those around them."[58] The book looks at fewer known films about exorcism that haven't yet been critically scrutinised in connection to the messages they are trying to convey and offers a commentary on historical periods in which these films were made, concluding with the expression of necessity to further explore the portrayal of possession and exorcism as a religious ritual in popular culture. This source served as a guide to position the textual analysis of Matanić's *Exorcism* within the frames of exorcism cinema, and to explore the representation of possession in different cultures, which reflects concerns about femininity, sexuality and the way in which the Balkan culture views women, and other cultural tensions, but because of Matanić's adaptation of the story, the film in its nature deviated from the classic exorcism cinema and leaned more toward drama. Other approaches have made this analysis clearer and focused. Sara Williams' extensive writing on Friedkin's *The Exorcist* has offered a fertile ground to explore exorcism cinema, even with only one case study available, giving a lot of information about the film's reception and

[58] Olson, Reinhard. Possessed Women, Haunted States: Cultural Tensions in Exorcism Cinema, Lexington Books, 2017, https://www.kobo.com/us/en/ebook/possessed-women-haunted-states

exploration of harsh themes, sexuality, parenthood and such. I have also found Schlobin and Geary's analysis of the concept of deep horror quite helpful, especially related to the character Vera from Matanić's *Exorcism*, as within the deep horror there is no happy ending and degradation of the character occurs from within. It is a handy concept that can be used to reveal deep inner states of characters in a film, although the claim that deep horror only means bad ending as opposed to a happy one can sometime pose issues regarding the case studies being analysed, as not every horror film has a bad ending.

Toward a brighter future of horror genre in the Balkans

Contemporary Balkan horror films have paved the way for horror genre to finally strive in the Balkan environment. Revealing the potential of the genre in this national context, these films are more daring than ever before in their portrayal of the political, social, and cultural issues that still exist in Croatia and Serbia. Prominent directors such as Dalibor Matanić (Croatia) have realised the potential of horror genre, in financial, creative, and marketing areas. His production house Kino Gerila, for example, specialises in films in horror genre, announcing future plans to make and produce more of these kinds of films. Matanić's success with his non-horror series *Paper* (*Novine*, 2016-2020) which was bought by Netflix, apart from being the first TV series to be shown on one of the most popular streaming platforms, is also a good indicator as to how to use online streaming services and internet could help to gain success and broaden the horizons in terms of financial and distributional viability. With his horror films, *Exorcism* and *Ćaća*, Matanić showed that the genre is flexible in Balkan context and that it can be utilised to explore the issues of contemporary society. Ličina's horror comedy *Last Serb in Croatia* (2019), the most recent example of a good quality Balkan horror film, moves the boundaries from the past, imposed by the difficult history of Balkan countries, and creates new ones, where he allows himself a certain level of freedom in the creative expression in order to criticise and parody the mentality of Croatia and Serbia, the complicated relationship between the two, all the while entertaining the audiences with his humorous approach to serious issues of nationalism in the first zombie comedy made in collaboration between Croatia and Serbia. From these examples, one can conclude that horror genre might, after all, find its rightful place in the Balkans and become a permanent part of the rich Croatian and Serbian film history.

PART ONE: Politics, horror, and the fall of Yugoslavia

Chapter 1

Film societies, magazines, auteur cinema and first horror films in the 1930s

Film history, since its beginnings, mainly focused on the rise of film as a business within the frame of Hollywood film industry. Thompson and Bordwell, in their book titled Film History (2010), one of the most important bestselling books in film studies for undergraduate students, clearly describe the importance of Hollywood film industry, as well as putting "film art in the context of changes across history."[59] Even though they examine other national cinemas across the world, and movements that changed and/or influenced film history in most countries,

[59] Thompson, Bordwell. Film History, An Introduction, McGraw – Hill, New York, 2010.

Hollywood and the development of its significant periods still stay the dominant subject in the book, around which the authors build their structure. Although Thompson and Bordwell mention European film industry, their work is mostly focused only on specific European countries, which are considered as having contributed the most to the film history, for example, Italy, Germany, USSR, France. In contrast, Dyer and Vincendeau summarize what Thompson and Bordwell claimed quite accurately: "Part of the existing map of cinema is coloured in quite clearly: there is America, which is Hollywood, which is popular entertainment, and there is Europe, which is art. Critics and historians of film have started to put new shades into the picture: the USA has, since the First World War, been massively part of European cinema, above all for audiences; aesthetic developments in European film have time and again found their way into Hollywood production (e.g. expressionism, the horror movie and film noir, the new waves and 'New Hollywood Cinema')."[60] However, unlike Thompson and Bordwell, who simply point to the problem and continue to exalt Hollywood, Dyer and Vincendeau in contrast point to the actual problem with European cinema, claiming that "one aspect of the equation has remained stubbornly unacknowledged: popular entertainment cinema made by Europeans for Europeans."[61], which will be addressed later in this project. Changes are inevitable, and when Lumière cinematograph appeared as a novelty on the market, this event changed the entertainment game across the world forever. Lumière brothers, with their invention, travelled the world to spread the word about this new medium that can capture movement and scenes from everyday life, thus bringing film to the wider public, amateur, and professional alike. France gave the world some of the most influential film companies in the world, such as Pathé and Gaumont. Germany gave its contribution in the form of German Expressionism, an art movement that influenced film as an art form in Europe, revealing the dread of human shapes "through their distorted, nightmarish surroundings"[62], and setting the standards in the film industry. However, there is little or no mention of other smaller national cinemas and their respective representatives in Thompson and Bordwell's book, nor in other publications for that matter. They do, however, cover specific events and movements that occurred in European and East European film history that hold significance for the region. A good example of this is the Sarajevo film festival circuit, which was shaped during Balkan Wars,

[60] Dyer, Richard. Vincendeau, Ginette. Popular European Cinema, Routledge, 2006, pp. 1-3.
[61] Dyer, Richard. Vincendeau, Ginette, 2006, pp. 1-3.
[62] Hutchinson P., Barret, A. 10 great German expressionist films, accessed June 15, 2021, https://www2.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-german-expressionist-films

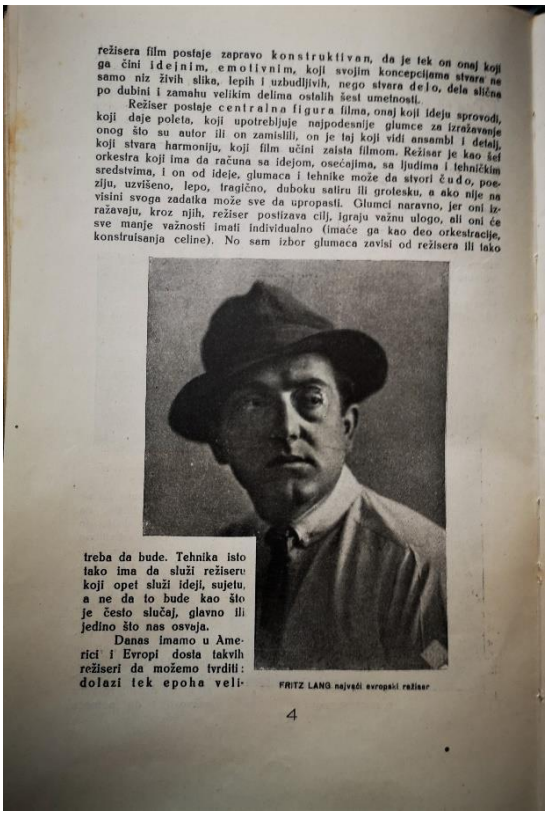
(1912–13), the two successive military conflicts that deprived the Ottoman Empire of almost all its remaining territory in Europe. The benefit of the existence of a film festival circuit on that territory was "a chance to rebuild a public life outside the bomb shelters."[63] Another interesting example that most researchers of national cinemas draw on are the so-called diasporas and diasporic cinema: filmmakers in exile created the diasporic cinema to remember the old while residing in the new, referring to home. A good example of diasporic cinema is Iranian cinema, which left a mark on the Western world through experiences from second or third generations of filmmakers transferred on film, experiences of living in the West, with their Middle Eastern heritage embedded in their personalities. A big part of diasporic cinema emerged from second and third generation immigrants, who have been a part of the host culture for a long time, which enabled them to hold on to its customs, and to participate in this immigrant subculture. Most, if not all, Balkan countries are familiar with the term diaspora, because of the conflicts that made people emigrate to other European countries and the West, where they formed their own national communities, and their national identities became imbedded in distinct cultures. Through these cinemas, globalization spread around the world, connecting regions which were trying to compete with Hollywood. Despite that, the Balkans somehow stayed at the back of the line, even though certain movements in Balkan film history made an impact on the overall film history, such as the Black Wave in Yugoslavia. This movement came to life as a reaction to partisan films that glorified the so-called national liberation struggle during WWII, whose "protagonists" were often used only as a means for straightforward propaganda. In Cinema of the Other Europe (2003), an influential piece of academic scholarship which focuses on the East Central European film studies and cinemas, including the Balkans, Dina Iordanova makes similar assumptions as Thompson and Bordwell, and Dyer and Vincendeau, regarding smaller national cinemas and the lack of scholarship on them, as well as the increasing interest of the West in that part of the world:

"Film scholarship on Eastern Europe in the West does not occupy a particularly prominent position in the context of Western studies into world cinema. Studies on East Central European film did not increase as intensely as one might have expected in the 1990s, particularly in relation to other areas of international cinema, such as India, Iran, or Middle East, for example.

[63] Iordanova writes about this in more detail in her work.

One probable reason for the low profile may be that most writing concentrates on single national cinemas, and almost none explores the issues regionally, thus failing to note and discuss significant trends."[64] Iordanova with this suggests that if the researchers focused more on regional cinemas, and not just national ones, the scholarship of Eastern European cinema would gain more interest in the West as it would be more complete, and it would fill in significant gaps that exist in East European cinema today. For example, equally scarce, Thompson and Bordwell's book, covering the discussion of 1960s British film, concentrates mostly on the British realist film, and only briefly mentions the basics of the hugely popular horror films associated with British film studios, such as Hammer Films, virtually ignoring the genre and its importance: "...British filmmaking responded to the decline in film going by creating new sorts of films. Hammer Films, independent production company, rose to prominence with a series of internationally popular horror films. Many were loose remakes of 1930s Universal films, including *Dracula* (aka *The Horror of Dracula*, 1958, Terence Fisher) and *The Mummy* (1959, Terence Fisher). Gorier than their predecessors, they also boasted polished production values, including elegant colour cinematography."[65], still stating that "horror films constituted one of the most distinctive portions of the mainstream cinema..."[66] Drawing on the previous example, any scholarship on horror to date in the Eastern Europe was neglected by the rest of the world. Case in point is the example of Balkan cinema. There was not any kind of historical mention of horror as a genre in the Balkans, although the traces of it existed since the 1920s-30s in the form of short films. Those were the films of amateur nature, films that explored everyday life and human nature, influenced by popular film and literature, foreign filmmakers, and equally foreign culture. For example, one of the pioneers of amateur filmmaking in Croatia, Oktavijan Miletić's short film *Fear* (Strah, 1933), was a parody that was inspired by the popular news of the Dusseldorf vampire, and more importantly, by Fritz Lang's film *M* (1931).

[64] Iordanova, Dina. Cinema of the Other Europe, Wallflower Press, 2003, p.63.
[65] Thompson, Bordwell. Film Art, An Introduction, McGraw-Hill Education Europe, 2010.
[66] Thompson, Bordwell. 2010.



režisera film postaje zapravo konstruktivan, da je tek on onaj koji ga čini idejnim, emotivnim, koji svojim koncepcijama stvara ne samo niz živih slika, lepih i uzbudljivih, nego stvara delo, dela slična po dubini i zamahu velikim delima ostalih šest umetnosti.

Režiser postaje centralna figura filma, onaj koji ideju sprovodi, koji daje poleta, koji upotrebljuje najpodesnije glumce za izražavanje onog što su autor ili on zamislili, on je taj koji vidi ansambl i detalj, koji stvara harmoniju, koji film učini zaista filmom. Režisar je kao šef orkestra koji ima da računa sa idejom, osećajima, sa ljudima i tehničkim sredstvima, i on od ideje, glumaca i tehnike može da stvori čudo, poeziju, uzvišeno, lepo, tragično, duboku satiru ili grotesku, a ako nije na visini svoga zadatka može sve da upropasti. Glumci naravno, jer oni izražavaju, kroz njih, režiser postizava cilj, igraju važnu ulogo, ali oni će sve manje važnosti imati individualno (imaće ga kao deo orkestracije, konstruisanja celine). No sem izbor glumaca zavisi od režisera ili tako treba da bude. Tehnika isto tako ima da služi režiseru koji opet služi ideji, sujetu, a ne da to bude kao što je često slučaj, glavno ili jedino što nas osvaja.

Danas imamo u Americi i Evropi dosta takvih režiseri da možemo tvrditi: dolazi tek epoha veli-

FRITZ LANG najveći evropski režiser

4

Figure 1 – Fritz Lang's photo (Cinema Revija, 1930s).

Fear could also be defined in terms of genre as a short incident imbued with humour, and that part could easily be used as a prologue of a feature horror film, but in the 1930s, it was only understood as a parody. The fact that these amateur films, which compile Oktavijan Miletić's filmmaking opus, had elements of horror, and tackled equally mysterious themes, however, still being understood as a completely different genre (comedy and parody) sets the foundation of an intriguing relationship between the two genres in the Balkans, especially visible in the filmmaking style in Yugoslavia (later Croatia and Serbia, and other smaller countries around them). Horror and comedy are the two vastly different genres that have been used in correlation to one another in most, if not all, media formats. Their connection has been widely used in film, TV, literature, theatre, to enhance, and in some cases, to diminish, the influence of both. Noel Carroll makes connections between the two, in both genres respectively, and offers reasons why these two distinct genres go well together, succeeding in their attempt to horrify and make the audiences laugh at the same time:

"But what is more perplexing from a theoretical point of view is not that some fusions of horror and humour fail, but that any at all succeed. For, at least at first glance, horror and humour seem like opposite mental states. Being horrified seems as though it should preclude amusement. And what causes us to laugh does not appear as though it should also be capable of making us scream. The psychological feelings typically associated with humour include a sense of release and sensations of lightness and expansion; those associated with horror, on the other hand, are feelings of pressure, heaviness, and claustrophobia. Thus, it may appear initially implausible that such broadly opposite affects can attach to the same stimulus. And yet, the evidence from contemporary films, television shows, comic strips, and novels indicates that they can."[67] Moreover, Carroll amuses the idea that if one takes out the essential component of horror, whether it be on an emotional, mental, or physical level, such as fearsomeness, the horror thus becomes unthreatening and takes on a comedic trait: "Thus, fear is the metier of the horror fiction. In order to transform horror into laughter, the fearsomeness of the monster, its threat to human life-must be sublated or hidden from our attention. Then we will laugh where we would otherwise scream."[68] To briefly illustrate this unique relationship between the two genres, it is interesting to mention Grand Guignol, French horror theatre, that used this exchange of horror and humour most effectively, which in turn opened a possibility of it influencing film as an art form later on: "This style of naturalist plays formed the foundations for the Grand-Guignol theatre in the way of melodramatic performances, which consisted of les douches eccossaises, hot and cold showers of comedy and horror exchanged during the plays to make the audience jump off their seats. The rapid alternation between registers-between something like "real" horror on the one hand and a camp, self-parodying horror on the other - is by now one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the tradition.[69] Indeed, the beginning of the film industry was considered as one of the possible reasons for the fall of Grand-Guignol, which pushed this theatre of horror into the abyss of oblivion."[70] Regardless of the assumptions about Grand Guignol's demise, this type of exchange of horror and humour has found its way into the creative

[67] Carroll, Noël. "Horror and Humor." The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, vol. 57, no. 2, 1999, pp. 145–160. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/432309 . Accessed 2 May 2021.
[68] Carroll, Noël. 1999. pp. 145–160.
[69] Qtd. in Goldstein, p. 277.
[70] Jurkovic, Tanja. "Blood, Monstrosity and Violent Imagery: Grand-Guignol, the French Theatre of Horror as a Form of Violent Entertainment." SIC, Journal of Literature, Culture and Literary Translation, no.1, year 4, 12/2013. https://www.sic-journal.org/Article/Index/208.

world of film and television, even in the Balkans, as it will be shown in more detail in Chapter 4, on the Yugoslavian films in the 80s and the emergence of Yugonostalgia after. Thus, Miletić's amateur parody films with horror themes can be considered the start of a now longstanding tradition and a rather distinct filmmaking style specific to the Balkans and Balkan mentality, where violence and horror is used in connection with comedy to diffuse and enhance the serious themes, such as war, war crimes, and violence as a metaphor for political and social issues, that most Yugoslavian, and later Croatian and Serbian films, will be preoccupied with. Since those amateur films were still a novelty in the 1930s, like Miletić's short film *Fear*, and were viewed as artistic rather than falling into any genre (art films were highly regarded at the time), the scholarship on them in the Balkans was primarily focused on that artistic aspect, and the writings on the topic came from practicing filmmakers and writers who were members of ciné clubs. These were the clubs that became popular in France and their popularity spread all over Europe. Ciné clubs had their own journals, some of them still exist today (for example, *Cahiers du Cinéma*); journals that were focused on bringing closer the art of film and filmmaking to the general public, in order to educate them about this novelty and introduce them to a new world, the one of film. Nevertheless, these films and ciné clubs were still operating in the shadow of the Hollywood studio system. From this, however, arises another issue. Art cinema in Eastern Europe was considered as just that, art cinema, without any mention of a genre. Genre was the term reserved for Hollywood rather than for small national cinemas across Europe. The term art cinema in Europe was associated with auteur cinema and national cinemas, aimed at niche markets, with little to no finances put into making such films. The directors of auteur cinema compensated the lack of finances with using amateur actors and basic film sets, in that way focusing more on developing ideas and exploring different narrative techniques. There is evidence of the development of art cinema in the Eastern part of Europe, numerous examples, such as Miletić's short film *Fear*, as well as his other films, making sure that the tradition still lives on, but it also poses an issue in connection to the Balkan horror cinema. For example, books were extensively written on ingenious directors such as Emir Kusturica, and the way his films changed the view of the West on the Balkans, via a so-called self-balkanization, using humour and violence to depict the harsh life in the East and to speak about political and cultural issues that still linger today. Balkan horror genre, however, still does not have a home in the Balkans. New, contemporary horror films are emerging on a speculative bi – yearly basis, but

because there is no scholarship on the Balkan horror genre, or any mention of them outside of national borders, these films fail to be distributed properly around the world, sometimes even without the intention to do so. They are not getting the attention they deserve, and some of them do not even progress beyond the screening in regional cinemas in their respective countries, with little to no interest from the cinemagoers. There are, however, examples of horror films made in the Balkans that gained popularity through festival circuits, even since the 1930s. The already mentioned *Fear*, by Oktavijan Miletić, won numerous prizes at international festivals, and a more contemporary example, *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010), that shocked the world with its depictions of violence and taboo topics, was screened at a few international festivals before being banned in most countries. However, because of the way they were presented to the public, they can still be considered to fall into the category of art films, or auteur films, rather than belonging to a genre, especially the one as obscure and "problematic" as horror. Most academic work on genre, especially horror, has been scarce in Eastern Europe and in the Balkans, which creates a gap in research on both topics. As Dobreva states in her work:

"With the exception of some research on Westerns and science fiction films produced by the East German studio (DEFA), genre is rarely studied in the context of pre-1989 Eastern European cinema. Monographs on national cinemas in the region tend to highlight auteurs and dissident movements, such as "new waves," but ignore genre cinema. Critics find the latter unworthy of analysis since genre films are rarely innovative or original in terms of aesthetics and content. Distribution problems further contribute to the gap of scholarship, as genre films made in the Eastern bloc have rarely if ever been released in the West."[71]

This gap is even more evident with the example of Balkan cinema[72], particularly in former Yugoslavia (more so in Croatia and Serbia respectively, the significance of which will be explained later); despite the insistent use of materials that have been discussed in terms of horror genre in the US and Western Europe. Focusing on a more specific part of the Balkans, for reasons presented above, Yugoslavia (the union of six countries: Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia) has had a very turbulent history since its

[71] Dobreva, Nikolina. Genre Cinema and the Visualization of a Heroic National Past. A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas, ed. Imre, A., John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
[72] Imre, Aniko. A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas, John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

inception as a small idea to bring together most Balkan nations together in hopes of creating a fertile ground for progress, unity and a collective that will have the power to keep all the nations inside the union and offer protection and prosperity to its people. However, these plans did not go as everyone expected. Different aspirations of power made different countries make and follow their own plans and vision of what Yugoslavia should be and who should be running it on a long run. Republic of Yugoslavia came into existence in 1929, and film as an art form was still in its decline period at the time, which started around 1920s, when Yugoslavia Films, a new company for film distribution and production, established in 1919, after the unification of all the countries into the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, fell into a crisis from which it never truly recovered. Yugoslavia Films offered news reels and a few entertainment films based on an already well-established formula that appealed to the public at the time, and its headquarters was in Croatia.

Figure 2 – Poster ad for Film, a journal for the protection and promotion of interests of Yugoslavian cinema.

Until 1930s, when the name Yugoslavia finally became official, filmmaking suddenly became moderate, since domestic films were not viable financially on small markets such as this, and as usual, the state did not want to offer any help. Films from the US became popular, driving the popularity of German films out of the picture – this set of occurrences highly influenced the audiences and their preferences. This popularity was highly owed to existing and emerging film journals, magazines and the already mentioned ciné clubs which were being formed on a regular basis around the world to spread the word and the newfound importance of film as a medium. As for the history of the international ciné clubs, it is important to mention that it dates to the beginning of cinema itself:

"The term "ciné-club" appeared for the first time on April 15, 1907, in Edmond Benoît-Lévy's article Le Ciné-Club published in Phono-Ciné-Gazette. Benoît-Lévy was a Parisian lawyer, educator, and editor of Phono-Ciné-Gazette—the first trade journal devoted to the cinema. His

article was in reference to the club he had organized in Paris that year, which can be considered the first ciné-club, and which had the charge of preserving and placing all existing cinematographic documents and productions at the disposal of its members. As Richard Abel noted in his book Silent Film, "from 1906 to 1908, Benoît-Lévy […] dedicated himself almost exclusively to promoting the cinema […] and to convincing people that the twentieth century would indeed be the century of the cinema."[73]

The first wave of cinema enthusiasm under the term cinephilia started in the 20s and 30s, and quickly spread from Parisian picturesque streets to the rest of Europe. In Yugoslavia, this newly founded ciné club culture emerged in 1928 in Zagreb, with the foundation of the section dedicated to film culture within the Zagreb photo club. It all started when the president of the Zagreb photo club, Dr. Maksimilijan Paspa, acquired his first camera in 1925, from Pathé, for home use, because the only cameras exiting in the day were for home use alone, which implies that film was not seen as a professional medium at the time just yet. That would soon change, in Yugoslavia, and the rest of the world. Paspa's intention was to popularize film as an art form, bring it to a higher level, and educate people about it at the same time. His partner in crime was Oktavijan Miletić, who was also one of the founding members of the cine club section at the Zagreb photo club, and together with Paspa, Miletić directed and produced all the films that the ciné club released at the time. Since the goal was to popularize and educate, a substantial number of their films, who were usually in short form, and filmed on a 9mm camera, ended up being entered at some of the most prestigious festivals around the world. The year 1933 was the initial year of Paspa and Miletić's ciné club's memberships in multiple different cinematography associations and clubs across the world. One of the most notable ones was the membership at the Institute of Amateur Cinematographers in London, that organised a film competition for amateur filmmakers. Paspa's film *Priroda u naravnim bojama/Nature in escallop colours* (1933) won first prize, and it was deemed as one of the first colour films in Yugoslavia. Oktavijan Miletić and his acclaimed film *Nocturno* (Miletić, 1936) won the first prize at the Venice Mostra festival in Italy. *Nocturno* was described by Škrabalo as an ironic paraphrase of horror films which were popular at the time.[74] Miletić was the most active filmmaker between two wars in Yugoslavia.

[73] Abel, Richard. French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915 – 1929, Princeton University Press, 1984.

[74] From Škrabalo, I. 101 years of Croatian Film (1896-1997), A Survey of the History of Croatian Cinema, 1998., paraphrased and translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

He is remembered for his skilful non-professional short 9mm films filmed between 1927-32 (*Nocturno* was also shot on 9mm), which he himself directed, filmed, and financed - these short films also represent one of the oldest artistic oeuvres in Croatian film history, still preserved in the archives today. Another one of his successful films was *Faust*, a short that also won first prize in the category of the fantastic at the UNICA congress in Barcelona, and together with the rest of the winning films from other members of the now Zagreb ciné amateur club, paved the way for Yugoslavian filmmakers to ascend into professionalism later.

Figure 3 – Oktavijan Miletić on set, filming the Bauernleben film (personal collection).

Figure 4 – Oktavijan Miletić on set with an actress. He was not just directing and producing, he was also a cinematographer, and a special effects and makeup person (personal collection).

Miletić's films were usually quite different from the rest of the films that were created at the Zagreb ciné amateur club. He quite often dabbled in the fantastic, often adding horror elements

to his films, which was quite unusual at the time, because of the previously mentioned decline in film, and poor access to the cinematic works with the same themes that were created in the rest of the world. For example, *Faust* was based on the famous Faust story, which had its share of versions in film since then but was immensely popular at the time in the rest of Europe. Filmed in black and white technique, this short film, as many of his films before and after, played with the notion of creating shadows to create the dark atmosphere of mystique, and to evoke horror in a viewer, incorporating elements of German expressionist cinema with which, it seems, Miletić and his comrades were most influenced by. In Miletić's *Nocturno*, for example, the inner subjective experience of the main character, a sales traveller, enhanced by his imaginative dreaming of dark horrific landscapes that he read about in obscure books of the time, leads to a complete night of terror in a local inn and a great misunderstanding in the end, which was portrayed by humoristic reveal. "*Nocturno* is, according to that, a film about nightmares, and dark visions, at least in that atmospheric sense, which is why it becomes very similar to the works of Murnau and Epstein."[75] Many of his works in that period had elements of horror genre. The atmosphere and the events in his films were an amalgamation of fear, nightmares, dreams, danger, darkness in the most literal sense, "which indisputably shows the influence of films of German expressionism, even Kammerspielfilm[76]; the movements that left a mark on other European cinematography in the period of transitioning into the 1930s."[77] His other short film, previously mentioned, called *Fear* (1933), also makes a connection with humour, a simple joke played on a woman by her peers while she sleeps, with the real events that play on the character's fear of the unknown threat in their own environment suddenly becoming real.

"Genre short film *Fear* could be determined as a comical story, and it is of the same length as one, meaning it would not be longer even with sound processing involved. However, perhaps it could, in development, serve as a prologue or a final scene of a feature film, and the one in horror genre, nonetheless. It was reduced to a typical horror turn, that "twist," the Anglo-

[75] Majcen, Vjekoslav. Hrvatski Filmski Tisak do 1945., Hrvatski Državni Arhiv, 1998, p. 122.
[76] Kammerspielfilm is a type of German film that offers an intimate, cinematic portrait of lower middle-class life. The name derives from a theatre, the Kammerspiele, opened in 1906 by a stage actor Max Reinhardt, a legendary Expressionist theatre impresario, to stage intimate dramas for small audiences.
[77] Majcen, Vjekoslav. 1998, p.117.

American critics would say, with which one brings a certain line of irrationality into a dry everyday life; very characteristic for the genre in its best edition."[78]

Figure 5 – Screenshot from Oktavijan Miletić's short film Fear (personal collection).

[78] Majcen, Vjekoslav. 1998, p.119.

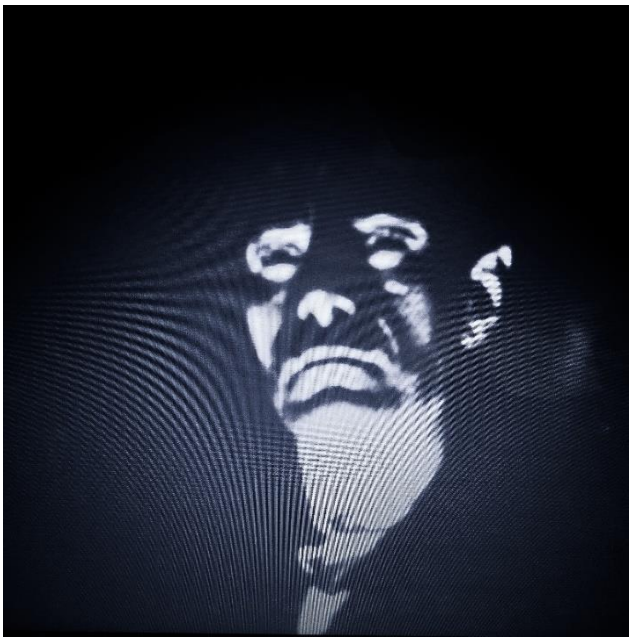


Figure 6 – Screenshot from Oktavijan Miletić's short film Nocturno (personal collection).

Even though Miletić experimented with horror in his short films, the most masterful part of his expertise was more focused on the components of narration, and the so called "the observer's perspective",[79] which can clearly be seen in all his films, especially the ones that balanced on the edge of horror genre. After 1944, Miletić changed his role of filmmaker to cinematographer and teacher, offering his expertise to the new generations of filmmakers to come. Although here I am using the term amateur films, at the time, the term 'amateur' had a completely different meaning, by no means meaning inexperienced, but rather new and established, especially when we are talking about ciné-clubs paving the path for new filmmakers setting out into a world of professionalism. Despite their amateurism, Paspa and Miletić still enjoyed a high status with their contribution to the growing field of film, much like Turković firmly claims in his work: "...under the auspices of "ciné-amateurs" Paspa and Miletić represented the beginning of the professional age of Yugoslav cinematography".[80] In his words, "amateur documentaries and other films at that time were equal and sometimes superior to institutionalized, professional film."[81], which is why it is important to mention and analyse notable film journals and magazines from that period, looking at the archival material and finding any traces of the term horror

[79] Majcen, 2008, p.119.
[80] Turković, H. Modeliranje ugroženosti: filmovi strave / Modeling of imperilment: horror films, 1989; Republished in H. Turković, 2005, Film: zabava, žanr, stil.
[81] Turković, H. 1989; 2005.

mentioned, and for what purpose this gap might have formed. During the archival research, I noticed that there was awareness of the horror genre and its existence in the Balkans, and journals and magazines were focusing on Hollywood stardom, foreign films, and notable directors. Most of the stars and directors mentioned in this context and in the materials had some kind of connection with horror, whether it be through films they were making and acting in, or through interviews, news, and gossip rubrics. Through this historical account, the aim is to point out and indicate the idea that has been present since the beginning of film history in the Balkans, that most of the scholars missed and/or neglected to talk about: that, despite the popular opinion of being unconsidered, and therefore almost non-existent, and especially not being worthy of financing, until contemporary times at least, horror as a genre has been present, in one way or another, in the Balkans since the beginning of film history in this particular part of the Eastern European territory. The genre itself "is a useful category, because it bridges multiple concerns," it is full of contrivance designed to perform numerous tasks all at once, and it "endures in film theory because of its ability to perform multiple operations simultaneously. According to most critics, genres provide the formulas that drive production; genres constitute the structures that define individual texts; programming decisions are based primarily on generic criteria; the interpretation of generic films depends directly on the audience's generic expectations. All these aspects are covered by the single term of genre."[82] Altman continues to discuss the genre and what constitutes one, which involves the assertions that "genres are defined by the film industry and recognized by the mass audience"[83], they consist of clear identities and are about a particular topic, with a specific structure, they are predictable - all in all, genres share certain basic characteristics. Genre is as stable as we want it to be. We are bound to use generic traits of the genre, because we have been told, mostly by critics, whose vocabulary is one of generic values, and therefore thought of fixed in time and space, while in reality, the genre changes the moment we try to use these generic terms that constitute a "stable genre" in a different context, for example, a historical one. " Genre is universal, basic to human perceptions of life."[84] When we start playing with the generic aspects of the so-called generic maps, they are a part of generic creation. Is the remake of the genre thus possible within a culture that started recognizing the

[82] Altman, Rick. Film/Genre, London, BFI, 1999, p.14.
[83] Altman, Rick. Film/Genre, London, BFI, 1999, p.14.
[84] Cawelti, John. The Six-Gun Mystique, Bowling Green University Press, 1975, p.30.

concept of the genre in recent times, despite the fact that the genre did exist there before that? Is genre the same in one culture and the next one? Altman offers a sane answer to this almost deliberately and magically puzzling questions: "Not only are all genres interfertile, they may, at any time be crossed with any genre that ever existed."[85] Hence the displacement of genres is an issue that needs to be addressed, especially, as Altman discusses, and I argue, that it is possible indeed to remake an existing genre, and that process would make perfect sense in the framework of Balkan cinema, as the cinema itself is no stranger to genres, literary or otherwise, and there is a gap where no genre has been claimed. The displacement of genres is evident in the Balkan context and throughout its history, it simply was not noted in written form to be visible enough – the changing and unstable nature of genre theory and Elsaesser's claim[86] that European cinema does not exist might be the reasons for the displacement of the genre that occurred. Elsaesser claimed in his work that every book needs to start with the claim that European cinema essentially does not exist in this world, which can be connected to the overall point of view of the West toward this territory. However, he also claims that in return, European cinema does exist, it is only neglected and still an unknown and uncharted territory of world cinema. Expanding on this statement, and as mentioned earlier, Grgić also argues[87] the same concept, only with a more specific territory, the Balkans - it exists, and it reinforces our understanding of landscapes of cinema. Taking these statements into account, by extension, I would then like to support Grgić's statement, and argue that the same principle and view of Balkan cinema, and horror genre in the Balkans for that matter, is accurate, which will be shown with the analysis of Balkan films and historical periods, including the ones that we now consider as horror films, and the genre's subgenres, and the archival material might offer some new knowledge on the topic in question. Hutchings also creates an interesting discussion around horror and issues with the genre and points out that horror is not just a blood-curdling genre; it is multi-layered, creative and exciting part of the existing cultures. Because of this, it holds a greater value than the critics give it credit. Hutchings uses historical overview to make sense of its history, the changes the

[85] Altman, Rick. 1999, pp. 14-29.

[86] Elsaesser, Thomas. European Cinema, Face to Face with Hollywood, Amsterdam University Press, 2005, pp. 13-32.

[87] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021: 19–26.

genre is going through and its immense flexibility. This type of approach to genre clarifies my rationale revolving around the topic, as historical overview that I am using and writing about will hopefully clarify the misconceptions around Balkan horror genre, which is a bigger part of this culture than just looking at it within the boundaries of *A Serbian Film* (2010) – as most critics and reviewers had that kind of approach to the film when it was released. I am also counting on the genre's open-endedness and its changeability to better analyse the case studies I am using, as one needs to be of an open mind when talking about horror, and genre alike. On the other end of the genre spectrum, as I have mentioned earlier, Jancovich's discussion on the genre, which refers to the work of Tudor concerning 'criticisms of structuralist and poststructuralist accounts of genre', 'the search for 'factor x' (a completely wrong place to start understanding genre, as it is implied), leads the genre discussion away from films and more into classificatory systems of the same, or the way we understand films, contemplating what genre is on a more general level. Following this train of thought, the factuality of genre distinction emerges not only in films that we watch and analyse, but also becomes a dependent part of a particular culture from which it emerged; thus, including those facts and notions in sets of existing cultural conventions. To circle around to the beginning of this debate, Altman's assertions coincide with Tudor's view and Jancovich's explanation of the genre and its value and complexity, although in a different manner, suggesting a problem with this solution, which might have to do with the identification of a certain genre, including horror. Horror in particular is hard to define, as it borrows elements from other genres and subgenres - perhaps that is its strength. However, they all agree that genres are not just located in textual bubble of criticism and analysis, but instead, they are the shroud that enwraps the diverse cultures and films, and they change their elements and systematic notions depending on that culture's influence. "Thus, genre as such, has not disappeared; the genres-of-the-past have simply been replaced by others." The shifting of genres irrevocably reminds us of how the genre situation came to be in the Balkans, for example. Putting aside the literary roots of genres for the sake of this project and focusing on film, one can say that genre has gone through some interesting shifts, much like horror in the Balkans, as well as Balkan cinema. It is already familiar that what was thought of as being horror genre today, certainly did not resonate in the same way back in the 1930s. As Jancovich further explains and gives examples of the same:

"The films associated with a particular genre can change within different contexts. During the 1960s and early 1970s, *The Innocents* (1961), *Repulsion* (1965) and even *Satyricon* (1969) were all discussed as central moments in the history of horror, although more recent accounts rarely even make mention of them. Alternatively, while 'German expressionist' classics such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919) or *Nosferatu* (1922) were rarely seen as horror films in their own day, they are now frequently cited as seminal examples of the genre."[88]

The history of Balkan cinematography roughly started after 1896, with the first film released and shown in Serbia the same year. The surge of information about film art in Croatia became available, such as short reports about the content and technical quality of film programs[89] which later gradually grew into a film review format. This vigorous development of cinematography and the growing interest in film as an art form resulted in the nascency of new journals and magazines covering everything about film that was available at the time. By 1945, the number of these grew significantly, as the goal was to inform film entrepreneurs, film audiences and enthusiasts about the issues and qualities of the arising film industry:

"As publishers of film journals, newspapers and magazines there were owners of film companies (distributors, for ex. Balkan film, Mosinger film), cinema owners (Cinema Parigi, Music Hall, Edison tone cinema, Balkan Palace cinema), representatives of foreign film companies interested in Croatian film market (American film co., MGM, Fox, Paramount), and individual journalists and publicists who are professionally engaged in popularizing film and film critique..."[90]

[88] Jancovich, Mark. 2002, pp. 1-2.

[89] Majcen, V. Hrvatski filmski tisak do 1945, Hrvatski državni arhiv, 1998, Introduction. Translation from Croatian by the researcher of this project.

[90] Majcen, V. 1998, Introduction. Translation from Croatian by the researcher of this project.

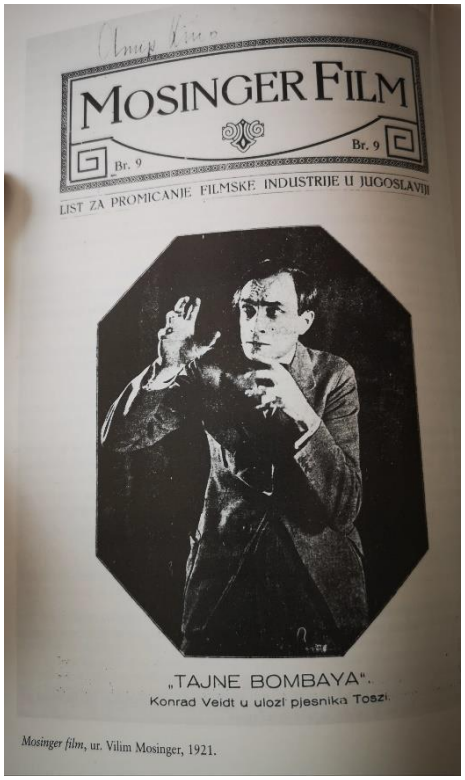


Figure 7 – Article review of Karloff's new film, Life After Death (Curtis, 1936), Filmska revija, 1936.
Figure 8 – First page of Mosinger Film mgazine with Conrad Veidt (Mosinger Film, 1930s).

As is becoming evident, the vast array of national and international film professionals interested in Balkan cinematography contributed to the more focused content of film journals and magazines. These publications often connected commercial film ads with descriptions of films, their quality content that was intertwining with the events from everyday life of ordinary people, behind the scenes accounts and the artistic significance of these works. Gradually, the scope of information collected in Balkan film journals and magazines expanded to include news from the rest of Europe, expanding to the West, in that way connecting national cinemas across the territory, and raising interest in them with the audiences: "To the beginning of the 20s, film magazines have turned to sources of information in bigger Central European centres (Vienna), which were connected to film distribution through film concern Sascha Film by A. Kolowrat, and Berlin, connected through *Licht-Bild- Buhne* film magazine as a source of numerous information. From 1919, the abundance of information comes from the Italian cinematography (Cinema Smotra by Josip Zimerman), Boško Tokin (Film, 1925.-1926.) spreads interest for

French film and film theory, and around 1927, the information about the American film and cinematography completely prevailed (especially expressed in *Cinema Revija* journal and magazines from American film representatives). Besides that, constant attention is directed toward Slavic film (especially Czech), which outlines a certain diversity to information about film. It was not until the end of this period, from 1941-45, that German film again becomes more predominant, and with it, first information about Finnish and Slovakian cinematography is introduced, as well as clear texts about French, Scandinavian, and South American cinemas."[91] In this foundation period, it was normal for film journals and magazines to operate with a common goal, which was to raise the standards of cinemas and showing of films, promoting the thought that film is not just for entertainment, but it is also art. In light of this, films often get reviewed, at first focusing simply on the information about content and the cast, taken from promotional material, without any additional information or argumentation about the films, thus drawing attention to the entertainment value of film, connecting it to other arts in the process: "Film magazines of the revue kind (*Cinema Revija, Kulisa*) form a special group of publications, the ones which connect film with other forms of entertainment and contemporary social life, in that way gaining the attention of a much wider audience. These magazines, with entertainment and propaganda content offer expanded information about film and cinema and encourage the interest in film as part of mass media. Huge part of their content is related to promoting film as a medium and on attracting attention of the audiences with stories about the lives of famous actors, descriptions of events from the world of film and retelling the content of films. In them, we can find feuilltons, novellas with the same content, romanticized film content, interviews and photo reports, and film photography gradually gains independent informative value."[92]

[91] Majcen, V. 1998, Introduction. Translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.
[92] Majcen, V. 1998, Introduction. Translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

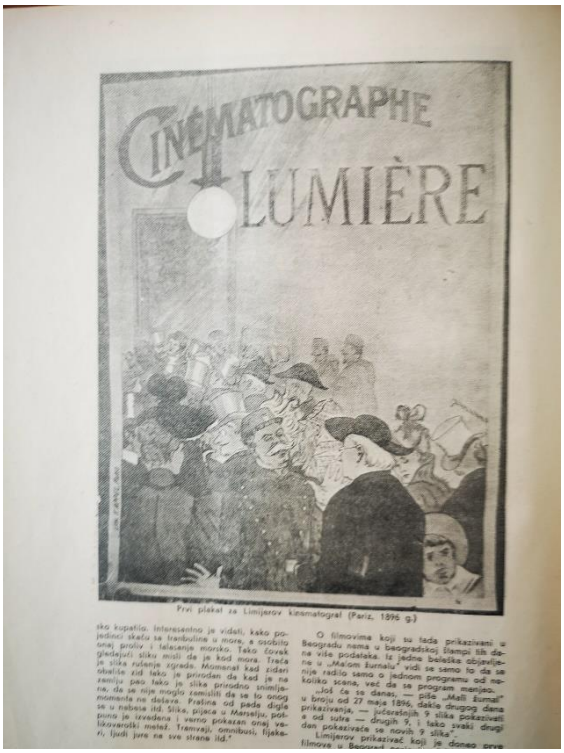


Figure 9 – First poster for the Lumiere Cinematographe, Paris, 1896 (Cinema Revija, 1930s).

Film photography, as stated by Majcen, was gradually gaining "independent informative value," and it becomes quite significant when analysing the content of film magazines and journals.

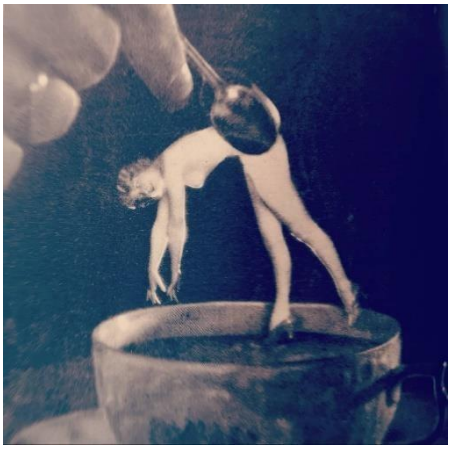
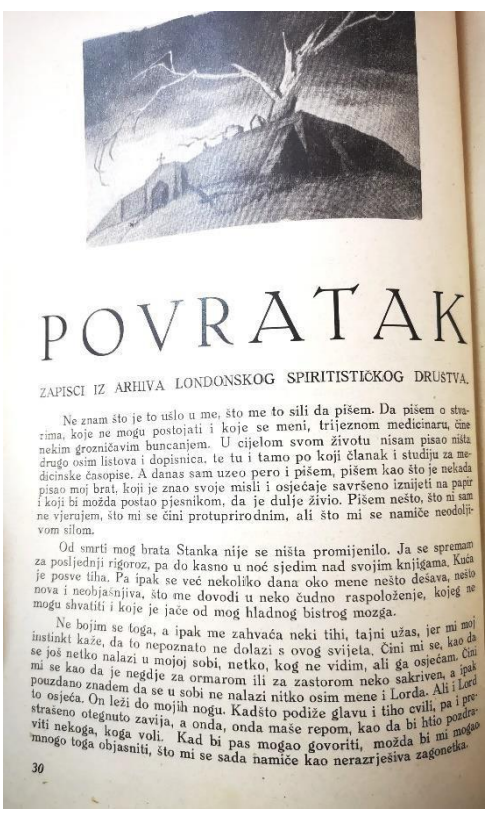


Figure 10, 11 – Examples of photography from various film journals from the Croatian Film Archive, that depict the shift in artistic ideas, thus gaining independent informative value as an artistic tool.

Having to promote the entertainment as well as artistic value of film as a medium, these magazines and journals offered great visuals, excellent graphic design and quality photography works, which systematically shifted their themes from social life and fashion to more obscure, erotic, and conceptual photography that expressed the darker side of the world, which, together with written content, culminated in the 1940s, with content focused on the occult, and themes such as cabala, ghosts, darkest fears, grotesque, death and horror.

Figure 12, 13 – Examples of photography from various film journals from the Croatian Film Archive, depicting much darker and more mysterious themes, in line with the changes within that period.



POVRATAK

ZAPISCI IZ ARHIVA LONDONSKOG SPIRITISTIČKOG DRUŠTVA.

Ne znam što je to uslo u me, što me to sili da pišem. Da pišem o stvarima, koje ne mogu postojati i koje se meni, trijeznom medicinaru, čine nekim grozničavim buncanjem. U cijelom svom životu nisam pisao ništa drugo osim listova i dopisnica, te tu i tamo po koji članak i studiju za medicinske časopise. A danas sam uzeo pero i pišem, pišem kao što je nekada pisao moj brat, koji je znao svoje misli i osjećaje savršeno iznijeti na papir i koji bi možda postao pjesnikom, da je dulje živio. Pišem nešto, što ni sam ne vjerujem, što mi se čini protuprirodnim, ali što mi se namiče neodoljivom silom.

Od smrti mog brata Stanka nije se ništa promijenilo. Ja se spremam za posljednji rigoroz, pa do kasno u noć sjedim nad svojim knjigama. Kuca je posve tiha. Pa ipak se već nekoliko dana oko mene nešto dešava, nešto nova i neobjašnjiva, što me dovodi u neko čudno raspoloženje, kojeg ne mogu shvatiti i koje je jače od mog hladnog bistrog mozga.

Ne bojim se toga, a ipak me zahvaća neki tihi, tajni užas, jer mi moj instinkt kaže, da to nepoznato ne dolazi s ovog svijeta. Čini mi se, kao da se još netko nalazi u mojoj sobi, netko, kog ne vidim, ali ga osjećam. Čini mi se kao da je negdje za ormarom ili za zastorom neko sakriven, a ipak pouzdano znadem da se u sobi ne nalazi nitko osim mene i Lorda. Ali i Lord to osjeća. On leži do mojih nogu. Kadšto podiže glavu i tiho cvili, pa i prestraseno otegnuto zavija, a onda, onda maše repom, kao da bi htio pozdraviti nekoga, koga voli. Kad bi pas mogao govoriti, možda bi mi mogao mnogo toga objasniti, što mi se sada namiče kao nerazrješiva zagonetka.

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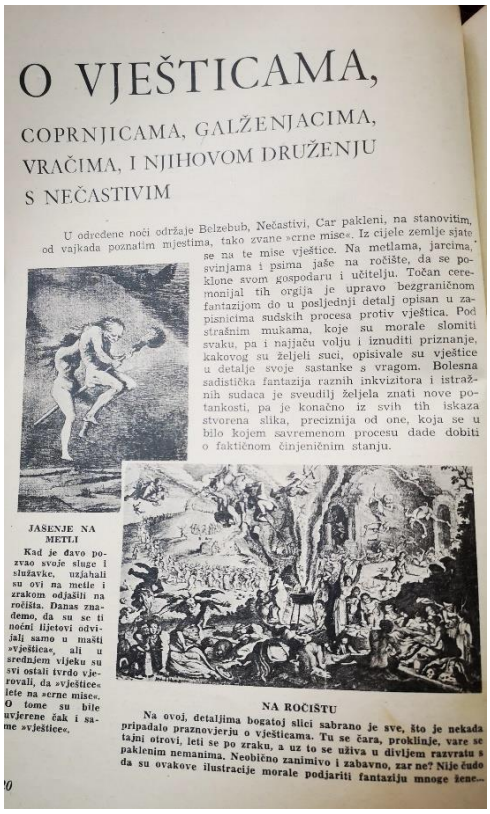


O VJEŠTICAMA,

COPRNJICAMA, GALŽENJACIMA, VRAČIMA, I NJIHOVOM DRUŽENJU S NEČASTIVIM

U određene noći održaje Belzebub, Nečastivi, Car pakleni, na stanovitim, od vajkada poznatim mjestima, tako zvane »crne mise«. Iz cijele zemlje sjate se na te mise vještice. Na metlama, jarcima, svinjama i psima jaše na ročište, da se poklone svom gospodaru i učitelju. Točan ceremonijal tih orgija je upravo bezgraničnom fantazijom do u posljednji detalj opisan u zapisnicima sudskih procesa protiv vještica. Pod strašnim mukama, koje su morale slomiti svaku, pa i najjaču volju i iznuditi priznanje, kakovog su željeli suci, opisivale su vještice u detalje svoje sastanke s vragom. Bolesna sadistička fantazija raznih inkvizitora i istražnih sudaca je sveudilj željela znati nove potankosti, pa je konačno iz svih tih iskaza stvorena slika, preciznija od one, koja se u bilo kojem savremenom procesu dade dobiti o faktičnom činjeničnim stanju.

JAŠENJE NA METLI

Kad je đavo pozvao svoje sluge i službvke, uzjahali su ovi na metle i zrakom odjašili na ročišta. Danas znademo, da su se ti noćni lijetovi odvijali samo u mašti »vještica«, ali u srednjem vijeku su svi ostali čvrsto vjerovali, da »vještice« leće na »crne mise«. O tome su bile uvjerene čak i same »vještice«.

NA ROČIŠTU

Na ovoj, detaljima bogatoj slici sabrano je sve, što je nekada pripadalo praznovjerju o vješticama. Tu se čara, proklinje, vare se tajni otrovi, leti se po zraku, a uz to se uživa u divljem razvratu s paklenim nemanima. Neobično zanimivo i zabavno, zar ne? Nije čudo da su ovakove ilustracije morale podjariti fantaziju mnoge žene...

Figure 14, 15 – Articles and stories about the occult, the spiritual and witchcraft in film journals of the 1940s (The Return – left, About Witches, Warlock, and Their Relationship with the Devil – right).

This shift came at the time of World War II (1939-45) and reflected the concerns that the world was collectively sharing/thinking. Snelson talks about the topic and the wartime concerns in his article Ghost in the Machine, where the emphasis is on the occult practices and female consummation of the same. The beginning of the hyphened interest in the occult happened in 1944, when "the New York Times reported that Hollywood, Broadway, and popular literature were 'haunted as never before […] It is an odd sort of escape from a world in which evil and terror are, objectively, and literally so important, but expected. This cycle of ghost stories—spanning across different mediums—came in the wake of a barrage of serious media debate, beginning in mid-1943, that reported the popularisation of all manner of spiritual and psychic practices, including séances, astrology, telepathy, spiritualist mediums and teacup readers. However, this revival in occult rituals was not attributed to a desire for 'escapism,' rather an

attempt to engage with the emotional and epistemological uncertainties of wartime."[93] The connection between the occult and warfare is not an unfamiliar topic. This connection existed since the early days of film, the days of the Lumière cinematograph, the appreciation of the moving image as a novelty and experimental amateur short films. Barber and FitzGerald explain the mentions of the occult and how it all began. They emphasise that this understanding and presence of the occult in warfare was based on psychological approaches and analyses of a range of theories about the occult involvement in Nazism: "Such ideas were first put forward as early as the 1930s, but it was with the astonishing success of Pauwels and Bergier's *The Morning of the Magicians* in the 1960s that they entered popular consciousness and became fashionable."[94] They also state that most of these theories were nothing more than imaginative conjecture: "A number of writers followed their example, some engaging in a serious analysis of the extent to which occult factors did or did not play a significant part in the regime and others in little more than fantastic speculation."[95] In WWII, apart from the stories that tickled people's imagination invoking a sort of escapism nonetheless, and scared them on a psychological level about Hitler's connection to the occult and the implication of the said practices in the war, this period revealed another concern, the one with the feminine, as apparently women were the main consumers of the occult and the consumerism that followed it: "this 'new occultism' was often linked to a female propensity for consumption. As one headline exclaimed, 'first it was women's panties, now it is Ouija boards that are in demand.' In these articles, anxieties about the legitimacy of the rationalist principles upon which the nation was built—and the American public's subsequent experimentation with alternative belief systems—are displaced onto women, in this case explicitly the female body."[96] That was reflected in film magazines and journals in the Balkans, especially with the shift of topics and content to a more entertaining and trendy content. Photos almost always showed a female body in a fantastical scenario, unlike the articles about the dark arts, ghosts, witches and the supernatural, in which, even though most authors were male, the

[93] Snelson, Tim. THE GHOST IN THE MACHINE: World War II, popular occultism, and Hollywood's 'serious' ghost films, Media History, Vol. 17, 2011, pp. 17-32.
[94] FitzGerald, Michael. Barber, Barrington. The Nazi Occult War: Hitler's Compact with the Forces of Evil, Arcturus Publishing, 2013, intro.
[95] FitzGerald, Michael. Barber, Barrington. The Nazi Occult War: Hitler's Compact with the Forces of Evil, Arcturus Publishing, 2013, intro.
[96] FitzGerald, Michael. Barber, Barrington. The Nazi Occult War: Hitler's Compact with the Forces of Evil, Arcturus Publishing, 2013, intro.

themes revolved around the magical and astonishing representations of the dark themes and the occult, without paying too much attention to gender, however, what these articles did have in common with the rest of the world was the appropriation of these existing antirationalist principles "in order to shore up the dominant belief systems for which the country was fighting— in this case consumerism, traditional gender roles and heterosexual coupling."[97] The occult was a metaphor for the fear of warfare, fear for one's own life, fear of changes and most importantly, fear of death. The few most notable, and most popular examples of film journals and magazines in the Balkans, as they were the most consistent in publishing and consistently mentioned in various contexts, were *Cinema Revija* (later changed its name to *Cinema Magazin*; 1927- 1941), *Filmska Revija* (1927-1941), and *Kulisa* (1927-1941). Like most of these kinds of publications in the 1920s, they were almost completely dedicated to film, and later, the content expanded to other artistic areas, like photography, theatre, society, and the said occultism period. Since the information and correspondence mostly came from the US, the established star system of American cinematography blended in the Balkan ambiance with success. *Cinema Revija*, for example, regularly reported about big names such as Fritz Lang, Peter Lorre, Boris Karloff, F.W.Murnau, Henri Georges Clouzot, and Konrad Veidt, who was the audience's favourite. News and interviews about him revolved around his overall career and life outside of film set, and he was recognized as a prominent figure in the works of German expressionism.

[97] Snelson, Tim. 2011, pp. 17-32.

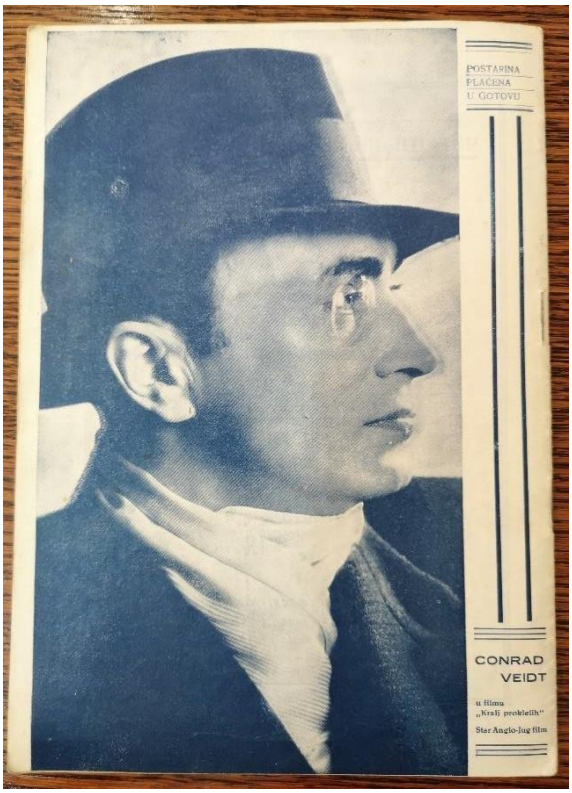


Figure 16 – Conrad Veidt on the back cover of Filmska revija (1931).

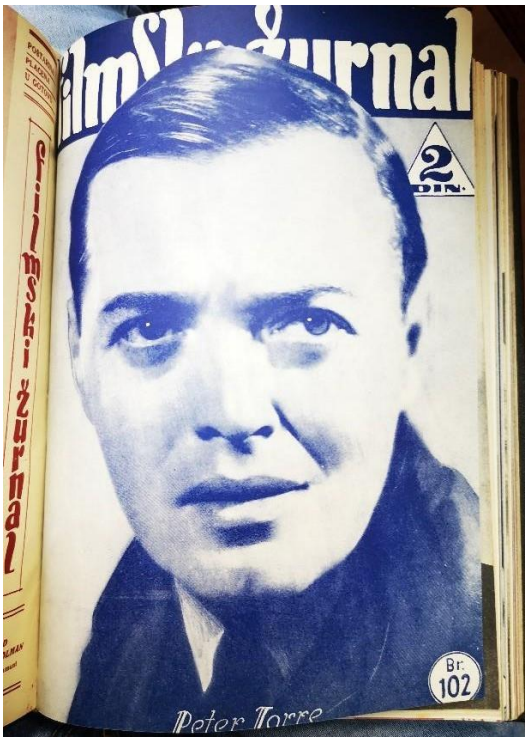
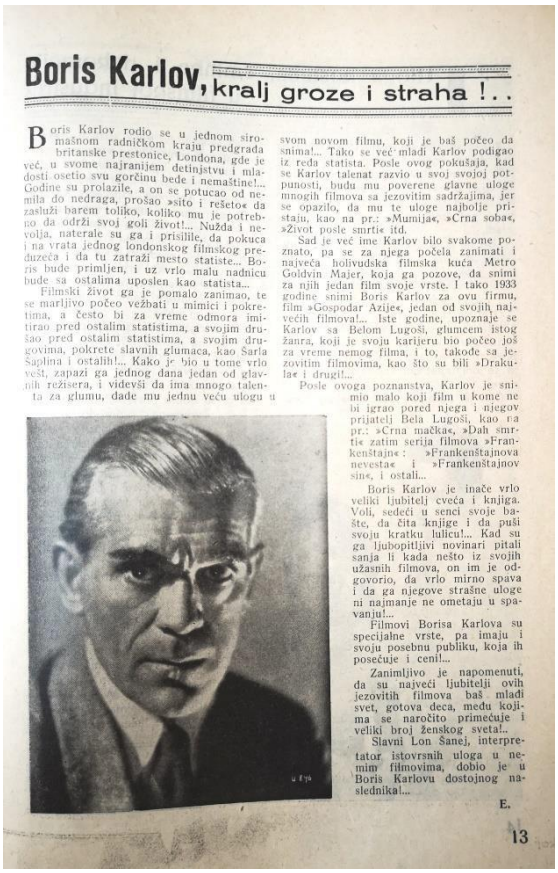


Figure 17 – Peter Lorre on the front cover of Filmski žurnal (1930s).

Fritz Lang and Boris Karloff enjoyed a special treatment from the Balkan audiences. Karloff was lovingly named “the king of horror and fear” in a biographical article about his life and career (*Filmska Revija*, 1931), calling him a worthy successor to Lon Chaney.



Boris Karlov, kralj groze i straha !..

Boris Karlov rodio se u jednom siromašnom radničkom kraju predgrađa britanske prestonice, Londona, gde je već, u svome najranijem detinjstvu i mladosti osetio svu gorčinu bede i nemaštine!... Godine su prolazile, a on se potucao od nemila do nedraga, prošao »sito i rešeto« da zasluži barem toliko, koliko mu je potrebno da održi svoj goli život!... Nužda i nevolja, naterale su ga i prisilile, da pokuca i na vrata jednog londonskog filmskog preduzeća i da tu zatraži mesto statiste... Boris bude primljen, i uz vrlo malu nadnicu bude sa ostalima uposlen kao statista...

Filmski život ga je pomalo zanimao, te se marljivo počeo vežbati u mimici i pokretima, a često bi za vreme odmora imitirao pred ostalim statistima, a svojim drugovima, pokrete slavnih glumaca, kao Šarla Šaplina i ostalih!... Kako je bio u tome vrlo vešt, zapazi ga jednog dana jedan od glavnih režisera, i videvši da ima mnogo talenta za glumu, dade mu jednu veću ulogu u svom novom filmu, koji je baš počeo da snima!... Tako se već mladi Karlov podigao iz reda statista. Posle ovog pokušaja, kad se Karlov talenat razvio u svoj svojoj potpunosti, budu mu poverene glavne uloge mnogih filmova sa jezovitim sadržajima, jer se opazilo, da mu te uloge najbolje pristaju, kao na pr.: »Mumija«, »Crna soba«, »Život posle smrtie itd.

Sad je već ime Karlov bilo svakome poznato, pa se za njega počela zanimati i najveća holivudska filmska kuća Metro Goldvin Majer, koja ga pozove, da snimi za njih jedan film svoje vrste. I tako 1933 godine snimi Boris Karlov za ovu firmu, film »Gospodar Azije«, jedan od svojih najvećih filmova!... Iste godine, upoznaje se Karlov sa Belom Lugoši, glumcem istog žanra, koji je svoju karijeru bio počeo još za vreme nemog filma, i to, takođe sa jezovitim filmovima, kao što su bili »Drakula« i drugi!...

Posle ovoga poznanstva, Karlov je snimio malo koji film u kome ne bi igrao pored njega i njegov prijatelj Bela Lugoši, kao na pr.: »Crna mačka«, »Dah smrti« zatim serija filmova »Frankenštajnove nevesta« i »Frankenštajnov sine, i ostali...

Boris Karlov je inače vrlo veliki ljubitelj cveća i knjiga. Voli, sedeći u senci svoje bašte, da čita knjige i da puši svoju kratku lulicu!... Kad su ga ljubopitljivi novinari pitali sanja li kada nešto iz svojih užasnih filmova, on im je odgovorio, da vrlo mirno spava i da ga njegove strašne uloge ni najmanje ne ometaju u spavanju!...

Filmovi Borisa Karlova su specijalne vrste, pa imaju i svoju posebnu publiku, koja ih posećuje i ceni!...

Zanimljivo je napomenuti, da su najveći ljubitelji ovih jezovitih filmova baš mladi svet, gotova deca, među kojima se naročito primećuje i veliki broj ženskog sveta!..

Slavni Lon Šanej, interpretator istovrsnih uloga u nemim filmovima, dobio je u Boris Karlovu dostojnog naslednika!...

E.

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Figure 18 – Article about Boris Karloff, the king of horror and fear (Filmska Revija, 1931).

It is fascinating how often Lon Chaney was celebrated for his roles and hard work in film – especially after his death - there was even a full coverage of James Cagney in the role of Lon Chaney in an autobiographical film *Man of Thousand Faces* (Pevney, 1957), a report written with the same admiration for this tribute as any other article and news written in admiration about Lon Chaney while alive.

Figure 19 – James Cagney as Lon Chaney, Man of Thousand Faces (Pevney, 1957).

These articles and news pieces were written with the need of the audiences in mind – it seems that they craved to get a glimpse of real life of one of the most prominent actors of the time; there was the need to see famous actors outside of their film surroundings: "Boris Karloff is otherwise a big admirer of flowers and books. He loves, sitting in the shade of his garden, to read books and smoke his short little pipe!... When the inquisitive journalists asked him if he ever dreams about the scenes from his own horror films, he answered them that he sleeps very peacefully and that his scary roles do not disrupt his sleep at all!"[98] The use of familiar language and excessive punctuation to emphasize the admiration for Karloff as a public figure with a private life outside of film industry, as well as for other actors and actresses serves to humanize them, which shows sincere effort to separate them from their roles of monsters they played in horror films. On the other hand, Fritz Lang was more celebrated for his film work. One of his most famous films *M*, based on the story of Düsseldorf vampire, was written about in revolutionary terms: "M means a complete turn in film art! Among all the names in European film art, one stands out the most – it is Fritz Lang! This director possesses the feature of always creating – he always aspires for something new, and he is always looking for new paths. That is why his movies have always been exceptional. Let us just remind ourselves of the Nibelungs,

[98] Boris Karlov, kralj groze I straha, Filmska Revija, 1931., translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

and The Spy, and The Woman on The Moon. Those were all silent films, but each one of them offered something new to the audiences. Lang has a good eye for optical effects and besides that, he has a developed sense of tempo – and that was always the most important thing about films. […] Fritz Lang finished his first sound film M a few weeks ago. What kind of film is it? Did Lang find something new in it as well? By all means – no doubt about it! That film is different from any other film made to date, not just because of the technique, […] but because of its value and the way its value was shown. Lang showed facts in this film – he described a dramatic event like the ones we have recently read about in the newspapers. All of that, as we have mentioned before, in a new technique, with a strong tempo, which is equally strong as the tempos in his silent films, with strong plot and – and persuasiveness so strong that in the cinema during the showing of the film on the big screen, the audience divides into two groups – those who want the child killer to get punished with a death penalty, and the others who are for throwing the killer in prison for life."[99]

[99] "M" znači obrat u filmskoj umjetnosti, Cinema Revija br. 12/1931., translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

FRITZ LANG:

STVARNI IZVJEŠTAJI -- FILM

BERLINSKO PODZEMLJE TRAŽI DÜSSELDORFSKOG VAMPIRA

Prema pouzdanim vijestima nalazi se berlinsko podzemlje u velikoj uzrujanosti. Naravno da svi »pošteni lopovi« osudjuju i okreću se gnjušanjem od ovakovog zločinca kao što je düsseldorfski vampir. Uslijed mnogobrojnih racija postali su berlinski teški momci nervozni i zlovoljni.

Vijest da postoji veza izmedju umorstva u Düseldorfu i Ratiboru dala je novi povod toj općoj uzrujanosti. Osam se lopova složilo da traže düseldorfskog vampira. Izjavili su da će putem svojih veza u roku od 14 dana doći do rezultata.

Tih osam lopova detektiva rade po jednom stanovitom tajnom planu. Novaca imadu dovoljno na raspolaganju. Oni stoje na stanovištu da traženi mirno sjedi u Düsseldorfu gdje živi po svoj prilici kao mirni gradjanin.

Ovaj izrezak iz berlinskih novina »Tempo« od 16. V. 1930. dao je pobude režiseru Fritz Langu za njegov film »M«.

Čuda koja se danas svaki sat dogodjaju nadmašila su ona iz 1001 noći — ili mislite li Vi da bi normalni srednjoevropejac koji na najbržem putu treba da dodje iz Berlina u Pariz sjeo na čarobnog konja, kada imade svoj trkaći auto, ili sjeo na leteći sag kad imade aeroplan? Treba samo da se pogleda što se zbiva oko nas! Svaka novina dnevno donaša ljudske tragedije i komedije i ti izvještaji puni su takove fantastike, ili slučajnosti ili romantike ili kako Vi to već hoćete nazvati, da se nijedan dramaturg ikojeg velikog filmskog koncerna nebi usudio ovakav siže predložiti šefu produkcije, a da ne bude ismjehivan. *Takav je život!*

Činilo mi se najispravnijim da izradim film stvarnosti, baziran na stvarnim izvještajima.

Fantazija najfantastičnijeg pisca nije ništa spram zamršenih dogadjaja i stranputica koje pravi život donaša, dapače najobičniji kič naše sadašnjice je slabiji od dnevne kolportaže. A ipak ne smijemo taj kič naše današnjice pregledati već ga moramo uzeti kao fakat, ako želimo da naš račun bude tačan, ako se ne želimo izvrći pogibelji da postanemo sami žrtva tog

Fritz Lang

jadnog bivstvovanja. Epidemičke serije ubojstva en masse u zadnjim decenijama interesirale su me, kako je i neugodan taj studij, i dovele me na ideju da u okviru filma pokažem tu Mamut opasnost ljudstva i puteve kojim se možemo spram nje boriti. U osobi düseldorfskog vampira multi ubojice Kürtena našao sam konačno prototip, i opazio sam da se u njegovim ubojstvima ponavljaju okolnosti pod kojim su izvršeni, to jest bili su uvijek na jednu tipičnu formu. Film »M« Ubojice izmedju sebe treba da je dokumenat i extrakt dogodjaja koje sam iz obilja materijala iskristalizirao pomoću moje žene i stvorio film. Bilo mi je stalo da tamne strane jedne pripovijesti ubijstva en masse logički prikažem i plastično predvedem pred oči publike. Svaku fazu filma sagradio sam na stvarnim izvještajima. Katkada je film prešao zadaću umjetničke reprodukcije i pokazao puteve da se unaprijed zapriječe ovakova ubijstva.

Razni stadiji filma su vezani u lanac istinitih dogadjaja i svojedobno proživljeni od stotine majki čija su djeca bila izvrgnuta opasnosti ubojice, tako da je cijela radnja jedinstveno konstruirana, a ujedno upozorava na opasnost. Pripovijest o nepoznatom ubojici, koji uvijek nanovo živi izmedju nas, i kojem svako dijete može da padne kao žrtva ako ga se ne čuva sa svim mogućim i postojećim sredstvima.

EIN FRITZ LANG FILM PDD NERO

»M« dolazi k nama u nakladi Pan-filma

Figure 20 – Caricature of Fritz Lang, and an article about his work and his film M (Cinema Revija, 1931).

These are just some of the examples of archival materials found in the Croatian Film Archive (Zagreb, Croatia). The extent of these materials is by far too big to cover completely, however, these examples do show that the countries in the Balkans were no strangers to horror genre in the early period of Balkan film history, in fact, they admired the actors and their work in horror so much that almost every issue of the most popular film journals (Cinema Magazin, Filmska Revija, Kulisa, Filmski žurnal...) had a piece of news or coverage of some of the biggest names in horror, whether in acting or filmmaking. The ciné clubs were a successful introduction into more prominent film movements that emerged after 1930s-40s, hyphened by the popularity of film journals and magazines. Instead of artistic pieces, the focus shifted to making and showing propaganda and educational films, during WWII and after, which gave rise to the so-called socialist cinema and the fifties producer's cinema, when most of the notable films were made across the Yugoslav countries, which often generated some sort of clash between national cinemas inside Yugoslavia. However, there was still no specific mention of horror as a genre at the time, as it was the era of what can primarily be considered as auteur cinema. Priorities lay in presenting the state policies and unity of the countries amidst a complex historical era.

Chapter 2

Horror in the Partisan Era: Propaganda in Yugoslavia during the 1940s and 1950s

The auteur cinema formed during the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which existed from 1918 until 1941, when the political circumstances changed gravely, and the countries that were a part of this kingdom were affected by WWII, political decisions of the leader of Yugoslavia, Marshall Tito, and heavy propaganda. "Before the war, the Yugoslav film industry was practically non-existent. And for the world public, it did not exist, to all intents and purposes, for the 20 years that followed the war."[100] Liehm and Liehm go on to say that: "The first Yugoslav feature film was made in 1947,[101] in the difficult post-war period, when a nationalized film industry was being established in the war-torn country. Those who established it, however, had nothing to work with - no cameras, no studios, no experience, no people. What they did have, was the dedicated support of the state, and a will that was equally strong. There was enthusiasm and persistence. During the partisan resistance against the Nazis, which in Yugoslavia in fact amounted to war, Yugoslavs joined the cameramen of the allied armies in filming some military action."[102] That kind of enthusiasm and the will to make something significant during the wartime amounted to a collection of films of national nature that mainly served as propaganda, popularly called partisan films. One of the most successful Yugoslav genres, partisan films were great in combining the post-war triumphalism and the naïve narration, designating action films that dealt with World

[100] Liehm, Liehm. The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film After 1945, University of California Press, 1977, p.123.

[101] This is incorrect. First Yugoslav (Croatian) feature (and sound) film was made in 1944, by Oktavijan Miletić, one of the pioneers of film art in Croatia since the 1930s. The film was named Lisinski, and it talks about the life and work of one of the most famous Croatian composers, Vatroslav Lisinski. However, since the film was not concerned with propaganda, nor it was mentioning it in any way, the officials concluded that it is not important for any kind of distribution or showing anywhere.

[102] Liehm, Liehm, 1977, p. 123.

War II. “The term “partisan,” right from the start raises a crucial general question when dealing with Yugoslavia’s … partisan art in literature, film, song and in visual culture: is it partisan in itself or is it first and foremost concerned with the (historic dramatis personae of the) Yugoslav Partisans? Partisan art and partisan art... often tread a common path in the history of the partisan narrative in Yugoslavia.”[103] However, there were some constraints to this growing genre in the Partisan – Communist era: “Without the political and propaganda needs generated by the totalitarian regime, the state would not have secured funds for the film industry, and without monetary support the film pioneers would not have enjoyed the opportunity for continuous work. On the other hand, technical prosperity was paid for in spades by constraints on artistic freedom and a servicing of the antidemocratic and inhumane regimes. The choice of topics was dependent on the political tides, and there were times when the filmmakers did not even have a say...”[104] in the process of deciding on the style of filming, atmosphere, or any other significant aspect of making films. Filmmakers at the time chose to follow the imposed restrictions and rules, for a higher cause, as Vidan and Crnković suggest in their academic collection on the topic of film in these parts: “...the most important task in this first period was to master the craft of making movies, even if it was to be done at a cost and while abiding to the prescribed ideological structures.”[105] However, the challenges that came with the regime and ideologies surrounding it were very restrictive of the creative aspect of making films. Some of the challenges that arise from this topic, while analysing and researching partisan art and its narratives stand out, as Jakiša and Gilić suggest, and include “…dealing with the often-quoted function of the Yugoslav partisan narrative to provide a founding myth for the new state of post-war Yugoslavia. Seen from this angle, Yugoslavia’s partisan narratives shrink to commissioned work in the service of an ideological re-education program of a primarily self-sustaining, suppressive regime.”[106]Hence, this way of conducting work was imposing constraints on all aspects of cultural and creative work at that time, which then lead to a common goal envisioned by the government through the regime they were imposing: “This way works of partisan writers like Vladimir Nazor, Oskar Davičo, Branko Ćopić, Miško Kranjec or Mihailo Lalić are

[103] Jakiša, Gilić. Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture, Transcript Verlag, 2015, p.9.
[104] Vidan, A., Crnković G.P. In Contrast: Croatian Film Today, Croatian Film Association and Berghan Books, 2012, p.24.
[105] Vidan, A., Crnković G.P. 2012, p.24.
[106] Jakiša, Gilić. 2015, p. 13.

retrospectively degraded to 'state novels', calling their literary quality into question while the partisan film production in its variety is reduced to a common goal: "propagandizing and legitimizing the newly founded people's socialist government."[107] Filmmakers had no other options but to comply to these restrictions, which in turn reflected on their work processes and the production of their films. With this common goal in mind, one can observe the impact of the restraints imposed on artists and filmmakers in doing what they do best – create art. Restricting creativity by way of politics meant restricting art in its many forms. Despite these however, partisan era was and still is one of the most prolific in terms of art and film, and ironically, now the genre of partisan films is deemed to be "one of the most authentic genres that emerged from the Yugoslav cinema."[108] Slowly it becomes clear why there was not ever any mention of horror as a genre in this period of creative darkness, as horror relies on a filmmaker's creativity to present their ideas. The genre was utilised in this way and explored by some of the first filmmakers in the region, to make film art in its purest, oftentimes amateurish, form. There is a certain division in partisan art; it is the commonplace that constitutes the difference between "us" and "them," them referring to anyone and anything that is not partisan art in any form. Hence, the total exclusion of horror in film in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as any other genre for that matter, was a matter of politics, propaganda and shifted financial interests, which mainly depended on Tito, who opposed everything and anyone that is not him: "In other words, partisan art establishes an us and them in the first place. This not only applies to political and war enemies, but to aesthetic adversaries, too. Partisan art wildly and enthusiastically opposes. It opposes something, someone, or both and the dissenting polemics being used in this opposition in Michel Foucault's words, "recruits partisans" and "establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests against which one must fight until the moment this enemy is defeated and either surrenders or disappears... One of this spirit's liveliest expressions can be found in the alternative partisan film production within the nouvelle vague or novi val (in Croatian). The renewed frontline in film separated 'real' art from the dishonest needs of the "red bourgeoisie" and made the directors partisans of art that fought an all-European artistic war on a Yugoslav frontline."[109] However, it might be presumptuous to talk about these partisan films as a

[107] Jakiša, Gilić. 2015, p. 13.
[108] Vidan, A., Crnković G.P., 2012, p. 34.
[109] Jakiša, Gilić. 2015, p.10-11.

genre, because even though they had certain common characteristics that were present in all of them, the most obvious and the most important one being the propaganda, these partisan films travelled across different genres altogether, from action films to westerns: "There should be no question about the stylistic consistencies of Partisan westerns. What binds these films together are clearly not only general stylistic characteristics, but also repeated narrative structures, stable ideological subtexts, consistent casting, use of the same sound effects, extensive reliance on the help of the Yugoslavian People's Army, etc."[110] Even though emotions and psychology were emphasized often in this genre, still, as the films developed more over the years, "much of this dimension was lost and replaced with pure, Western-like action…The schema was simple: every big battle from the rich history of Yugoslavia's World War II experience deserved a monument – and a movie."[111] Consequently, we now have films like *Živjeće ovaj narod/ This nation will live* (1947) by Nikola Popović, *Kozara* (1962) by Veljko Bulajić and perhaps his most famous one, *Bitka na neretvi/ Battle on the River Neretva* (1969, Bulajić), that depicted epic battles of good and evil between the "good"[112] Partisan soldiers and "very bad"[113] Nazi soldiers. Stanković uses the term partisan films here based on the influence of the latter, the film which made such a great impact all over the world with its success: "*Bitka na Neretvi/The Battle on Neretva* (1969, Veljko Bulajić)...was a spectacular account of one of the most dramatic battles fought by Tito's Partisans during the war and as such was financed by the federation, republics, factories from all over Yugoslavia, a foreign distributor, as well as by massive material help from the Yugoslavian People's Army (with guns, planes, tanks and thousands of extras). It was actually so expensive that even today it stands as one of the most expensive European films ever made. However, the huge financial investment paid off: *Neretva* became the film with the greatest attendance in the history of Yugoslav cinema, was sold to 84 countries, and was also nominated for the Best Foreign Film Oscar."[114] These films enjoyed a prominent status in the country and outside of it, and they had full financial and creative support from Marshall Tito, who even on one occasion gave permission to blow up a real bridge for the purposes of filming. Local online portal N1

[110] Stankovic, Peter. 1970s Partisan Epics as Western Films, in Jakiša, Gilić. Partisans in Yugoslavia: Literature, Film and Visual Culture, Transcript Verlag, 2015, p. 247.
[111] Taylor, Wood, Graffy, Iordanova. The BFI Companion to Eastern European and Russian Cinema, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019, p. 265.
[112] Emphasis by the researcher.
[113] Emphasis by the researcher.
[114] Stankovic, Peter. 2015, p. 248.

released the story and the event that inspired Bulajić to get clearance from Tito and the government to film this epic scene: "German officers during the Battle of the Wounded were sure that the partisans would move towards the north and the Vrbas River where they concentrated the largest number of their forces. Josip Broz – Tito managed to outwit them, turning the partisans together with the wounded towards Neretva River and the Prenj mountain. At the same time, he ordered the demolition of four bridges on the Neretva River and one on the Rama River, after which the Partisans managed to build a new wooden bridge on Neretva in 19 hours, thus crossing to the other bank and getting out of the ring. Guided by this, director Veljko Bulajić, in agreement with the authorities, decided to blow up this bridge into the air, and it represents an important historical place in the tourist offer of Herzegovina since then."[115] The place where the bridge used to stand now serves as a monument of a sort, a monument to Tito's legacy and the nostalgia for the times that have passed, but still linger inside people's minds. Most of these highly successful commercial films were made into series afterwards, in the 80s, becoming even more popular among the audiences. But this success did not last long. Couple of factors marked the 1980s the final year for the partisan film genre: Tito died, so did the financial support, and the making of a film directed by Živojin Pavlović, *Na svidenje v naslednji vojni/ Farewell until the next war* (Pavlović, 1980). A war drama with romantic elements, follows the two enemies from war, a German soldier Bitter and a Slovenian partisan Berk, who meet during their holidays in Spain. Recollecting the war through a personal conversation, Berk remembers Anton, his fellow comrade he had spent the most time with.[116] Pavlović's film was effectively the final blow to the partisan film genre, making sure that the genre stays dead in the years to come: "If the death of Tito symbolically closed the period of partisan triumphs, Pavlović's film was a clinical diagnosis of the death of the genre itself."[117] The reason for this opinion coming from liberalist corners lies in the construction of the film itself, and the way Pavlović tells the story of war as it is: "The cynically (i.e. prophetically) titled FAREWELL UNTIL THE NEXT WAR was Živojin Pavlović's second, and last look at World War II in Yugoslavia and is by far most ambitious, honest, bitter, and controversial partisan film produced in the country that was to

[115] Anadolija, Most iz filma "Bitka na Neretvi" uskoro u novom ruhu, accessed July 3, 2021, https://n1info.hr/regija/a508138-most-iz-filma-andquotbitka-na-neretviandquot-uskoro-u-novom-ruhu/

[116] From IMdB: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0174058/, where the film was translated as See You In The Next War.

[117] Taylor, Wood, Graffy, Iordanova. 2019, p. 266.

collapse into flames and genocide only a decade later. Based on an equally uncompromising novel by Vitomil Župan, the enfant terrible of Yugoslavian literature, NASVIDENJE V NASLEDNJI VOJNI continues the comprehensive deconstruction and demythologization of the official narrative of partisan heroism… At first, this lavish production hints at yet another heroic spectacle, but soon descends into the murky, base corners of the human psyche, showing war for what it is on the ground: tragic madness that brings the worst out in human beings."[118] Regardless of its ending, it is however apparent that the word genre appears quite often in connection to Partisan films, even though there are divided opinions about it. Stanković quite skilfully makes the distinction about genre in partisan films, and partisan films as a genre, analysed and spotted by Dimitrijević in 2016: "The term partisan film also operates as a genre category, most often associated with the war spectacles or epics or Western-like, action-packed movies. In his essay 1970s Partisan Epics as Western films: The Question of Genre and Myth in Yugoslav Partisan Film, Peter Stanković proposes a distinction between partisan films in general (meaning all films dealing with the National-Liberation War) and partisan westerns from the 1970s."[119] Stanković further states[120] that as a whole, these represented a return to the more propagandistic Partisan cinematography from the late 1940s and 1950s, at least in respect to their simplistic content. As he is using Will Wright's film theory and the structure of westerns, Stanković focuses more on the Partisan epics in the 1970s in his article, however, the foundation for his reasoning and mapping the partisan film genre starts with some of the first partisan films made in the 1940s and 1950s, films that made the development of this successful genre possible. Because of this rapid success of partisan film genre, and the propaganda that was a crucial part of them, any other genre was almost literally erased from the filmmaking map in Yugoslavia; there was no place for horror in this period of financial and artistic prosperity, not until the 1960s and 1970s, with the emergence of the Yugoslav Black Wave, when things rapidly started to change. Horror has seen and found a way to get back on the Balkan film stage with some of the prominent and well-respected names in film.

[118] From an Austrian festival Viennale retrospective 2019: https://www.viennale.at/en/films/nasvidenje-vnaslednji-vojni

[119] Dimitrijević, Branislav. The Yugoslav Partisan Films: The Battle Continues, Studies in Eastern European Cinema, 2016.

[120] Stanković, Peter. 2015, pp. 248-9.

Chapter 3

Rebellion, horror, and the Black Wave in the 1960s and 1970s

Kingdom of Yugoslavia became the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), consisting of Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Slovenia in 1946. As the political and state structure changed, so did the filmmaking. All the finances were put into making war films as a social and political commentary on the WWII, and propaganda films, that glorified Partisan troops and their contribution to the new union. Filmmakers did not have many options, but to conform to whoever had the finances, which was the Union, in this case. Freedom was restricted, censorship struck hard, and that state of lingering in space and time without having the option to express oneself and one's own political aspirations and opinions lasted until the late 1960s and 1970s. Suddenly, the wall of despair collapsed in the minds of young filmmakers and artists, and everything that they had bottled up inside came out in the form of a Yugoslavian Black Wave. The Black Wave is a term that describes a specific opus of films created in Yugoslavia in the late 1960s and 1970s, such as films that speak about issues of human soul and psychology, and films that analyse and deconstruct repressive political apparatus. It was created as a reaction to partisan films that glorified the national liberation struggle during WWII, whose "protagonists" were often used only as a means for straightforward propaganda. Young directors who made the greatest impact with their work during this time, like Dušan Makavejev, if they managed to escape incarceration, moved on to Europe and the US to create their respective careers. Makavejev "cared deeply about his homeland but was prevented from passing film through a camera on its soil."[121] Like many others, he wandered the world to avoid incarceration in his country. This was the time when the real circumstances were more dreadful than the horror genre itself, and there was no place for it to flourish and rise above the insurrection and auteur cinema which was prevalent in the Balkans. "As the horror genre possesses a unique capacity to epitomise a collective sense of the world, such films permit their

[121] Tafoya, Scout. Director on a tightrope: Dušan Makavejev, 1932-2019, Roger Ebert Features, January 2019. https://www.rogerebert.com/features/dusan-makavejev-1932-2019

audience to subvert dominant mainstream values, such as bourgeois patriarchal standards. It is not the genre that is most disturbing, but the precarious national eras that such films radically revolt against."[122] McCollum's claim here holds an interesting weight of truthfulness, which, when applied to a territory such as the Balkans, does make more sense of the complicated and often confusing situation in Balkan countries caused by the tumultuous political and social changes in different periods in Balkan history. Such is the period between 1960-70s, when all hell broke loose in order to help filmmakers and artists express themselves without censorship and defend their right to free expression and personal freedoms in general. The 1960s produced a collection of significant films completed under the term Black Wave (Croatian: crni val, Serbian: crni talas), a threatening name made up by extreme ideologists with the main purpose of prosecution. This difficult period in Yugoslav cinema was dominated by rather vibrant Serbian films of experimental nature coming from filmmakers such as Živojin Pavlović, Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik and others. It is commonly understood that Croatian films made during the Black Wave were rather intelligent, while Serbian ones were sharp and straight to the point.[123] This is quite descriptive of the overall mentality of the people in both countries, and it shows how each of them approached this dangerous and uproarious time period. The movement itself reflected the rebellious surroundings in which it was created, as a reaction to the propaganda films from the 1940- 50s and the struggles for liberation from all the political constraints imposed on a national level. This open and direct propaganda encouraged the younger generations to speak up about the issues of human soul and human psychology, as well as to immerse themselves as creative individuals in the extensive analysis of current events and to decode the repressive political structure that tried to take away the freedom from the individual under the guise of the collective being threatened by the actions of individuals. Simultaneously, the filmmakers of the Black Wave used their newly acquired knowledge and skills that they obtained from neorealism and the French new wave "in order to reject the unwritten rules of 'real socialism' (Socialist realism) – simply imitating life, integrated in nationalistic education, combined with patriotic education. Accessible and comprehensive to everyone in the world are the words usually associated with the rise of the Socialist Realism, an

[122] McCollum, V. Post-9/11 Heartland Horror: Rural horror films in an era of urban terrorism, Routledge 2016, p.19.
[123] Statement translated by the researcher from Vidan, Crnković. In Contrast: Croatian Film Today, Croatian Film Association and Berghan Books, 2012, p.

official doctrine in the Soviet Union and its dependent states that was used to govern artistic practices. The two main elements of this rigid movement were Realism, or depicting reality around us as it is, so that people can connect with it, a reality that seems all too familiar and recognizable. As it was essentially a critical movement, but with restrictions, the Realism part of Social Realism could depict critical points of view from the artists, but only if that point of view correlated and bettered the revolutionary cause. The second element, coined revolutionary Romanticism, was described as a romantic notion that gave hope to the future of communist utopia, which served as an explanation to justify any difficulties that emerged along the way. As art is usually quite ambiguous in depicting different things that have different meanings to a whole range of different people, Socialist Realism is essentially the portrayal of reality as it ought to be, not as it really is, if it speaks in favour of the revolutionary cause. As Tito was "in bed" with the Soviet Union at the time, of course, Socialist Realism brushed on Yugoslavian artists, including filmmakers. At the time, in the 40s and 50s, Yugoslavia started producing more films, around 15 or so per year, and the fundamentals of Socialist Realism and its influence coming from the Soviet Union reflected on the art of film in Yugoslavia as well. However, there were indications of different themes emerging in film, which was a step up from previous works. These new themes were talking about the issues of modern life, and most films adopted the practice of putting literary works of significance on screen, which was in a way the filmmakers' way of avoiding the fundamentals of Social Realism that was imposed to them via political connections and Tito's aspirations. Although this period in Yugoslavia is considered as negative by many critics, the mixture of modernism and social realism brought about changes and different fresh perspectives to various art forms, and was rich in quality works from numerous individuals, opening new possibilities to artists and filmmakers alike. This kind of attitude eventually led to young, subversive avant-garde generation creating its own movement as a form of rebellion against the system, the already mentioned Black Wave, a term first used in a derogative manner by communist authorities that tried to impose censorship and ban most of the films made during that time. Later on, the Black Wave took on a more positive meaning which was welcomed by oppositional film culture. This was the time when film as art and a medium was glorified and promoted by the Leninist doctrine that was present in the state as the most important of all arts, which gave the green light to young prospective filmmakers to express their own views about the state that they lived in and to offer criticism of the same state and the

government, as well as the past issues, through creative means. The young filmmakers turned 'bad', in a sense that they started portraying the dark side of the newly formed society, the issues that they were passionately against, like corruption and government's hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness of the societal ruling classes. Considering the dangerous implications of such behaviour in a still more dangerous and restricted environment, creating such open critical content in an unstable political and social climate often led to extensive censorship of most of the films made during that time. The style of the films made during the Black Wave era was often grotesque and abstract, using archival shots and clear-cut editing to convey the absurdity and surrealism of the situation in the country. These films were not focused on forming any kind of genre, instead the filmmakers used their own state of mind and emotional distress caused by the situation in the state to convey their dissatisfaction and lack of individuality that was suffocated with the political repression and the idea of the collective that was present in Yugoslavia at the time, using dissociative images, nervous handheld camera and the scenes of dream like existence and madness. They have created a bubble in which the main statement is that there are no more heroes, evoking the fear and disappointment of being stripped off any kind of individual perspective to express themselves and their concerns. Filmmakers like the already mentioned Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Želimir Žilnik, Bata Čengić formed the main core of the movement, and it is interesting to note that they were all a generation who were a part of a so-called Yugoslav Prague Group, the name referring to the excellent work of a group of Yugoslav directors who were all educated at FAMU, a prominent film school in Prague. Different directors from different countries of Yugoslavia and different ethnical backgrounds created an opus of highly valued work, which was often portrayed with an expressed interest in the plot, quite commonly trying to combine humour and drama, followed by the vague characterization of characters. Also, they skilfully showed that they paid a lot of attention to visuals and details, working with capable crew of cameramen. Most of the members of the school emigrated abroad, where they still live and work, free of restraints from government restrictions and censorship. Nevertheless, after the Black Wave came to its end in the late 1970s, there were still some filmmakers who continued expressing themselves through their work, and the changes that occurred after the madness of the Black Wave, in a very specific way - through Gothic and horror films. One of the representatives of this change is Đorđe Kadijević, who made one of the first horror films in Yugoslavia, *Leptirica* (She butterfly, Serbia, Yugoslavia, 1973), based on an

old Serbian vampire folklore. Including this film, which was the only one of his films that did not focus on the eerie landscapes, Gothic elements and themes of death and madness, but on what is today classified as horror, Kadijević made a few more, which could be seen as a whole cycle of Gothic and horror films in Yugoslavia from 1973-1990, following another crucial change: the fall of SFRY, accompanied by the civil wars in Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia in 1991. It is worth mentioning however, the 1980s as a period when there was a significant gap in making serious horror films (Kadijević's first film was made in 1973, and the last film was made in 1990). It was the time of dealing with the fall of a union and the formation of independent states from it, including the consequences that followed. People and filmmakers alike found solace in a somewhat different genre, a mixture of horror and comedy. The mixture of these two genres in the 1980s resulted in the making of a couple significant horror comedies, that subtly expressed the concerns and the atmosphere of this period. Yugoslavia collapsed, Marshall Tito died, but the cult of his personality continued to live in the hearts and minds of the people who were left behind. After Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia slowly started crumbling down under the weight of political and social issues. The reactions of people were even more intensified by the fact that Tito created a godlike image for himself during his reign, which became embedded into the national identities of all member countries of Yugoslavia, as well as in the memory of their people, creating the so-called "Yugo nostalgia"[124], a term that stayed in the language well after Yugoslavia's collapse. As far as horror is concerned, Đorđe Kadijević, a Serbian director and one of the prominent figures of the Black Wave era was and still is considered a pioneer of Yugoslavian horror, if a thing like that ever existed in the turbulent time of this social change. He earned this title after he made what is now considered the first Yugoslavian (Serbian) horror film, but before we go into discussion about what is considered to be the first Serbian and Yugoslavian horror film, it is worth mentioning his other films as well. *Praznik* (Holiday, 1967) is a typical example of the Black Wave film and Kadijević's debut on film scene that talks about the national liberation struggle in Yugoslavia. Kadijević often uses symbolism in his films, religious and other, that work well with the story he often tries to tell in his films. For example, in *Praznik*, he clearly uses the Last Supper as a tool for parody, by paraphrasing the composition of the painting using the characters from his film and their often ordinary and very

[124] Yugonostalgia, as a term, appeared in language for the first time in 1992, in the weekly newspapers Globus in Croatia. As a term, it had a negative connotation.

oversimplified philosophies of life in the rural areas of Yugoslavia. His interest in horror and the fantastic can also be seen in the character such as Manolo, who is silent throughout the film, but is described as a fantastic and mysterious character with a huge potential to become someone who is a lot more baleful. After the upheaval of the Black Wave, which included most of his films to be banned, and him being excluded from filmmaking circles, Kadijević nevertheless continued to create different, mystical and often haunting films in the 1970s, mostly for television: "Đorđe Kadijević, the author of movies with exceptional personal sensibility and style, was excluded from Serbian filmmaking, like some other Black Wave directors from the Serbian cinema. Subsequently, he transferred to a similar medium: television. This unusual author "knew how to create multi-layered visual metaphors, to coordinate the various elements of the images, to handle with visual effects and to inspire his staff. At the same time in doing so, he found refuge in the creative multitude of fascinating television films based on the rich Serbian historical tradition, folklore, myths and legends, full of horror, grotesque and tragicomic details—just to mention the ingenious first Serbian horror production *Leptirica* (1973), or his interpretation of the domestic literary classic [written by] Milovan Glišić, as well as the feature film Sveto mesto (1990), following Gogol's work *Vij*."[125] Kadijević embraced adaptation as a form of expression in his cycle of Gothic horror films made from 1970- 1990. "*Leptirica* was the first "Serbian" horror film and was loosely based on the 1880 story After Ninety Years by Milovan Glišić. The story revolves around the 19th century Serbian village of Zarožje that is plagued by the vampire Sava Savanović who has been systematically killing anyone who takes charge of the flour mill (situated in the woods outside the village). After four millers have been killed the council elders become desperate as food is rapidly running out."[126] Assumptions about this film, as well as the interpretations of it were and still are quite ambiguous, the storyline often leaving the audiences more confused, and even more scared, in the end. The film opens with a conversation between two villagers at the village mill, discussing the job and the issues that came with it in this particular place. One of the villagers, Živan, has a daughter named Radojka, one of the most beautiful girls in the village, who soon appears up on the hill nearby. The brief exchange between the two men when they see her sets the tone for the rest of the film: "So, tell

[125] Erdeljanović Aleksandar. The Fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Serbian Films, in Habsburg's Last War:The Filmic Memory (1918 to the present), ed. Hannes Leidinger; University of New Orleans Press, 2018; p. 296.

[126] Video from: https://archive.org/details/LeptiricatheShe-butterflyyugoslaviaHorrorFilmEnglishSubtitles1973

me, master Živan, is that your Radojka over there?...oh, just look at her, she looks like a butterfly!"[127] Her appearance and overall presence bring everyone in the village joy; she is the epitome of beauty and innocence. In this instance, Radojka being compared to a butterfly reveals one of the meanings and beliefs connected to it back in the day: a new life, new beginnings, cycle of life, which will change over the course of the film, influenced by villagers' actions and the region's folk tales. The tale of Sava Savanović, the first vampire in Serbia, is one of the most famous folk tales and makes up for the basic plot of the film. It is said that Sava appears inside the mill in the middle of the night and sucks the blood of any miller who dares spending the night in the mill, doing his job. Our miller from the beginning of the film meets the same fate. During the night, when the mill stops working, and the last light inside goes out, he appears. This scene in a film is carefully crafted by the director in order to evoke fear in the viewer. The mill stops working, all the lights go out, one can hear distant screeching sounds and piercing screams, believed to be coming from a mythical animal called drekavac, "a creature of the night and graveyard, originating from south Slavic mythology."[128] Furthermore, the word animal here is used loosely, because: "The creature has been variously described; in some folk tales it has been depicted in the form of an undead man that came out of the grave during night-time to haunt people. Yet in others, it has been depicted as an undead child, who was unbaptized, that rose out from its grave during nighttime to haunt its parents. In Eastern Serbia, it has been depicted in the form of a humanoid canine creature that walks on its back legs. The monster was originally thought to have come from the souls of sinful men, or from children who died unbaptized. It was popularly believed to be visible only at night, especially during the twelve days of Christmas (called unbaptized days in the Serbian language) and in early spring, when other demons and mythical creatures were believed to be more active."[129] The shrieks and screams serve as an announcement of the vampire's presence. The scene develops further with a close-up shot of the monster's piercing eyes, then his overly long black hand checking the flour, and the vampire towering over the villager, his victim for the night, in the culmination of the scene revealing his big, sharp teeth grinding into the man's neck, accompanied by sucking sounds and tearing of the skin, reminding of the violent act of violation. After he finishes sucking the blood out of his

[127] Leptirica (She butterfly, 1973, Kadijević); translation from Croatian by the researcher of the project.
[128] https://www.mythicalcreaturesguide.com/drekavac/
[129] The Srpska Times, The ''Drekavac'' – Monster From South Slavic Mythology, accessed October 2022, https://thesrpskatimes.com/the-drekavac-monster-from-south-slavic-mythology/

victim, the mill starts working again and the morning arrives. The reveal of the dead body and what comes after is filmed in a very comical way, in accordance with the region's mentality and the simple-mindedness of the village folk. One of the villagers finds the victim of the vampire in the morning, and he runs in shock to the village to inform everyone in the village of his find. Kadijević in this scene times the questions and reactions of the villagers on screen perfectly – which gives this scene of shock, tragedy and fear a comical relief through the dialogue between the villagers, and the mimicry of their faces. The story continues with Radojka and Strahinja, a young poor man who is in love with her. They talk about her father not approving of their relationship and potential marriage, and Radojka feels lost and confused and torn between trying to please her father and honour his wishes and be happy with Strahinja, which makes her want to jump to her death. As her thoughts get revealed every time when she is close to the mill to be in view of her controlling father, she becomes the perfect victim for the evil lurking inside the mill. In the meantime, the villagers feel equally confused and torn between two options: dying from the vampire's attack or dying of hunger, since the mill is the only source of food nearby, and with the attacks, no one wants to work there anymore: "What Sava Savanović? What vampires? What forces? What werewolves? Can't you see that we're running out of bread?"[130] The plot complicates further when Strahinja, after an unsuccessful attempt to ask Živan for Radojka's hand, decides to leave, but with the help of rakija (schnapps) gets convinced by the villagers to stay a bit longer. Another plan comes to light when villagers convince Strahinja to spend the night at the mill to get some money for his departure. Strahinja experiences the same problems when the vampire appears, with a slight difference: in shock upon seeing the vampire, he falls through the attic floor of the mill trying to escape the monster, and falls into a pile of flour, rendering him almost invisible to the vampire and thus saving his life. He is yet to live another day. Again, Kadijević turns the scene of finding him in the morning into a comical situation, as the villagers who came to see if he's alive in the morning, see him all covered in flour, looking like a ghost, portraying the superstitious nature of the people living in rural areas: "Before Orthodox Christianity took root, the Slavs held pagan beliefs, and many mythic and folkloric traditions endure to this day.... Serbs are a superstitious people and take their beliefs very seriously […] Before the Second World War, Serbia had an agricultural economy based around small towns and villages, the larger cities being administrative centres of culture and finance.

[130] Leptirica (She butterfly, Kadijević, 1973); translation from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

The Communist leadership had little faith in the economic power of agricultural peasantry and hoped to achieve the preeminence of the working class through a modern industrial economy. […] Communism thus rendered the landowning peasantry a thing of the past; peasants were considered provincial, narrow-minded people, an embarrassment to forward-looking Communist Yugoslavia. Even nowadays, calling someone "seljak" (villager) is a common insult."[131] Village patriarchy, after gaining courage getting drunk celebrating Strahinja's survival, together with Strahinja decide to go on a vampire hunt, which ends up at Sava Savanović's grave. Staking the coffin and whatever might be inside it, they, accidentally and again, very comically, release the butterfly that flew out of the hole, but being drunk and excited, they soon forget about it and go on celebrating their success, which also involved kidnapping Radojka from her father's home and performing a wedding between the two lovers. As the tradition entails, the bride-to-be must spend the night before the wedding alone, under supervision of a chaperon, which didn't particularly appeal to the groom, as he sets out to sneak into Radojka's room when everyone is asleep. This room scene is possibly one of the most horrific ones, for several reasons. It shows Radojka's full transformation into a monster and the consequences of it, and it implies an attempt to violate her femininity without her consent, when Strahinja starts undressing her and kissing her all over her body while she is sleeping. The repressed sexuality of the scene is an interesting portrayal of the same at the time in the Balkans, with the Black Wave in full swing, when the chains of repression of any kind, including the sexual one, started breaking under the weight of social and political issues, bringing to light the desire of the people to free themselves from the restrictive life they had to lead due to the country's and the government's oppression. However, Radojka's transformation starts very early on in the film, even before this pivotal scene of horror. Oftentimes during the film, she is seen roaming the outskirts of the village alone and lost in thought, followed by the screams and screeches of the mythical creature drekavac, the sounds that announce the ethereal presence of the vampire himself. During these moments, she becomes hypnotised and seduced by the presence, detaching herself from her body and losing chunks of time in the process, often not remembering anything after. A few questions come to mind: is the vampire, with luring Radojka into his embrace, planning a revenge against Strahinja because he escaped his clutches and left him hungry, or perhaps he knew that the villagers are planning to kill him, so he had to have a backup plan? Either of these could be true or could be answered

[131] Zmukić, Lara. Serbia – Culture Smart! The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture, Kuperard, 2012, ch.2.

affirmative when looking at the film's storyline, as the plot thickens with every minute of the film, gradually building the atmosphere of horror leading to the horrific ending. The fine line between right or wrong gets blurred in this representation of monstrous feminine transformation: "Although the specific nature of the border changes from film to film, the function of the monstrous remains the same-to bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability. In some horror films the monstrous is produced at the border between human and in - human , man and beast (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Creature from the Black Lagoon, King Kong)*; in others the border is between the normal and the supernatural, good and evil (*Carrie, The Exorcist, The Omen, Rosemary's Baby)*; or the monstrous is produced at the border which separates those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not (*Psycho, Dressed to Kill, Reflection of Fear*); or the border is between normal and abnormal sexual desire (*Cruising, The Hunger, Cat People*)."[132] Although these encounters, as Creed calls them, can be seen in most later examples of horror films in the Balkans, which are going to be covered in subsequent chapters, the final scene in *She - Butterfly* portrays the monstrous produced on the border between normal and abnormal sexual desire, between the normal and supernatural. Kadijević uses a lot of close-up shots in this scene to direct the viewer to the most important details to make sense of what is happening. As Strahinja starts to unbutton Radojka's white nightgown (the importance of colour of the nightgown will be revealed towards the end), the viewers see the close-up of his hands opening the nightgown, only to reveal a bloody hole in Radojka's stomach, that looks like a hole from a stake. He slowly looks up in surprise and sees Radojka's face now visibly changing into a monstrous one; her mouth reveals sharp vampire teeth followed by a horrific look in her eyes. The sounds of the mythical creature drekavac fill the room and the night, denoting the vampire's presence and involvement. Her transformation has begun. She has become the host for the soul of the vampire. This is where the true horror starts. Radojka violently starts attacking Strahinja while he runs outside to save his neck, however, when outside, Radojka jumps at him and on him, sitting around his neck and on his back and thrusts violently making him run as fast as he can. It is interesting how Kadijević here counterbalances the folklore of the region, mixing the vampire lore, and the witch folklore in this scene. In most folk tales of the Balkan region, the witch attacks her victim, sits on his neck and

[132] Creed, Barbara. Horror and The Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection, downloaded from screen.oxfordjournals.org, accessed 21/6/21, p.44.

drives him to run as fast as he can, riding him until he collapses and dies. He is very skilful in adapting parts of folklore and literature in general in his work, and he is tackling the witch lore in one of his later films as well in more detail and with a more sexually explicit twist, *Sveto Mesto* (1990), an adaptation of a Russian tale *Viy*, written by Nikolai Gogol. Monstrous Radojka gasps and screams as she continues to ride her lover, driving him to Sava Savanović's grave, yelling at him and urging him to pull out the stake from the vampire's coffin, as she continues to transform. Strahinja, now released from her clutches, takes out the stake from the coffin, still in shock. He looks at Radojka, only to see her nightgown lying on the ground. The coffin suddenly opens, and Radojka is emerging from it, moaning violently and looking scared, now all dressed in black. Her transformation is finally complete. She starts her monstrous, convulsive dance coming out of the grave and coming at Strahinja. In this shocking portrayal of fear, love and pain, imbued with allusions to penetration and violation of the body, Strahinja takes the stake once again and drives it through Radojka. As stated earlier, due to the positioning of the camera, and using a lot of close ups of the character's faces and facial expressions, the ending is ambiguous and leaves plenty of space for different interpretations, leaving the viewers to choose their own ending: did Strahinja kill her to defend himself from the monster she has become, or did Radojka, after realising what she has become, willingly jump on the stake that Strahinja was holding? The film ends with a wide shot of Strahinja lying motionlessly on the ground, which turns into a close-up of a butterfly landing on his head. Again, the ambiguity of the ending proposes several options: is Strahinja alive; did the vampire got his revenge as Radojka is nowhere to be found, will he be the next host for the vampire's soul, as the butterfly survived? The meaning of the butterfly in Balkan folklore could perhaps clarify this ambiguity and bring a more satisfying conclusion to the viewers who are often left confused and shocked by the ending of *She-Butterfly*: "Moreover, among the Slavs and in the Balkans generally, the human soul is believed to take on a corporeal form when it leaves the body, and one of the forms reported is that of a butterfly.[…] This notion – that both vampires and souls can be transformed into butterflies - seems at first glance hopelessly opaque.[…] Perhaps the transformation into a vampire is seen as akin to that whereby a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly."[133] *Devičanska Svirka* (*Song of Virgins, Virgin's Song,* 1973), a far less known than *She-butterfly*, but worth mentioning in this context, is a classic Gothic romance tale that evokes the atmosphere

[133] Barber, Paul. Vampires, Burial and Death: Folklore and Reality, Yale University Press, 1988, p. 72-3.

and the characters of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1898). The main character, Ivan, comes to a rural part of the country that only has a few inhabitants, who all seem to be male. He finds them sitting in front of an inn, silent and motionless as puppets waiting to be moved by their master. This metaphor becomes clearer toward the end of the film, when Ivan finds out the true secret of the so-called *Song of Virgins*, a haunting and disturbing melody that comes from the nearby mansion. The way the locals treat Ivan, the fancy town gentleman, and how they refuse to give him a lift to town from the inn reminds us of the way the locals and the rural surroundings were depicted by Jonathan Harker on his travels to Dracula's castle. From the start, in the opening sequence and throughout the film, the director is using wide angle shots to convey the vastness, or the isolation of the rural landscape. Dogs start barking, and the inn folk become restless, the driver of the carriage refusing to take Ivan to town, pointing at the cross hanging on the outside wall of the inn: "Not even if he asks me to", says the driver and sits back down in his chair, minding his own business. Ivan is confused, and blind to what is going on. After being treated unfairly by the locals, Ivan heads back to town on foot, but stops halfway to listen to a haunting melody that almost hypnotizes him. He asks the local boy who was walking on the road where is the melody coming from and the boy points to the huge mansion nearby and tells Ivan not to go there, but he doesn't offer him any further explanation. Instead, he gets killed by the carriage that was heading to the previously mentioned mansion, and the mistress of the house herself. An unsettling feeling appears in the viewer as one question starts lingering in the air: was the boy killed on purpose by the mistress of the house because he told Ivan not to go inside? The mistress comes out of the carriage and Ivan helps her get the boy's body inside the house, which is said to be haunted, judging by the stories and very strange behaviour of local people witnessed so far. The haunting sound of wind where there should be silence creates an unsettling atmosphere. Once inside the house, Ivan becomes trapped by the mistress' beauty and she lures him into a series of grotesque and strange scenes, moving through the house following the haunting melody of the song of virgins, at the same time showing Ivan the Gothic space in which he might spend the rest of his days, if he chooses to. Close-ups depict the desire, Ivan's desire for Sibila, the mistress of the house, in the dark moment of boy's death. She begs Ivan for help, and as he says yes, the music gets louder, and they are both transfixed by the sound of it. She gives him a few chances to leave the mansion while it's not too late, but he chooses to stay, because he subconsciously knows that, even if he runs, he will still end up back in the house. On the other

hand, as if she has a split personality, she tells him that he's not leaving the place, he says he'll stay if she needs him, and she bursts out laughing. The clock is ticking in the house, depicting her solitude and the silence she's been living in all these years: "The atmosphere of the house reveals the lady's obsession with death, her surroundings with artifacts such as deathbeds, candles, hidden corners where she keeps the bodies of murdered men."[134] Lazarević Radak notices that Sibila plays the role of a mermaid or some other mythical creature which lures men to their deaths, so no wonder Ivan looks like he is under a spell while inside the house. It is the mansion that is one of the main characters in this film though; this mysterious abode also represents a Gothic space haunted by the past of whoever dwells in it, and "the space expands by combining the play of perspective and depth of field, which is achieved by multiplying doors and mirrors," one of the standard tricks in Gothic genre. The mistress is an enigmatic character, beautiful, voluptuous woman who uses her charms to seduce Ivan. She tells her story going in and out of different rooms in the house, taunting him with the promise of telling him where the music is coming from. They share a few kisses, as innocent as it sounds, but the grotesqueness of the whole scene, love connected to death, is in the fact that they do that next to the dead boy's body, who is now an involuntary inhabitant of the mansion, forever in Sibila's cold embrace. She also does not hide the fact that the mansion is alive, as long as she is alive, and that there is no escape from the shackles of its tormented inner space. "In most horror films and Gothic novels, the haunted house/castle serves as a vehicle for the inner psychology of its inhabitants. The protagonists appear trapped within its recesses."[135] The mistress, Sibila, and the house are connected, and even though the house itself does not become the body per se, it lives and feeds off her past, her secrets and looming darkness that follows her everywhere. Sibila can exit the house but cannot leave the house altogether. In a traditional sense, this connection has a role of uncovering the patriarchal structure, which is immersed in the domestic feminine – the symbol of Sibila's hopelessness because she is trapped in her own home, and her oppression. Indeed, Sibila does act as if she is a vulnerable, gentle, subordinate wife in the beginning, to lure the representative figure of patriarchy, Ivan, inside the house. "What constitutes a private space in many Gothic narratives… is tantamount to the limitation of freedom and agency afforded to the

[134] Lazarević Radak, S. The Moving Pictures of Terror, Social Aspects of Yugoslav Horror genre, article published in Antropologija 15, sv. 3, 2015, p.54.
[135] Michlin, Monica. The Haunted House in Contemporary Filmic and Literary Gothic Narratives of Trauma, Transatlantica [Online], 1, 2012.

female subject as she is confined to the house apparently in order to protect her innocence but is, in truth, fundamentally meant to subordinate her to male dominance and control."[136] She shows him the altar in a different room where her husband died, lulling herself into a dreamlike state, lying down on the altar as she invites Ivan into her embrace. The theatrical show doesn't end there. She reappears dressed in a wedding gown, teasing Ivan to the point of madness, and when he says that he loves her, she suddenly changes her mood. She becomes serious, and very defensive towards him, making him feel like he is a threat to her, thus implying that she has been hurt before, possibly by her late husband. On the other hand, when Ivan "decides" to stay, she suddenly changes her persona, from submissive into powerful and seductive female monster. The house becomes the place of female empowerment, "a catalyst that will motivate her toward activating her desires and eventual liberation from patriarchal control."[137] This strange, manipulative dance between the two continues throughout the whole film, followed by the symbolism of certain Gothic elements and the gliding from room to room in order to tell the story. After hearing a shot, they go outside to watch the murder of crows fly by, only one specific night a year, as Sibila informs Ivan, symbolising death that comes for us all. The music starts again, and he becomes even more enchanted by it. The melody is stronger than death, but not strong enough to hurt. He wants to know where the melody is coming from, and he starts roaming through the castle pointlessly. He goes outside, but Sibila is gone. He sees Bartholomew[138], Sibila's servant, with a gun, and starts running away from the castle, but her voice and the melody lure him back inside. The unsettling feeling starts to build up with the use of strong loud isolated sounds, like footsteps; it adds to the feeling of Ivan's impending doom because he returned. Bartholomew locks the doors, enters the house, and disappears in the shadows. Ivan finally finds out what creates the song of the virgins: the skeletons of mistress' past lovers hanging from the roof of the mansion in the attic, their bones rocking in the wind and gently touching the harp strings, producing the haunting melody. She becomes ecstatic as she starts swaying the skeletons creating music. Each of them has their own sound that never changes, because they're dead. She still loves them; the beginning is the end, and the end is the beginning – a sentence which is a recurring motif present throughout the film. Bartholomew

[136] Soon, Hock Soon Ng. Women and Domestic Space in Contemporary Gothic Narratives: The House as subject, Springer, 2016, p. 4.
[137] Soon, Hock Soon Ng. 2016, p. 4.
[138] Croatian spelling of the name is Bartolomeo. I chose to use the English version of the name for clarity and flow.

emerges from darkness, the camera points up to a new noose for Ivan, and Sibila says she's going to recognize his sound as well. She says if he doesn't want to die, he has to kill her; she is tortured by her own ghosts and wants to die but can't take her own life. She commands Bartholomew to kill Ivan, but something strange happens instead, concluding the dance of love and death. In the end, the mistress was strangled by her faithful servant Bartholomew, who is lurking in the shadows throughout the film, and only occasionally shows his motionless face. Realizing that he was nothing else but a servant to her who she can exploit however she wants, he strangles her in a passionate act of his unreturned love, thus releasing her victims from her and the mansion's cold embrace on the harp, making the music go wild as she is dying. Close-ups of his and her face denotes the intimacy of the act, and when Sibila dies, the music stops. Bartholomew smiles. Ivan runs for his life and out of the mansion. After her death, the mansion becomes just that, a mansion, an architectural representation of Sibila's disturbed mind, the haunting melody of the song of virgins, which "is produced from the cries of repressed sexuality, that which has not been realized in marriage and remains repressed in love adventures during which Sibila seeks emotional and sexual fulfilment"[139] disappears, and Ivan finds himself away from the house, discarded and alone, his hair white from fear which he experienced the night before, left in the middle of the vast unknown rural space. He faints. After he wakes up, his hair all grey, the birds are chirping, the sun is shining, but he still hears her voice and her death song that will haunt him for the rest of his days. He realizes that he will never be free of the virgin's song. This cycle of experimenting with Gothic elements and dark themes continues in another film *Štićenik* (*Ward, The Protected,* 1973). *Ward* (1973), a dark fantastical film directed by Đorđe Kadijević, and scripted from a short story written by Filip David, a Serbian writer, (a story, originally called *Mihael i njegov rođak* (Eng. *Michael and His Cousin*), appeared in the collection *A Well in the Dark Forest*, 1964). As a writer, David belongs to the canon of postmodernist Yugoslavian literature, and his prose focuses on the grotesque, the mythical, and the fantastical. Seeing as most filmmakers adopted the practice of putting literary works on screen back in the days of social realism, connecting modern life with fiction to avoid all the fundamentals that Social Realism tried to force upon them, it is important to talk about some of the works and writers which influenced certain filmmakers when making their films, which are again relevant to this research, as most films during this period were adapted from literature of

[139] Lazarević Radak, 2015, p.54.

the region, and classics from the rest of the world. Filip David's highly valued collections opened up a space of darkness for Kadijević, where he could express his opinions and feelings and describe the search for one's own true meaning. One single thread that connects all the stories written by Filip David is the grotesque which is omnipresent in his world. As in all good postmodernist texts, the ontological boundaries between worlds on multiple levels are also being examined here. There is also a kind of multiplication of the worlds. There is at least one other world between the world of life and death, the one where the undue souls hopelessly wander around. Those souls, neither alive or dead, but alive and dead at the same time, are school examples of the grotesque. They disturb the world of the living by reminding him of his deepest fear, the fear of death, but also of loneliness and inability to be a part of something, to be an eternal exile, foreign to everyone. In addition to overcoming ontological limitations, one of the usages of postmodernist texts is the inclusion of metapoetic elements. In David's stories, the characters of prophets, clerics, and other unhappy characters are wandering around trying to make their journey to find their true essence and meaning of their own existence. But when searching for that sense of meaning, characters often fail to notice how this essence has always been revealed to them, even during their journey. These characters are trying to escape the fear of misunderstanding, but this attempt of escape usually fails; nevertheless, in the end they have to face whatever they have been running from. Kadijević's Ward belongs to this kind of thematic representation of trying to find oneself and failing to do so, in the end embracing the Other, that has been torturing poor lost souls; in this case Mihael (Michael), a young, troubled man who we see running away from a dark cloaked figure that has been chasing him through the vastness of the Serbian landscape. At first it seems that Mihael's escape is pointless, as it gives the feel of hopeless search for a secure space where there is none. Nevertheless, Mihael finds an asylum in the middle of the dark and ominous landscape, where he seeks protection from the medic inside. The medic serves as a benevolent figure, a "filter" character, which Mihael needs to convince that his apparent madness is not an illness at all, but fear of being caught by a dark, unfamiliar figure whose identity remains unknown throughout the film, and leaves quite a lot of space for speculation about its identity and intentions towards Mihael himself. The medic offers Mihael sanctuary, for a short time, before he decides whether he is going to put him up for hospitalisation or send him on his way after, and if, he gets better. The dark figure of Mihael's pursuer is relentless in his intention to find and take Mihael with him. He appears in front of the

asylum, waiting for Mihael to come out and go with him. The medic confronts him, but after talking to him about the strange, almost surreal situation that everyone in the hospital is by now involved in, he becomes more confused, and starts doubting his first impression of Mihael as someone asking for help. Instead, the man in black convinces him that Mihael is in fact a very ill person who needs special care that only he can offer. One night, when he realizes that the medic's intentions are to send him away from the asylum, and possibly deliver him into the hands of his pursuer, Mihael tries to escape, but in doing so, he only confirms the medic's fears that the man in black was right, and therefore stops him in his escape. The next day, just before Mihael was about to leave the asylum and the security it offers, he asks the medic for a moment of repose to prepare for departure. When he was left alone, Mihael opens a window and in the Gothic style of tortured souls trying to escape their fate, he throws himself out the window, the fall killing him instantly. The medic, still in shock from what had happened, goes to meet the man in black as planned, but without Mihael, bearing only sad news of his sudden death. Instead of getting a sympathetic reaction from Mihael's pursuer as expected from a fellow colleague, who is familiar with human destinies and the illness of the mind, the only reaction the medic gets is the man's confirmation that he already knew about Mihael's death and that the medic himself is to blame for it. Lazarević Radak's theory about the man in black state that he is in fact the representation of conscience, as one of the final scenes in the film might imply: "Faced with the death of a frightened fugitive, the medic encounters a dark conscience with an icy expression. Having informed the pursuer that his ward is dead, he himself will be exposed to re-examination of his own actions: Medic: "Your ward is dead." Conscience: I know, you killed him."[140] The film Ward obviously relies on some of the essential motives and elements of classic horror, elements such as "the dark pursuer, the shadow that the protagonist is afraid of, the environment of a mental hospital, the desert and broken trees, but also the intertwining of the Superego with the Shadow, or conscience with the devil", which all contribute to the image of "the porosity of psychological concepts. In this sense, what society presents as correct, ethically elevated can take on the characteristics of the demonic and become man's persecutor, and in this way the foundation on which the entire value system is built, and the good/evil opposition, disappears. The possibility of twisting normality and madness, a reversal of roles that shows the extent to which unconscious content penetrates the conscious, causes anxiety in the individual and loss of

[140] Lazarević Radak, 2015, p.58.

existential support."[141] The man in black takes the body of the young man, puts it in the coffin in his carriage and drives off through the vast surreal landscapes of the country, thus forming a full circle of hopeless fate that awaits us all, and leaving the end of the film vague and suggestive for the audiences, encouraging them to think of their own possible explanation for the ending. One of the last films in this cycle is *Sveto Mesto* (*A Holy Place*, 1990), film adapted from Nikolai Gogol's horror novella *Viy*, first published in his collection of tales *Mirgorod* (1835). It is a story of three students, the theologian Toma, the philosopher Khoma Brut, and the rhetorician Tibery Gorobets, who roam around the country during the summer on their way home. On their travels, after getting lost in the wilderness, they find a village, and they decide to stop and rest there, hoping to get some food, drink and a place to sleep. They stumble upon a small house and try their luck there. An old woman opens the door and tells them she can't accommodate all of them, but after some persuading, the old woman lets the three students stay the night. At night, she comes to the philosopher, who, after thinking that the old woman wants to seduce him, very soon realizes that she is not what she seems. Her eyes glare red in the darkness and she reveals herself to the philosopher as a witch, which leads to more horrifying events for Toma: "Toma the theologian, with his two friends, at night in the house of an old woman who, transformed [into a witch], rides him the way Radojka rides Strahinja in Leptirica. When she falls from him after riding him all night, the young man sees the face of a beautiful girl [instead of the old hag] dying in front of him. Accompanied by feelings of guilt for the girl's death, he knows that before her death she requested that he read her the Lord's Prayer for three days and three nights in a row. Toma soon becomes a witness to mysterious events and a victim of intertwined family pathologies."[142] These scenes from *A Holy Place and She – Butterfly*, audio-visually violent, denote the feelings of repressed sexuality, and the concerns about the monstrous feminine. *A Holy Place* almost faithfully follows the story of the novella, and depicts the witch quite accurately, nevertheless it adds an eerie atmosphere and a touch of modernity to the film. The depiction of the witch becomes an interesting point to look at in the folk tales from Serbia, as there might be similarities in the way she was represented in *A Holy Place* and the way the female vampire was represented in the above-mentioned horror film *She - Butterfly* (1973) by the same director. These films in Kadijević's cycle draw heavily from the folklore of the country,

[141] Lazarević Radak, 2015, p.58-59.
[142] Lazarević Radak, 2015, p.55.

representing femininity as something monstrous hidden behind the façade of the beautiful. Rather than drawing upon the existing "western forms of vampire and Gothic horror literature and cinema the director Đorđe Kadijević went back to its source and in doing so created something completely original and compelling in the horror genre."[143] Apart from Kadijević's work, it is worth mentioning some other films of the same visual representation that were made around the same time as his films, some falling into the category of ontological horror, like *San Doktora Mišića* (Dr. Mišić's Dream, Pleša, 1973.), and *Prokletinja* (Damned Thing, Pleša, 1975), films "that follow the fate of an individual exposed to doubts, anxieties, and a feeling of incompleteness becomes a reflection of insecurity in society, questions about the meaning and questioning of the fundamental values on which the community was founded. Time (past, present, future) and state of consciousness (consensual reality, dream, hallucination) are no longer firmly established categories in these films, which contributes to the sense of destabilization of norms and everything taken for granted." Popular expression in horror in the 70s were also films that linger between social drama and horror, such as Gilić's film *Kičma* (Backbone, Gilić, 1975), the film that reveals a "narrative that manifestly points to the dangers of environmental catastrophe, laboratory - disease; control established by white coats equipped with needle and sedative to latently and gradually reveal his critical side aimed at disrupting social relations through alienation and moral degradation.""[144] Kadijević's dark, fantastic style translated further onto films of a more of a fantasy nature with horror elements in the 1970s in Croatia as well. It is worthy to mention *Izbavitelj* (Rat Saviour, Papić, 1976), by Krsto Papić, who tried to make an elaborate statement about corruption and the dark side of human nature. However, the film failed to deliver that message, according to national film critics, despite the creative and fantastic approach to the theme. Nevertheless, the film won an award for Best Film at the 1982 Fantasporto festival in Portugal, which was success enough for this kind of genre film coming from Yugoslavia, and it was selected as the Yugoslav entry for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 49th Academy Awards but was not accepted as a nominee. *Izbavitelj* (Rat Saviour, Papić, 1976) is "a 1976 Yugoslavian horror science-fiction fantasy film (emphasis added) directed by Krsto Papić."[145] The interesting notion is that most viewers and film critics

[143] Video from: https://archive.org/details/LeptiricatheShe-butterflyyugoslaviaHorrorFilmEnglishSubtitles1973
[144] Lazarević Radak, 2015, p. 59.
[145] Lawrence, D., Movies and Mania, THE RAT SAVIOUR (1976) Reviews and overview, accessed October 10, 2021.

define the *Rat Savior* in this way, with a bit of expected ambiguity around using the terms Yugoslavian and Croatian in this sense. Since the film was made during Yugoslavia, but by a Croatian director, it is considered as both, which makes these two geographical terms interchangeable in most written pieces. Same issue comes up with Serbia and films made during Yugoslavia by Serbian directors, as can be seen from this first part of my research project. This is mainly due to the constant decentralization, nationalist bias issues and these countries trying to reaffirm their separate identities in the post-Yugoslav era. The uncertainty about using and labelling films made in Yugoslavia as horror, or fantasy or sci-fi comes from these genres being neglected by the general public and academia, because these genres, primarily horror were thought to be non-existent since the beginning of cinema in Croatia and Serbia (1920s), because of a certain displacement of the genre in general, which is proven not to be accurate, as it is outlined in this research project. Older films like *Rat Savior* here have been labelled horror, sci-fi, fantasy only in contemporary times, when horror as a genre was well established and gained popularity, or notoriety, as an inevitable and constantly resurrecting part of popular culture. Rat Savior tells a story of a writer, Ivan Gajski, not only struggling to have his novels published but also being left without a place to live. Being forced to sleep on the benches in the city of Zagreb, and selling his possessions, he encounters a beautiful local woman Sonja Bošković, with whom he forms a bond and is successful in acquiring her phone number, not realizing that he will need it when he least expects it. One night, while Ivan was looking for a bench to sleep on, he encounters an acquaintance who suggests that he takes up lodging in a nearby abandoned bank for the night. While exploring the building, he finds a working phone which gives him an opportunity to call Sonja, but that is not the only thing that he finds inside. The building seems to be infested with rats. He stumbles upon a huge secret banquet attended by strange people. Soon Ivan realizes the true meaning of rat infestation, and that the people at the banquet are more than just people, plotting against none other than Sonja's father, the Professor. He accidentally makes his presence known to the group, and he tries to run away, scared and confused, but finds himself trapped by what seem to be rat people. After being rescued by the Professor, he finds out that the group at the banquet is a half human and half rat collective who are plotting to take over the society and the city of Zagreb, and that the Professor has a cure for this infestation, a formula

https://moviesandmania.com/2013/11/19/izbavitelj-the-rat-saviour-1976-croatian-horror-film-by-krstopapicreview/

which will eradicate these rat people for good. Turning to the local police for help didn't give any results, and Ivan, Sonja and the Professor are left to battle these vermin on their own. In the process, the Professor gets mysteriously killed before finishing the formula for the eradication experiment, and the mysterious figure of the Rat Savior, the leader of the collective, makes his presence known. Ivan and Sonja lose all hope in winning this fight, but suddenly the mayor of the city offers his help to them to end this horrific situation. However, the deception becomes real, and Ivan and Sonja end up trapped in the sewers with the Rat Savior himself, and soon they realize the reason why they didn't get help from the authorities – authorities are the collective, with the mayor leading it in the pursuit of eradicating human society. The concept of the story reveals concerns that were present in the 1970s, with the Black Wave still raging in both countries, distrust in the law and the government is clearly expressed here with building up the twist of the mayor being revealed as the leader of Rat People, while the "classifications of deformed bodies, the pseudo-scientific concept of degeneration that appears in the medical discourse of the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is also recognized. Within the framework of the theory of degeneration, one recognizes the apprehension of the disruption of progress first, and then the destruction of all humanity."[146] Degradation, destruction, helplessness and hopelessness are the major points expressed here by the filmmaker Krsto Papić, "who was often perceived as an oppositional or subversive artist."[147], and his films were for the most part deemed and understood as very controversial because of the current topics and issues he was trying to criticize in his work. *Rat Savior* is not an exception: "...*Izbavitelj* (*The Rat Saviour*, 1976), an adaptation of Alexander Grin's story *Ratcatcher* about rat-people who try to overtake a town, has often been interpreted as an allegory of socialism."[148] Papić's subversive narrative style evokes those feelings through gloomy, foggy atmosphere on the historical streets of Zagreb, darkness prevailing, the silence of the abandoned building, and the use of different sounds to build the next scene and create an unsettling and anxious feel of the time period. "When Yugoslavia dissolved, Yugoslav cinema disintegrated as well. The production and

[146] Gilić, Nikica. "Post-Yugoslav Film and the Construction of New National Cinemas". Contemporary Southeastern Europe 2:102-120., p. 110.

[147] Gilić, Nikica. "Post-Yugoslav Film and the Construction of New National Cinemas". Contemporary Southeastern Europe 2:102-120., p. 110.

[148] Gilić, Nikica p. 110.

distribution of films, as well as critical reflection, were suddenly split into separate states, some of which were barely capable of producing films at all. Very few local or international observers could have imagined the eventual dissolution of Yugoslavia, even judging from Yugoslav films from the 1980s. The dissolution of Yugoslavia may have been a desire of many, but even those who desired it could often barely have imagined what it would be like and when it would happen."[149] *Izbavitelj* (Rat Savior, Papić, 1976) earned the right to have a more contemporary remake compliment the original, titled *Infekcija* (Infection, Papić, 2003) which plays with the similar themes of deception, crime and abolishing freedom, adapted only to the 2000s period in Croatia, incidentally, focusing on the evils and dark histories of Europe in the process. That same year (2003), Croatia started its application for the European Union membership. The film was shown at one of the oldest and most prominent Croatian film festivals, Pula Film Festival, and it won an award for Best Direction in 2004 in Dubrovnik, release and distribution of the film not crossing the national and regional borders. It seems that Papić's work, as well as his Serbian colleague Kadijević, quickly paved the way for the young filmmakers of the 1980s to be able to create under the umbrella of the odd genres like horror, sci-fi and fantasy, in that way following the western trends of the time, and expressing their dissatisfaction in films that entwine these genres with comedy, clearly and quite accurately depicting the mentality of these countries, in a way mocking the decentralization that occurred when Yugoslavia started falling apart, which marked the crisis like no other in the Balkans, leading to more disturbing events in the 1990s.

Chapter 4

Yugoslavia in crisis in the 1980s and 1990s:

"Yugo nostalgia" and Horror Films in ex – Yugoslavia

After Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia slowly started falling into degradation because of the problematic and overwhelming political and social issues. The reactions of people were even

[149] Gilić, Nikica, p. 104.

more intensified by the fact that Tito was forcing to create an almost godlike image for himself during his reign, an act that later became embedded into the national identities of Yugoslavian countries, as well as in the memory of their people, creating the concept of Yugo nostalgia, which became a constant part of the culture in the 1990s, and stayed like that well after Yugoslavia's fall. "In the course of Yugoslavia's final decade, Croatian cinema reached a point of stability: competitions for funding were announced at regular intervals, sources of financing were determined by law, and production oscillated between five and eight films per year."[150] That was also the case in Serbia, with somewhat higher number of films made per year. A generation of new filmmakers started to form during this time, the most significant directors being Tadić, Šorak, Ivanda, among others. The work of Zoran Tadić (his film *Ritam zločina* (Rhythm of the Crime, 1981) is considered to be "the best Croatian film of the eighties and it has become a classic that has opened a new chapter in the history of aesthetic and stylistic orientations...Tadić created a tense detective feature with elements of a fantastic mystery; he is thought of as the founder of new-genre film."[151] Tadić has set some ground rules for the exploration of more obscure genres such as detective and crime films, as well as horror.

"This orientation is based on a return to established genre determinants in terms of style, in line with what was advocated by an influential group of critics, the so-called "Hitchcockians". As they positioned themselves counter to ideologically coloured conventions, this faction reached for traditional genres from the standard Hollywood production of the forties and fifties which had been rediscovered by the French New Wave in the sixties and the new Hollywood directors in the late seventies."[152] Tadić, being the most prolific director then, made low-budget films that were more accepted by the film community rather than the general audiences, and the western influence is clearly visible.

"Nonetheless, they [these directors and their films] introduced stylistic innovations, not only in Croatia, but also in other film communities of the region. This kind of refreshing take on the narrative film, following genre determinants, had an impact on many other directors, among them Dejan Šorak..."[153], whose less popular film *Krvopijci* (*Bloodsuckers*, 1989) can easily be

[150] Vidan, Crnković. In Contrast: Croatian Film Today, Croatian Film Association and Berghan Books, 2012, p. 39.
[151] Vidan, Crnković. In Contrast: Croatian Film Today, Croatian Film Association and Berghan Books, 2012, p. 39.
[152] Vidan, Crnković. 2012, p. 39.
[153] Vidan, Crnković. 2012, p. 39.

considered as a horror comedy, one of the first made in Yugoslavia in the 80s. This chapter will look at two films that fall into horror genre in Balkan cinema, the already mentioned *Krvopijci* (*Bloodsuckers*, Šorak, 1989, Yugoslavia (Croatia)) and *Davitelj protiv davitelja* (*Strangler VS. Strangler*, Šijan, 1984, Yugoslavia (Serbia)), by another young director from Serbia, Slobodan Šijan. Both films are horror comedies that tell the story of the times after Tito's death in a distinct way, focusing on completely different issues and influences. However, both films, for example, masterfully describe the mentality of the people of Croatia and Serbia in the 1980s, but with a slightly different focus, using the exchange of horror and comedy to tone down the seriousness of the cultural climate that was changing rapidly, a very successful formula popularised in the 1890s by Grand Guignol, which used the same exchange of two disparate genres, focusing on violence and horror to entertain and shock their audiences. The analysis of these two films will serve as a tool to describe the turbulent times during which Yugoslavia experienced one of its final years; social and cultural differences in Croatia and Serbia while they were still part of the union, but slowly distancing themselves from it and the problems it was experiencing, issues which affected all nations equally; as well as to portray the Balkan mentality after Tito's death, in the midst of Yugoslavia's fall, and the serious prediction of the wars that followed. Film *Krvopijci* (*Bloodsuckers*, 1989, Šorak) opens with a shot of Kamenita vrata (Stone gates) in the capital of Croatia, Zagreb. Kamenita vrata have a long and rich history and are part of the contemporary tourist offer. The place itself has religious connotations, and it is quite common for people to go there, light candles for the dead, and pray for their souls. It became a place of worship because of a legend of the portrait of Virgin Mary owned by a local girl, that got caught in the fire. Everything else burned down except that same portrait, and people recognised that as an act of God and proclaimed Kamenita vrata to be a holy place of worship. It is interesting, therefore, to note that one of the rare horror films in Croatia was filmed there, and in the vicinity of that same place. In the film, the story of a vampire Teobald Majer, as he tells it to doctor Glogowetz, a psychologist of Croatian origin who lived and worked in America, talks about his demise as a witch hunter who was stabbed in the back, at Kamenita vrata, died and returned a vampire. His last known witch killing was the one of the beautiful witch named Barbara, also the name of the doctor's wife, coincidentally, who likes to talk about ghosts, hold seances and is very superstitious. So far, betrayal, ghosts, witches, vampires set this holy place as a place of desperation, suffering and darkness, which is an intriguing dichotomy to

analyse. Furthermore, the doctor's last name, Glogowetz, has its root in the Croatian word glog (eng. Hawthorn)- a tree from which one makes stakes for killing vampires, and the spelling implies that he has been abroad, as it is adjusted to the American English speaking territory, suggesting that the doctor might have lost touch with his original identity, as it will be suggested later on in the film when his uncle and cousin come to visit him from the rural place of Glogovec - also the name of his family. After the unexpected visit from Teobald, who claims he is the only vampire in Zagreb, the doctor, who is also a university professor, an educated man, talks about his unofficial patient to his students, saying: "Today is not the time of great leaders, but desperate and rebellious individuals"[154], thus, equating the vampire myth with the latter. Precisely because of that statement he gets into trouble with local authorities and newspapers/tabloids, because those kinds of statements were still quite dangerous to make at the time, in the period after Tito's death, and Yugoslavia's imminent fall a few years later. Since the opening dialogue, the director implies that this is a horror comedy, and that comic relief will be present throughout the film, usually through some characters, like the doctor's uncle and cousin, or his old maid, or the doctor himself, in the culmination of the story toward the end. His wife Barbara, on the other hand, has everything in life and is bored. She fancies the vampire Teobald; she teases him into coming to her bedroom while the doctor is away and she keeps searching for him on the dark streets of Zagreb, looking for excitement. She seems like an independent, strong woman, but in the end, she is only addicted to the upper-class lifestyle that her husband provides, and all the comforts it brings. Manipulative as she is, she comes up with an idea to put an ad in the local newspaper about vampire hunters offering their services to people who have troubles with monsters, and together with the doctor's uncle, his cousin and the doctor himself, who has now descended from his throne of an educated individual and a respected member of the community into an abyss of a superstitious, obsessed man who goes on a hunt for vampires, they all set out to do what every politician in the country knows how to do best: "...to make money off people's stupidity"[155]. Suffice to say that they found their first client, a fragile mid-thirties woman, who pays them good money to stake her dead uncle through the heart, so that he doesn't bother her again. Fittingly enough, the dead uncle's name is Drakulić, which too obviously

[154] Krvopijci (Bloodsuckers, Šorak, 1989), translated from Croatian by the researcher of this project.
[155] Krvopijci (Bloodsuckers, Šorak, 1989), translated to Croatian by the researcher of the project. This also seems to be the general attitude in the Balkans when it comes to politics and social issues.

implies the connection to the western vampire myth and Stoker's novel *Dracula* and serves as a confirmation that the late uncle really is a vampire. The whole case seems too perfect to be true; our company of merry wannabe vampire hunters sets out to the local graveyard to dig up this uncle, who is supposed to be dead since the 1960. This is the moment when everything appears to be falling apart. In the end, the doctor finally gets his confirmation that vampires are real. They are as real as the metaphor made here, drawing assumptions that Yugoslavia is drawing to its end. Vampire myth was compared earlier to desperate individuals as opposed to real leaders, one of which Yugoslavia lost in the 80s, and it is an indicator of what is to come after. Film was made in 1989, two years prior to Yugoslavia's downfall and the civil war in 1991. The end of the film, however, is interesting to draw possible conclusions from. Teobald Majer, who thinks he is the only vampire, representing perhaps the new climate that is rapidly changing, comes across none other than uncle Drakulić one eerie, dark night on the streets of Zagreb, and seeing him, quickly moves away from him in fear and disappears in the dark, while Drakulić grins at the young vampire, lights a cigarette and slowly disappears surrounded by fog. There are a few ways to analyse this ambiguous ending, depending on what each of the vampires is supposed to represent. Perhaps the old system represented by Drakulić, and the new one to come represented by Majer, may imply that the old one has no place in the new upcoming change that will make an impact on the future. Majer is a young man, strong yaw, tall, mesmerizing eyes, while Drakulić is much older than him, black circles under his eyes, crooked smile, grey hair and wearing a suit (he might have some similarities with Tito's image). Drakulić evokes the nostalgia for the times with more stability, when Tito was alive, and Majer represents those desperate young individuals, soon to be the lost generation modified by the events that followed in the 1990s.

The Yugo nostalgia is still present[156], and it is not going anywhere, instead, the cult of Tito's persona and the old ways still linger in the minds of people, it is strong and omnipresent, never forgotten. As Lindstrom explores in her work, there is a distinctly visible mentality connected to Yugo nostalgia, which can be seen as both "restorative" and "reflexive"[157] nostalgia: "The first

[156] Meaning, Yugo nostalgia is still present in contemporary times - it might be unclear to some readers as to what is meant by this, especially when it is coming after the analysis of a film that was made before the term itself was coined in 1992. Please refer to the title of this chapter for more clarity.

[157] Drawing on Svetlana Boym's distinction between "restorative" and "reflective" nostalgia, in her essay Yugonostalgia: Restorative and Reflexive Nostalgia in Former Yugoslavia, Lindstrom maps" two broad, and often

expresses a reconstructive longing for an essential Yugoslav past; the second offers self-consciously ambivalent and critical frames in indulging fantasies of this past. What different forms of Yugonostalgia share in common is challenging symbolic geographies of disunity that have dominated political discourse in former Yugoslavia for the last two decades. The two types can be differentiated by their stance toward the present, past, and future: while both of them are based on fantasies of the past, the "restorative" Yugonostalgia looks backward toward a seemingly fixed time and space while "reflective" nostalgia restlessly grapples with the dislocation so palpable in the former Yugoslavia to imagine alternative futures."[158]

Strangler VS. Strangler (*Davitelj protiv davitelja*, 1984, Šijan) takes on a similar parodying approach to the Balkan mentality in the 1980s as *Bloodsuckers*, playing with film tropes of serial killers from slasher films of the same period. Belgrade is a city that wants to become a metropolis. The opening narration of the film explores what the term metropolis might mean in Yugoslavian context, and in Serbian terms. Perhaps what makes a city a metropolis, is the geography, or number of people living in the city, but the film's narrator settles on an interesting and quite an appropriate conclusion: it must be the chronicle of crime. If there are no maniacs in a city, a city cannot call itself a metropolis, and Belgrade, the capital of Serbia, has a lot of candidates to fill this role; characters like Rashomons, peeping toms, unsuccessful bank robbers, and the Belgrade phantom that defies the police every step of the way.[159] These introductory musings make a clear point however: all these characters are tragicomical; they defy the authorities as a form of rebellion in a city where the governmental power is not present anymore. The main character, and the one most important for this analysis is The Strangler, however. He appeared out of nowhere, and the crime rate went up in the city, putting it on the provisional map of crime.

Pera Mitić, a 48-year-old bachelor who lives with his mother, sells red carnations around town, a dying form of employment in an upcoming age of changes. Even with this basic characterization,

overlapping, ideal types of Yugonostalgia expressed in and through contemporary former Yugoslav film, popular music, and multi-media".

[158] Lindstrom, Nicole. Yugonostalgia: Restorative and Reflexive Yugonostalgia in Former Yugoslavia, in East Central Europe! L'Europe du Centre-Est, 32, Nos. 1-2 (2005), 227-237, p.227. Downloaded from Brill.com06/23/2021 11:18:27AM via University of East Anglia.

[159] Description of the introductory narrative sequence from Strangler VS. Strangler (Sijan, 1984), for the purpose of painting the absurdity and sarcasm prevalent to the times.

the glimpses of Hitchcock's influence are quite visible from the start, and as it turns out throughout the film, the homage to Hitchcock's work is present in other scenes of *Strangler vs. Strangler*. Pera Mitić, as one of the main characters in the film, is quite simple minded, nevertheless, his tortured mind implies the complexity of his character, a combination that makes space for parodying him and the time he got stuck in. Just like Norman Bates, he dreams of being free from the clutches of his mother's influence, yet he is imprisoned by her presence in his life, when she is alive, and when she dies. When Pera strangles his victims, he feels freed from his mother's influence, as opposed to Norman, who became his mother and started killing under the pretence of doing what his mother forced him to do. At that time in Belgrade, red carnations were not trendy anymore among younger generations, as the communist aspirations slowly dissipated and became irrelevant in the new age, so no one was buying them. Yet, the appreciation for the flowers and the craft of selling them still came from the old generation that was slowly diminishing. The symbolism of carnations might be of relevance here, as these flowers symbolise mourning. Red carnations that Pera sells can thus be looked at from the socio-political perspective as a symbol of mourning for the old system that is coming to an end. In *Strangler VS Strangler*, the fact that carnations are red, might serve as a symbol of communism, which would fit in the overall thematic playfulness in the film: old generations still favour red carnations, holding to the idea of the old political system that is crumbling down, while young generations have no regard for the flowers, nor do they care for them, suggesting that the old system is slowly being replaced with a new one, which is slowly forming as Yugoslavia is reaching its end. In that sense, Pera is also choosing his victims according to similar characteristics and behaviour patterns. He only kills young people, mostly women, who refuse to buy red carnations from him or offend him by refusing to communicate with him at all. He is preserving the memory of the old political system in this way, but at the same time, he is expressing the mourning that comes with its demise. To revert to Pera's inner turmoil and the reasons why he became The Strangler, he is constantly being haunted by his mother's non-loving and controlling behaviour toward him. During the film, she always tells him that she is not proud of him and that he is a failure when he doesn't sell enough carnations, which makes him fall into one of his states when The Strangler persona takes over. His first killing is a thrilling mashup of him crying, screaming and collapsing under the pressure of his mother's constant image hovering over his head; he gets blinded by rage and lashes out, and that is the moment when he kills. On

the other hand, Pera is a sensitive, timid man who has lived under his mother's boot all his life, and only became free of her influence after he killed her. Perhaps he could be a metaphor for the people who lived under Tito's reign and got liberated after his death, became lost and confused to the point of retorting to violence. These older generations, even today, are still glorifying the old system under Tito's reign, not willing to accept the changes that came into place after his death, invertedly influencing generations to come with the past times, potentially teaching them how to loathe something that belongs to the past and can never be retrieved or duplicated. Returning to the said homage to Hitchcock in the film, one scene particularly stands out. It is a clever homage to the famous shower scene from *Psycho* (Hitchcock, 1960). However, looking at it from the Balkan perspective in the 1980s, and since *Strangler VS Strangler* is a parody, one can suggest that the reading of the homage scene could be read in a reverse way from the original scene. After one of the young women refuses to buy red carnations from him, Pera follows her and sneaks in her home with the intention to kill her. He hides in the shower behind the shower curtains, waiting for the young woman, his second victim, an opera singer, a member of a contemporary art community. When she enters the shower, Pera grabs her and starts strangling her. A very comical moment of violence plays out. This implies that if we read this homage scene as proposed earlier, Pera is in fact the victim of the oppressing regime that he's trying to defend, and he feels threatened by the younger generations, representing the new regime coming to place. The opera singer, after being strangled by Pera, advertently becomes the victim of that same old regime that is dying out. The scene itself loses the suspense that the original scene embodied in Psycho, due to the comical nature of the scene and what it might represent, which is a distinctive style of filmmaking in the Balkans that can be found in many other prominent films of the period, not just the ones that play with the tropes of horror genre. Following the legacy of post-Black Wave films, such as Kadijević's films with gothic elements and atmosphere, Pera's house is a basic gothic setting, an old abandoned lifeless space, full of cobwebs, dust, framed photos, gloomy, suffocating atmosphere and darkness, that changes in appearance as the inhabitants of the house change, that can be easily compared to any such abode from Gothic literature. "Throughout its tradition, the Gothic has consistently recognized a quality invested in domestic space that has the power to unnerve, fragment, and even destroy its inhabitant unless something is done to arrest it and restore order and normalcy back to the house."[160] This setting

[160] Hock Soon Ng, Andrew. 2015., p.1

becomes important primarily toward the end of the film, as the most changes can be seen toward the culmination of Pera's relationship with his controlling mother, when Pera's relationship with his mother escalates and he kills her, in that way making her a central part of the house as a gothic monstrous setting, a space that almost drives Pera to madness. "More interesting are Gothic narratives that feature a house whose ominousness is not the result of a curse or possession by an unseen, alien presence, but stems instead from its very own self; that is, the house is itself the very source of strangeness or anomaly, and whoever occupies it will be inevitably engulfed by its power to become part of its mysterious establishment."[161]

As Pera is driven into the abyss of madness by his actions, experiencing the loss of his mother, nonetheless the freedom of the mind that came with her death made Pera see things more clearly in terms of his other personality, The Strangler, which completely takes over his fragile mind toward the end, making him as dangerous to the unsuspecting passers-by as any other criminal hiding in the dark alleys of Belgrade, the metropolis of crime. Pera's counterpart in the film, a young punk rebel, a musician named Spiridon, also plays a crucial role in the film in understanding the way of The Strangler and the impression that he made on the inhabitants of the metropolis. Spiridon has an unhealthy relationship with his stepmother, who is just a bit older than him. Spiridon develops hatred and disgust toward her as a young beautiful woman, as well as toward every other young woman that he encounters. He tries to strangle his stepmother, at which point he realizes that he might be in a mental connection with The Strangler. Becoming fascinated by The Strangler's work, Spiridon decides to write a song for him, which triggers a chain reaction of strange events and the encounter between The Strangler, i.e., Pera, and Spiridon. Spiridon completely immerses himself in the role of The Strangler trying to get into his mindset, which causes a chain of hilariously comical events with a parodying twist as he starts hovering over women, stalking them, attacking them, but usually ending as getting attacked himself. Nevertheless, Spiridon wrote one of the most popular songs of the time, even breaking the fourth wall as the song became popular off the screen as well, remaining one of the most popular songs in Yugoslavian music history to this day.[162] As the popularity of Spiridon's song grows, so does the popularity of The Strangler and his crimes within the artistic circles of the

[161] Hock Soon Ng, Andrew. 2015., p.2.

[162] The song Bejbi, Bejbi (Baby, Baby), performed by a rock band Idoli, quickly became popular in Ex – Yugoslavia and is still an essential part of its rock history.

young generation. The fascination with and glorification of The Strangler's violent acts blur the lines between the generation gap of the old and the new, and Pera in turn becomes fascinated by this new popularity and acceptance from the public. He sneaks into the concert venue where Spiridon and his band are premiering the song to the Belgrade masses and observes at first this culture reserved for the young, the one that he despised not so long ago, concluding that no one should be judged for their actions. Just as there seems to be some hope that Pera finally came to terms with his own dual personality, the police intervene in the most unusual way. Inspector Strahinić, who is a walking parody of the Belgrade police in the 1980s, orders one of his policemen to dress up as a woman, hoping to lure The Strangler in and catch him. However, the policeman dressed as a woman makes a cardinal mistake and refuses Pera's offer to buy red carnations from him, which in turn triggers The Strangler side in Pera and he falls back into the darkness of violence by killing him. Consequently, blaming Spiridon for the crime (since he wrote the song for The Strangler, and lured him out of the shadows with it), Pera dresses up as his mother in a very disturbing and yet comical scene, channelling his inner Norman Bates in front of a Gothic style old mirror covered with cobwebs, and he comes after Spiridon, chasing him around town. Things end badly for The Strangler/the Mother as he ends up accidentally hanging himself while chasing Spiridon around. The story of the Belgrade Strangler has ended. However, considering The Strangler's influence on Spiridon's psyche, Spiridon now becomes haunted by The Strangler's violent crimes, and becoming completely obsessed, executes his first killing by strangulation of none other than his own bride, on their wedding night. In line with the reading of this film, The Strangler's omnipresence, even after his death, might suggest that the old political system in Yugoslavia, despite drawing to its end, might still survive in the minds of the people, and coexist with the new political system and changes that are set to occur in the 1990s, after the fall of Yugoslavia, the mindset that is still present today in both Croatia and Serbia through the term of Yugo nostalgia. It is a visible clash of this traditional mindset left over from Tito's times and the more modern way of thinking outside of the box, and the adjustment to the latter. Both these films speak about the times that started changing rapidly, and people's inability to cope with that same change, often wishing to "go back", not fully aware that that is impossible. Even though the constant switching between the suggested comparisons of the old, dying regime and the new, rebellious generations is present in both films (it is more apparent in *Strangler VS. Strangler*), whether we are looking at the characters, certain scenes or clever use of

language, which makes *Bloodsuckers* and *Strangler VS. Strangler* prime examples of the collective mindset in both countries on the verge of Yugoslavia's downfall, and predictions of more violent times to come.

PART TWO: Horror in post – Yugoslavia

Chapter 1

Creepypasta and online horror in the Balkans

"The European audio-visual market consists of a majority of various small markets and a limited number of large markets, however none large enough to compete with notable Non European markets such as China and the United States."[163] European film and TV production has been limited to the borders of their respective countries (in this context, this refers to Yugoslavia, later Croatia (as an independent country and a member of the EU (European Union) in recent years) "with the exception of cross-country collaborations in the form of coproductions or co-financing (in which a distributor finances part of the production) deals…Various authors (for example,

[163] Afilipoaie, Adelaida. Iordache, Catalina. Raats, Tim. The 'Netflix Original' and what it means for the production of European television content, Sage Journals, Volume 16, Issue 3.

Hjort and Petrie, 2007; Lowe and Nissen, 2011; Puppis, 2009; Wauters and Raats, 2018) have described the characteristics of these European markets, highlighting, among others the vulnerability of national broadcasters and producers, as foreign media companies, satellite, and cable networks threaten national sovereignty. Additionally, the shortage of capital and media professionals and the small audiences", as is the case with the Balkans and its audio-visual content, "result in small production budgets."[164] In this chapter, I argue that despite the low to no budgets existing for making audio-visual content in the Balkans, the turn to internet streaming and using YouTube and other online services for the purpose of filmmaking opens up a new world of possibilities for Balkan filmmakers to present and market their work, whether they're offering film format, or as the latest trend, TV series format. As Grgić notices, in contemporary times, "increasingly, well-known film directors are diversifying their practice and getting involved in the production of television serials. For example, Dalibor Matanić's political thriller series *Novine/The Paper* (2016-2020) was acquired for distribution by Netflix, thereby becoming the first Eastern European series in their catalogue, while the historical drama *Senke nad Balkanom/Balkan Shadows* (2017-) was the first Serbian series acquired by Amazon Prime."[165] However, stepping out of the Balkan film studies comfort zone, and stepping into the fairly unknown territory of Balkan horror genre, the situation becomes a bit more complicated, as there are very few to almost no case studies that would serve to explore the benefits of using online platforms for the above-mentioned purpose. Some of the rare examples of online serials and films released solely via YouTube do exist. Analysing the popular *Croatian Files* (2013) web series, which deals with the internet sensation the Slenderman, the only one of this kind filmed in Croatia, will explore the horror themed urban legend in Balkan context, its potential purpose and success or lack of it in integrating itself in Balkan culture via internet platforms like YouTube using the concept of "digital campfire". First of this kind in Croatia, and as almost all web series which explore the urban myth of Slenderman, filmed with handheld camera and in a found footage style, *Croatian Files* is a web series, consisting of 25 files altogether, based on the myth of the Slenderman. It started airing on YouTube in 2013, almost three years after the creation of the character on Simply Awful online forum. Chess and Newsom explain the rationale behind

[164] Afilipoaie, Adelaida. Iordache, Catalina. Raats, Tim. Sage Journals, Volume 16, Issue 3.

[165] Grgić, Ana. There is no such thing as Balkan cinema, and yes, Balkan cinema exists: Ruminations on the past and possible futures of Balkan cinema (and media) studies? NECSUS 10 (2), Autumn 2021: 19–26.

their academic research on the controversial topic of Slenderman in their book Folklore, Horror stories and Slender Man, implying that Slenderman can belong to any culture in the world because of the collective creativity that made the character in the first place: "Our research into the rich and complex creative processes behind the character, […] helps to demonstrate the value of the Slender Man by illustrating the individual and cultural effects that participatory culture is capable of manifesting."[166] For this reason, I decided to include a chapter about the Slenderman in my research project, as it shows the creativity of communities either emerging from the Balkans directly, or are being imported via other culture, and appropriated to the Balkans via the means of shared experiences that travelled across borders. It is an interesting thing to analyse, because horror genre in the Balkans bears some similarities with the character of Slenderman, being created by the West, and slowly making its way into this territory of Otherness, where it found a home even when no one was looking or perceiving it as a thing of value. Nevertheless, the genre endured through this communal creativity of different filmmakers from different historical periods, building its character in the Balkans and thus becoming a part of one of the most frowned upon cultures in the world, in this creative sense imbued with historical occurrences. Slenderman had a similar journey to the Balkans. Through online means, Slenderman's domain after all, he was transported to a culture often deemed violent and uncivilized and dark by the West, the place of his creation, through that collective creativity that took the world by storm and added value to the character of Slenderman himself, as well as the cultures in which he appeared in alternate versions of himself, appropriated to different regions and countries. Independent films and student films have always been quite common in the Balkans, primarily because of the lack of funding from official film associations, which made these trips to the horror genre validate the existence and the need for the filmic expressions in horror in these countries. Hence a YouTube series about the figure of the Slenderman in the capital of Croatia, Zagreb, holds a value, also contributing to the overall myth about the Balkans, but at the same time showcasing the beauty of these cultures and countries, and the rich dark history and settings. For example, Zagreb has a very dark and rich history as a city, and most of the filmmakers played with that notion in the 1980s. Zagreb was one of the main characters in *Bloodsuckers* (1983), which follows a story about vampires, witches and vampire hunters in a comical way (see Part One: Chapter 3), so it is only natural for the setting and its history to

[166] Chess, Newsom. Folklore, Horror Stories and Slender Man, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 6.

become the inspiration, as well as one of the common elements in films of the region and beyond. To this date, there are no real accounts of Slenderman in Croatia and Serbia, nor there were any official accounts of the crimes inspired by the Slenderman story - it remains just that - a visiting story from Western cultures, where it made a serious impact on the young lives of the American youth: "...the degree of immersion for the two girls [from Waukesha, US] who committed the crime and the subsequent fear - fuelled media analysis of the Slenderman confirms the abilities of the collective of mostly amateur creators to conjure a convincing and compelling horror creature using at - hand digital tools and distribution networks."[167] Maintaining borders between fiction and reality about Slenderman myth is crucial in general, however, that doesn't seem to be as important in the Balkans as it is in the rest of the world, as the Balkans surely have scarier characters from history than Slenderman, a history that is plagued by wars, violence, hate, oppression and all the horrors they bring with them; that might be one of the reasons why the impact of the Slenderman myth on the collective reality wasn't greater in the Balkans. However, looking at the web series and its setting, the facelessness of the Slenderman myth might be understood in the Balkan context as portraying the "tradition" of horrors of the wars that continued well into contemporary times: faceless monsters that still lurk in the background of countries' political, social and cultural areas in the form of corruption and violence on a national level. There is a certain value in the term "digital campfire" in this context, positioning the Slenderman "in the lineage of traditional storytelling, identifying key elements of oral folklore that the stories recall: variability that leads to shifts and changes in the story according to teller, performance that defines each telling as a mutually communicative event between teller and audience, and community that draws the parameters of each telling according to the culture and tastes of the digital campfire around which it is told. Just as in folklore, the Slenderman stories are considered in the specific contexts and milieus of the communities who tell, consume, and share them."[168] Drawing on this concept, it is not surprising that this story came to life in the Balkans. The territory that is rich in folklore, most legends from it appearing in films and giving life to characters and monsters like vampires, werewolves, witches, dark figures lurking in the shadows, after the oral storytelling somewhat waned due to the emergence of contemporary times and technologies. In order to preserve them, it is only

[167] Chess, Newsom. Folklore, Horror Stories and Slender Man, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 7.
[168] Chess, Newsom. 2015, p. 76.

natural to transfer that word-of-mouth storytelling onto a digital space, to preserve the legacy of these legends for future generations. Immediately in the first episode of *Croatian Files* web series, Slenderman makes his appearance. The first episode serves as an introduction to the whole story of the series, which is standard by all accounts. Two Spanish students are studying in Zagreb, Croatia and they find an HDD left behind from previous student/s who were staying at their dorm room. One of the students offers the whole story of finding the disc, and what they did with it next. This is how the story of Slenderman in Croatia begins. Immediately in the first episode, the creators set up the mood and the expectations of the YouTube community to get involved and share their angle on the videos that the two students found in their dorm room. File #2 offers a more specific setting, during wintertime, when everything looks desolate and cold, the winters are harsh and unforgiving, but peaceful, nonetheless. The two students are exploring the surroundings of Zagreb, and they stumble upon an abandoned building in the middle of nowhere, implying during their conversation that it might have been a church at some point, which is a subtle hint into what they might find in there upon their wander around the building. Abandoned buildings are certainly not uncommon in cities, towns and villages in Croatia. Many houses and buildings were left to rot after the war, primarily because of any lack of funding put forward from the councils and the government to try and rebuild them and put them to good use. This type of setting further enhances the desolation and the upcoming feeling of terror and horror that the students in *Croatian Files* web series will encounter in the next episodes. They are both hesitant to go inside, which further enhances the feeling of unease. Inside the boys start finding strange items, without being able to place them logically, considering that the nature of the building itself could be anything, from a school to a hospital. Finally, they find an open hatch that leads to the roof of the building, and they go on to explore it. The camera is shaky, found footage style of filming and as they're approaching to the darker parts of the attic and find strange photos of unknown people lying around, and the sound as well as the picture on the camera start experiencing static and other issues. Kike, one of the boys, is nowhere to be found all of a sudden. Instead, his friend Teo finds him on the other side of the attic, visibly confused and with blood dripping out of his nose. A strange thump on the other side of the attic draws their attention, and as the boys approach the hatch where they came in, they see that the loud thump came from the hatch door being forced closed, implying that they are not alone. Kike is still out of it, but immediately when they leave the attic, and the building, he gets better.

However, the static is still there, and there is a silhouette of a strange tall man without a face standing in the doorway of the building entrance behind them, as they are leaving the place. In the next few files, the audience is getting more insight into daily life of Kike and Teo, that they're studying film and journalism, and the changes they seem to be experiencing because of their encounter with the Slenderman. The creators who are uploading the files constantly make connections between the videos they found and hint toward the fact that the boys are being stalked by this tall dark figure. Loss of memory, not being able to explain where they lost chunks of time is being explained as they themselves rewatch their videos and start noticing strange things. The static becomes present almost all the time, which means that the Slenderman latched onto one of them, or both of them, and slowly creeps into their daily lives, messing with their studies and their overall mood. The build-up creates more terror and fear, as both Kike and Teo realize that they are not alone at any moment, which affects their behaviour. In file #5, the creators show a video clip of the building in Croatian, with a report talking about casualties in a hospital. From that moment on, the files start showing the distorted realities of both Kike and Teo, a somewhat interdimensional *Silent Hill* type of reality, where both of them exist in the same place, but in different realities. These distortions become longer as the files progress. Suddenly, in File #7, the creators, the students who found Teo and Kike's HDD turn the story around and inform their viewers that they will start uploading their own files from now on. This twist further enhances the distortion of reality and the interference of the tall figure in the students' lives after watching and uploading videos that they found in their dorm room. The story of Dani and his roommate thus begins. They informed us that they visited the 'upper town' of Zagreb, which is one of the oldest parts of the city, full of history and folklore. Coincidentally, this connects well with the legend of the vampire in Zagreb, portrayed in the film *Bloodsuckers* (Šorak, 1989) from Chapter 3. Small, narrow dark alleys, long stairs, dark corners are all a part of the appeal of this historical place, where the boys claimed that they encountered the "figure" that keeps following them. The interplay between the shared experiences from all the boys and their videos start telling a mutual story of this "figure", the boundaries between the past and the present get blurred, and the atmosphere becomes darker and more ominous as the files continue. The boys get an anonymous message telling them to go back to the building from file #2. Involvement of the third party becomes obvious. Going back to the building, they find a burned analogue film roll, and conveniently being film students, they have the means to watch it. Upon

entering the attic, they realize that the place is different. Before empty, with only old photos scattered on the floor, now the attic is full of furniture and boxes. As their reality changes and gets more distorted, so does the setting, implying that they might not be at the same place, even though the space is the same. "The situation got complicated. We do not know if we will upload more Files", was the video announcement in File #10, after the boys saw a blonde girl with empty eyes in the attic of the building from File #2. However, the upload of the files continues but with File #0, and continuing onto #11 and so on, bringing the audience back to the beginning, or before the beginning to tell the background story that is hiding in the film roll that the boys found earlier inside the building. The film roll was introduced to Teo and Kike by presumably another student named Damien, and after watching it, Damien tells them that what they saw on the film roll they can see in person and points them in the direction of the abandoned building. Dani and his friend watch the half-burned film roll as well. It builds the story of Slenderman, the origins of it, placing it in old vintage photos and clips, slowly approaching after every static and film distortion, it is always there, lurking in the background, which is exactly how Victor Surge described it when he started the Slenderman story on the Something Awful online forum:

"It all started with Something Awful. On June 8, 2009, a member of the online forums for the web site Something Awful began a new thread, challenging members to "create paranormal images through Photoshop." Throughout the first two days, forum members created the expected fare: a variety of ghostly or generally creepy images (often adding half-seen spirits into the backgrounds of real pictures). But on June 10, the tenor of the forum shifted dramatically when a user posted two doctored photos and a news story identifying a faceless "slender man" in a suit who stalked children. Almost immediately, an obsessive interest in the Slenderman took over the forum discussions. Constant additions expanded the fledgling Slenderman mythos with new photographs, drawings, short fiction, and even woodcuts showing his appearance in multiple places throughout history."[169] As they found out from the local news that the girl from File #10 that they saw in the attic is found dead, the boys continue uploading Kike and Teo's files to get some sense and clarification. The original storyline goes back to the all so familiar setting, the woods, the home of Slenderman. Kike was placed there, in a trance. The setting changes toward the end as Kike and Teo finish their semester in Croatia and go back to Spain. There, they are

[169] Chess, Newsom. 2015, p. 16.

still haunted by the "figure" from Croatia, despite parting ways. A letter with a SIM card sent to one of them brings them back together, only to be contacted by someone named Salvador who says that he knows what happened in Croatia and what is still happening to them. He is from SEIP who deal with, and help others with, para-contacts with figures, Catharism – warriors who guard the gates between dimensions (he calls the tall dark figure kinospectrum (a spectre of Herbert Frankensen, child molester from England - he was a butler – File #19 contains the whole background story of this spectre). The figure is never named and mentioned as Slenderman, only verbal descriptions of Slenderman implied that it might be him, and that the influence of the myth is present in the web series). Slenderman "saves" Teo from hoodlums who beat him up, after which they mysteriously disappear. In the last few files all four boys encounter the "figure" directly. The ending reveals a more sinister plot than the one Salvador was offering to them earlier, which also fits into the Slenderman myth - crossing the boundaries of reality and imagination, as we see the boys exploring another abandoned place back in Zagreb, an additional storyline revealed only at the end of the web series. A vortex of unclear, blurry, madness inducing scenes reveals the all too familiar element of the Slenderman story: one of the boys is indeed a proxy, who eventually kills his friend in the name of the tall dark figure that has infested both of their lives. *Croatian Files* is a good example of how a successful web series with a horror theme can be made independently, without any official financial backing and only with an amateur camera, using creativity and inspiration from the Balkan setting, which will become a normal way of making films later on, as some independently made films will be analysed in the next chapter. *Croatian Files* might well be understood as portraying anxieties of experiencing a different, unknown culture, a culture that has been known for its Otherness in the rest of the world. The fluidity of the Slenderman myth, since he is residing and traveling within the online space that is being shared and created collectively by every person in the world, shows the changing and adapting nature of such horror related legends popularly called creepy pastas, which works well in the fluid Balkan context: "The Slender Man is no exception. As a horror character, the Slender Man is a reminder of current cultural anxieties in a multitude of ways. […] While many of the other horror monsters we encounter – vampires, werewolves, and the undead – are familiar and we see them rise again with each new medium, the Slender Man is unique in that he was born in online spaces. […] Additionally, the many meanings of the monster help to highlight his instability – as a creature of the Internet he is, by his very nature, constantly

changing."[170] However, it is not just the Slenderman myth that is constantly changing; everyone that comes in contact with it also changes, often in unimaginable ways. These individuals, called proxies, embrace the violence, implying that every person can commit heinous violent acts, especially when influenced by a supernatural force. The question here poses itself: what then happens when this kind of supernatural force (Slenderman), that makes others turn to violence against their will, enters the culture that was built on violence and that uses violence as a form of communication (the Balkans)? The Slenderman myth and everything it represents resonated with other cultures around the world, making it a reality. There were numerous reports of young people committing acts of violence in the name of Slenderman, however, that was not the case in the Balkans. This supernatural force did not resonate with the Balkan mentality, possibly because of the history of violence that shaped the culture through complicated political and social relationships and wars between the countries – these actually created a different kind of monster that was a part of the collective storytelling, a "character" even greater and more brutal than the Slenderman himself, the one that grows with the stories of people affected by it, and with the unresolving issues concerning poor leadership, corruption and consequences from the 1990s wars that are still present in Croatian and Serbian modern society. As Chess and Newsom point out, stories we tell are important, "the stories we tell have meaning. Our human tales represent our dreams, our anxieties, our faults, and our sense of purpose. […] And yet, not all of our stories are about humans – they feature both the natural and the supernatural. Horror falls into the latter category, as a necessarily fictional form of storytelling that connects us with the unknown. It often functions on a metaphorical and allegorical level – the fears that we see play out in horror stories convey larger anxieties of the unknown, fears of our nature and ourselves, and fears of the Other. Horror's metaphor affords us the pleasure of seeing these anxieties without having to deal with their implications directly or overtly. Horror's power exceeds the confines of a single mass medium – popular horror storytelling occurs in novels, film, television, comics, the Internet, and countless other forms. The Slender Man is no exception."[171] However, the horrors of violent communication in the Balkans exceed the power and influence of Slenderman, essentially a digital product of contemporary society, making it simply a sidenote on a page written by Balkan reality, presented in film and other media through the combination

[170] Chess, Newsom. 2015, p. 40.
[171] Chess, Newsom. 2015, p. 40.

of horror and humour, which has become one of the identifying traits of Balkan style of filmmaking, regardless of the genre. These digital products, like the Slenderman figure, "...end up lost within certain cultures, as they do not have the means or the capacity to develop and adapt because of the clash of the digital and the traditional."[172] However, what the case of the Slenderman shows, is that there is a huge potential and the market in the Balkans for filming and marketing horror themed films, TV and web series due to Balkan's rich and dark history, contemporary issues and folklore, which is just waiting to be utilized and further explored.

Chapter 2

Defining rural horror in Balkan context:

Ćaća (Matanić, 2011), Zagorski specijalitet (Kapac, 2012),

Šuma summarum (Vitez, 2010)

"Ever since there has been a clear distinction between the country and the city, the rural has occupied an ambivalent position in the popular imagination. On the one hand it is cherished as an innocent idyll of bucolic tranquillity and communion with nature – a place to retreat from the ever-quickening pace of urban living and to join in with 'authentic,' rustic community life. […] Against these idyllic representations of rurality, however, can be set other visions of the rural."[173] Constructions and portrayals of the idyllic rural landscape differ from country to country. In the USA, for example, the emotional attachment to the word countryside and what it represents has different connotations than the same idea viewed in the British context. Both focus on the countryside as valued landscape, with some differences incorporating the wilderness in the USA context, and the social aspect of mapping such terrain, constructing the picturesque "village

[172] Jurkovic, Tanja (2023). 'The clash of digital and traditional monsters: Slenderman adaptations and the Balkan culture', Journal of Adaptation in Film & Performance, Special Issue: 'Making Monsters', 16:1&2, pp. 147–59, https://doi.org/10.1386/jafp_00094_1

[173] Bell, David. Anti – idyll: Rural horror, in Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality, ed. Cloke, Cloke, Little, Routledge, 1997, p. 94.

England"[174] in the UK. Following Bell's logic of the rural idyllic here, the question of the representation of the countryside in the Balkans poses a challenge worthy of analysis. Balkan Otherness comes into play here, as it is a crucial part of the Balkan mentality, and it shapes the view of the West of the same region[175], oftentimes unfairly portrayed as barbaric, violent, and uncivilized. The rural countryside in both Croatia and Serbia differs from the mentioned examples in the West, mostly because in Balkan film, the rural has often been represented as a vast, vague, isolated dark rural landscape from where people leave to experience the exotic aspects of the urban life. This has been the way of life in both countries for a long time: if one grows up in the countryside, one also often decides to leave their place of birth to seek better opportunities in an urban setting to shape their future lives. Constantly under some form of oppression, stricken by wars, the countries in question invested very little in the rural parts of the region, which resulted in poverty and lack of food, some rural parts of Croatia and Serbia still fighting this modern-day plague today. Rural landscape is reserved for the old population who do not have the means to move to a larger city and are often left behind by younger generations to fend for themselves. The harsh truth about the social situation of rural countryside in the Balkans speaks through the landscape itself. The rural in the Balkans therefore is connected to isolation, loneliness, stagnation, devastation, which are all ideas that construct the dark reality of Balkan rural countryside. In effect, this dark reality which was constructed by political, social, and cultural elements of Balkan society lays the foundations for the perfect setting that can be explored and utilized in horror genre quite effectively. Dalibor Matanić recognized the potential these vast isolated rural landscapes of Croatia formed over the years, and he set out to make a low budget horror film *Ćaća* (Matanić, 2011) in the expansive isolated cold landscape of Lika, a traditional region of Croatia, surrounded by mountains from all sides. He explores the idea of difficult family relations within the rural landscape that clashes with the urban. The film opens with a close-up shot of a couple kissing, during which we get information about the setting of the film, in a very brief exchange of a few sentences about the visit to the girl's father, for which she calmly says: "Let him rot for all I care"[176], setting the tone of the visit to her estranged father. Next scene provides more information as we see another girl urinating next to a tree in a cold,

[174] Bell, David. p.94.
[175] See Introduction.
[176] Ćaća (Matanić, Croatia, 2011), translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

snowy winter landscape, and as we soon find out as she approaches the car where the couple is waiting, that she is the girl's sister, the whole setting rounds up to where they are going: a godforsaken, distant, idyllic part of Lika, a vast rural mountainous area in Croatia. The father's house seems like a standard idyllic vacation home in the mountains, but soon as one of the girls comes inside searching for him, the house gives an impression of a cold, stuck in the past space without any emotional familial aspect as one would expect from a father's home, which in a sense describes the emotional state of mind of the father figure himself, as we will see later in the film. The two sisters start reminiscing about their childhood, as they are waiting for their father to appear, and the inside of the house slowly changes into a visually warmer space, but still the coldness and emotional distance between the two lingers in these scenes. The boyfriend seems to be a background character who serves for expanding some ominous shots, a buffer zone between the two sisters with whom he has a relationship, both a loving one with one sister, and the cheating, lustful one with the other, as we later find out after they're left alone in the house, and as a victim, because the father witnesses his infidelity with the other sister, which leads him to tie the boyfriend up in the shed to get some sense into him. However, the boyfriend gets angry at the cowardness and hypocrisy of the father regarding the two girls, and he tells the truth to father's face, threatening to tell everything what happened to the girls. In the culmination of events towards the end of the film, the father kills the boyfriend with an axe in plain sight in the middle of nowhere, and the girls witness it as it happens, which drives them into a frenzy escape from their own father, flesh and blood. This immoral behaviour from the characters in the film and "lack of civilisation were precisely the product of the climate and the pleasant and attractive countryside which made it possible to live in a state of nature, a primitive contentment allowing only for the most extreme and basic passions."[177] Even though father finds the girls, he decides not to initiate contact, but rather he goes back to the house to get drunk, yet again escaping the severity of a new situation, just like he ran away from his daughters' lives, as it was implied numerous times during the film, revealing an abusive and a broken relationship between the three. Even though the girls get what they came for in the end, their father's apology for everything that he has done to them while they were children, there is only one way to settle this familial relationship. After one of the girls breaks into tears in front of him, the other sister

[177] Gribaudi, Gabriella. Images of the south, in The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited (eds R. Lumley and J. Morris), Exeter University Press, Exeter, 1997, p. 88.

comes inside, and lovingly escorts her father to his bed, gently saying: You're going to sleep now, daddy, and stabs him in the chest. This reveals a very intimate moment between the two, because she was the one who initiated the visit in the first place and tried to make amends in a loving manner with him throughout the film. The father locks his eyes on hers as she stabs him, as if letting her know that he understands why this is happening. In the final scene of the film, the two sisters, now more broken than ever, find each other all over again in a vast, distant, and cold rural winter landscape which serves to portray their inner state of mind. Although *Ćaća* has the characteristics of what is understood as rural horror, including the setting, and the obvious treatment of the victim represented as urban (the two sisters and the boyfriend) and both the setting and the monstrous entity as rural (idyllic landscape of Lika and the father), is it possible to define rural horror on these Balkan territories simply because of one film that fits the term, despite its significance when it comes to filming it and "distributing" it (Matanić made this film using his own budget and with the help of the actors and crew, who received very low to possibly no compensation for this film, and yet, the father was portrayed by one of the most famous and well-paid Croatian actors Ivo Grgurević)? Perhaps to expand on this idea in the attempt to search for the answer to the previous question, it would be useful to mention *Zagorski specijalitet* (Kapac, Croatia, 2012), described as a "...purebred horror, without added allegory, parody or psychologizing of any kind"[178], a student project turned semi-feature film that even screened in regional cinemas: "Realized in the form of a student thesis at the Academy of Dramatic Arts, this short satirical horror-thriller drama co-written and directed by David Kapac, is a film that in an intriguing, but not in an particularly original and mature way thematizes capitalist society where young people, if they want to survive, they have to become beasts, literally and figuratively. It is about a clear genre driven, plot derivative, modelled on Toby Hooper 's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and Wes Craven 's *Hills Have Eyes* and marked with elements of rural horror, an emphasized social critique type of film, a film that abounds in scenes of naturalistic violence, accompanied by the atmosphere of anxiety and horror; in places, the director uses grotesque very successfully and the acting is fresh and convincing."[179] *Zagorski specijalitet* is therefore an interesting example of the clash between the rural and the urban, that

[178] Xagorski Specijalitet, Kino Tuskanac, accessed November 9, 2020, http://kinotuskanac.hr/movie/zagorski-specijalitet

[179] Zagorski specijalitet, Baza Hr kinematografije, http://hrfilm.hr/baza_film.php?id=344 , translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

criticizes the contemporary capitalist society and the way it influenced our lives, stripping the emotional and moral values to its bare minimum, creating mindless, emotionless monsters in the process. Obviously low budget, this film tells a story of a cannibal family from rural Croatian part of Zagorje using humorous colloquialisms and global horror clichés, and again shows the clash between the urban (victim) and rural (monster), even though it fits more within the slasher category in terms of the theme and the organization of scenes. *Zagorski specijalitet* (Kapac, 2012) is quite often mentioned in connection to another Croatian film, a black comedy/thriller with horror elements set in the rural environment and preoccupied with the balance between rural and urban, *Šuma summarum* (*Forest Creatures*, Vitez, Croatia, 2010) because of the setting (the forest) and the group of characters who are deemed as victims from the start (a bunch of trendy, urban businessmen and women on a forced team building exercise), and even though there is a "similarity in the plot with the film *Šuma summarum* directed by Ivan Vitez, David Kapac, the director of *Zagorski specijalitet*, claims that the script for his movie was created independent of the script for Vitez's film."[180] What we have here then are the two quite innovative and very similar films that play with the tropes of horror genre, jumping from rural horror to slasher subgenre and back, offering a sound critique of the contemporary capitalist society and corporate world, trying to destroy its foundations by forcing the corporate world into a rural one for the purpose of survival. Rural horror, although present in the Balkan context with obvious potential to become at least a subgenre, still needs to be outlined and researched more closely to be able to define it withing the proposed context. Although resemblances to rural horror and anti-idyllic landscape can be traced back as early as 1970s in the works of Đorđe Kadijević (*She-Butterfly*, *Holy Place*, *Ward, Maiden's Song/Virgin's Song*) that portray the vast rural desolate landscape within both the Gothic and horror genre framework, Matanić created a crude, contemporary and more realistic portrayal of the same in his film *Ćaća*, making this landscape a permanent part of Croatian, and Balkan, cinema, enriching it with images that correspond with the complicated Balkan identity and mentality. What all these films evidently have in common are the narratives that depict a psychological or physiological state of character and its decay, for which Mendik claims that "these narratives of physical and psychic regression reflect urbanite fears about the lack of development within the untamed rural sphere, rendering the inhabitants of the

[180] Zagorski specijalitet, Kino Tuskanac, accessed November 9, 2020, http://kinotuskanac.hr/movie/zagorski-specijalitet , translated from Croatian by the researcher of the project.

countryside (and their bodies) as a source of both repulsion and fascination."[181] Mendik uses this reflection of psychological regression to posit the genre that explores the "monstrous nature of the Southern Italian that can be defined under the title of the *Mezzogiorno giallo*" also by using Banfield's concept "amoral familialism" to explain a regional rejection of the cultural and socio-political bonds associated with modernity and its advancement"[182], in which the term signifies a certain kind of behaviour directed toward "the good of the family"[183], which can be observed in Matanić's *Ćaća - f*or example, through the characters of two daughters who set out in the desolate rural countryside in order to save the abusive relationship with their father. In Banfeld's view, the backwardness of the rural can be explained by "the inability" of, in this case, a broken family nucleus, where the father is absent, and mother is non-existent, except in rare moments in the film where she is briefly mentioned, to act together for the common good, or indeed, for any end transcending the immediate, material interest of the nuclear family. This inability to concert activity beyond the immediate family arises from an ethos – "amoral familism" – which has been produced by[184] a combination of social and cultural factors, such as high death rate and the absence of the institution of the extended family. However, the girls' intentions turned out to be something completely different, and the amorality here takes on a key role, from everyone inhabiting the brutal rural landscape of Lika. As far as other case studies is concerned, *Zagorski specijalitet* (2012) perhaps even better depicts Banfield's concept with its degradation of character and depiction of a cannibal "nuclear family"[185], a "specific type of unit" which "performs sexual, procreative, educational and economic functions"[186], and relates to societies "where the fundamental unit is the nuclear family, and more complex forms of social organisation are absent"[187] – much like in most slasher films, where the depiction of a nuclear family is seen through a very simple and straightforward hierarchy led by a deviant and all-

[181] Mendik, Xavier. The Return of the Rural Repressed: Italian Horror and the Mezzogiorno Giallo, In H. Benshoff (Ed.), A Companion to the Horror Film (pp. 390-405). Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.
[182] Mendik, Xavier. The Return of the Rural Repressed: Italian Horror and the Mezzogiorno Giallo, In H. Benshoff (Ed.), A Companion to the Horror Film (pp. 390-405). Wiley-Blackwell, 2014.

[183] Gribaudi, Gabriella. 1997, pp. 83–114.
[184]Banfield, Edward C. The Moral Basis of a Backward Society, Free Press, 1958, p.10.
[185] Term coined by a social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s-30s, and explored in his work, where he argues that family is universal.
[186] Hendricks, Lewellyn. Nuclear Family Universals: Fact and Faith in the Acceptance of an Idea, in Journal of Comparative Family Studies, University of Toronto Press, Vol.6, No.2 (Autumn 1975), pp. 125-138.
[187] Gribaudi, Gabriella 1997, pp. 83–114.

knowing patriarch or matriarch, with their spouses and children serving under them, but serving under the same goal nonetheless: the preservation of the family, its traditions and mentality; in the case of *Zagorski specijalitet*, the backwardness and a desolate way of life that refuses to acknowledge the modern world, and instead simply tries to get rid of it by exploiting it (the cannibalistic way of life of the family in the film implies the exploitation as a normal, traditional way of life, and is shown in a very disturbing way, with just a small hint of humour in the scenes of drug induced fear before the urban bodies become a permanent part of the rural idyll, or its counterpart anti-idyll, to be more precise). Balkan rural landscape then paints a very dark picture of isolation and disturbed emotional state and relationships, with different outcomes at the forefront, opening the possibility to transfer the concept of isolation to more urban landscapes, and on the other hand, it allows young filmmakers to play with the existing subgenres of horror jumping from one landscape (urban) to the other (rural) and vice versa, in that way further exploring horror within the Balkan setting; an idea that Dejan Zečević skilfully played with 9 years earlier, using isolation of an urban setting, as well as forming a blueprint of the slasher film subgenre explored and adapted to the Balkan context, to portray suspense and terror in his film *T.T. Syndrome* (2002), the first slasher film made in Serbia.

Chapter 3

Glimpses of slasher film in the Balkans:

Dejan Zečević, T.T Sindrom (Srbija, 2002)

and the Western slasher horror genre formula

There was a time in the 1970s America which saw the rise of different kinds of films within the horror genre. These films of contemptible content that dealt with adult themes, violence, gore and overall taboos made an impact on Western film industry and audience around the world in a very short time of their existence. These controversial films were called slashers. "These brutal and gory films which came of age during the late 1970s were the bastard children of the horror film, too gleefully violent and graphic to be embraced by the mainstream, but far too popular and successful to achieve true cult status. They hovered somewhere in a cinematic netherworld—between popular and counterculture—taunting critics who found them indicative of the decline of Western civilization while enthralling millions of dedicated fans who flocked to every new release."[188] As Rockoff implies, slasher films encountered backlash and dismissal from film critics at its early beginnings, who negated the influence and the indelible mark these films had already made on American audiences in the 1970s. Slasher films quickly became a part of people's reality through comic books, VHS, trading cards, video games and the corresponding merchandise, cashing in on notoriety that followed them. Slasher film, as any part of genre, has its issues when it comes to defining it. Depending on the approach and the scholar, the definitions vary slightly, and the similarities between them are present and visible. We have the definition of the slasher which, according to Richard Nowell, contains a structure in terms of storytelling by "a shadowy blade-wielding killer responding to an event by stalking and murdering the members of a youth group before the threat s/he poses is neutralised"[189], while in a similar manner, Clover describes the slasher as "the immensely generative story of a psycho killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who survives"[190], that girl having the titular title of the Final Girl that Rockoff considers one of the most interesting elements of the slasher film. Same as Nowell, when he refers to a killer responding to an event, he claims that the killer does so by stalking, among other things; an approach which Dika prefers over the summaries of her colleagues. She posits that it is not so much about murdering as it is more about stalking and looking, observing

[188] Rockoff, Adam. Going To Pieces: The Rise and Fall of The Slasher Film, 1978 – 1986, McFarland 2016, Introduction.

[189] Nowell, Richard. Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011, p. 20.

[190] Clover, Carol J. Clover, Carol J. Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film, University of California Press, No. 20, Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy, 1987, pp. 187-228.

the victim rather than just slashing her/him in most gruesome ways, as she implies in her work: "Although many of the films identified in this way have been called slasher films (thus placing the defining characteristic on the central narrative action), the term stalker film…alludes instead to the act of looking and especially to the distinctive set of point-of-view shots employed by these films."[191] Or, as Clover puts it, "eyes are everywhere in horror cinema."[192] Dika's stalker film makes sense in this horror environment, as well as the slasher film defined by Rockoff, Nowell and Clover, with only slight differences between them. Positioning both the slasher film and the stalker film in the Balkan context would be interesting for this purpose, to see which concept fits it better. Slasher films are usually gory and violent, and often audiences, while viewing them, fail to observe other elements of slasher, which causes negative reactions. But despite the negative reactions to these gory violent films that, more often than not, raised fear among people because of the themes and elements they were built upon-such as victimizing the teen generations who very often died in most gruesome ways on screen-the slasher film successfully entered our dreams and nightmares-and not just that, "the slasher film hadn't just entered our nightmares, it had entered our national consciousness."[193] The national influence of the slasher film that Rockoff speaks of did not end there, on the territory where it was created; it spread across international borders and entered cinemas and homes of people around the world. No wonder then that a fan of the slasher film turned director, Dejan Zečević, decided to make the first slasher film in Serbia in 2000s. That was the time when the second cycle of the slasher film was well underway and very popular. "After this first slasher cycle, the subgenre mutated into a series of increasingly campy copycats, sequels, and reboots. By all accounts, it was exhausted by the end of the 1980s."[194] Audiences were saturated, as well as the studios, who shifted the production of slasher films from cinema to video. First slasher cycle brought audiences some of the most intriguing films, the most famous ones being the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, 1974), and *Halloween* franchise, among others, but because of the saturation of the market, the change entered the stage in 1996 with the release of *Scream* (Craven, 1996), an event that changed the game. "Indeed, *Scream* represented a new trend in cross-over media, as films

[191] Dika, Vera. In Clayton, Wickham. Style and Form in the Hollywood Slasher Film, Springer, 2015, p. 8.
[192] Clover, Carol J.1987, pp. 187-228.
[193] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, Introduction.
[194] Keetley, Dawn. PREFACE: THE NEO-SLASHER, Horror Homeroom, https://www.horrorhomeroom.com/prefacethe-neo-slasher/

became integrally tied to TV and to popular music. With *Scream*, the slasher became mainstream, breaking the subgenre's longstanding tradition of casting relatively unknown actors and remaining self-consciously on the margins of established popular culture."[195] Keetley also claims that it has changed the nature of the slasher killer, and introduced the so-called self-reflexivity. In the Balkans, in our case study by Zečević, self-reflexivity, if there is one in *T.T Syndrome*, is very vague and incoherent, even though the director skilfully plays with references to other horror films and genres, but mostly in visual, subtle terms. As Craven in *Scream*, Zečević also uses well-known Balkan actors, however, *T.T Syndrome* still stays on the margins of our (Eastern Europe, the Balkans and especially the world) popular culture, where the issues with positioning and defining horror genre in the Balkans and viewing the Balkans from the East and West point of view come to light. Zečević however, doesn't see this as a problem, but as a fertile ground ready to make something different, with a Balkan touch. Zečević is one of the youngest Serbian directors who developed his own distinct style of filmmaking dealing with controversial themes, themes with social and political impact, films that speak out about current issues. It is interesting then that he decided to make his *T.T. Sindrom* (*T.T. Syndrome*, 2002), for which he himself says that it was made "as a classic horror film with all the elements that can be found in that kind of movie."[196] Obviously, a fan of the slasher film, Zečević wasn't afraid to take a risk and film the first horror film of this kind in the region, despite potentially knowing that it will not be received positively by the audiences. Some reviews on IMDB[197] use words such as sh**, bad, dull – these usually come from foreign users, which is important to note, because, as the next chapters will show, there is always a misunderstanding happening between western audiences and Balkan horror films, mostly because of the lack of the Balkan context that directors often neglect to provide, a certain background on the Balkans in a political, social and cultural sense that would be offered to foreign audiences in order for them to be able to make sense of the films in the first place. However, not every Balkan horror film is about politics and difficult social issues, but what they all do have in common is the Balkan context where the directors often place the horror films they make. This is, however, a recurring issue with horror films made in the Balkans, which will be covered in more depth with other examples in the next

[195] Keetley, Dawn. PREFACE: THE NEO-SLASHER, https://www.horrorhomeroom.com/prefacethe-neo-slasher/
[196] Intervju Dejan Zecevic, Novi Magazin, https://www.novimagazin.rs/zivot-i-ljudi/171120-intervju-dejan-zecevic-pravljenje-nereda-dovodi-dopojaveizgreda , translated from Serbian by the researcher of the project.
[197] Review T.T.Sindrom, https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0249180/reviews?ref_=tt_urv

chapters of this part of the research project. Reviews from Balkan users are nonetheless more positive, and they do defend Zečević's film. One can feel a sense of pride in users' reviews, because of the fact that *T.T. Syndrome* is the first slasher film made in Serbia, which goes on to expand on the background story about how the film was made, mentioning the serious lack of budget and the actors not getting paid because of it, harsh conditions of filming within a historical fortress, the technicality of the equipment which in most opinions, added to the atmosphere and the visual identity of the film, all implying that *T.T. Syndrome* was made independently, out of a sheer desire from the director to dwell into a subgenre that he personally liked. Most film critics and audiences are dismissing *T.T. Syndrome* as a serious film, usually because of the ostensibly amateur nature of filming, which seems to be deliberate rather than arising as an issue from the director's lack of experience and creative vision, and the confusion with the story that revolves around a group of young people who end up in a Turkish bath while trying to score some weed for their night out. What they don't know, is that they will never get out of this ominous place alive. They experience a night of utmost violence and suffering, inflicted upon them by a deranged serial killer who is hiding in the baths, which enables him to kill off the youngsters one by one without much outside interference. Zečević's directorial skills are shown here as he navigates the claustrophobic underground Turkish bath setting with ease, accentuating the scenes of gore using close-ups for a more intimate experience for the viewers, almost transporting them inside this space of violence and pain. According to Ognjanović, elements of *giallo*[198] are successfully incorporated in scenes in the film to create suspense and mystery: "Zečević creates a rather effective collage of slasher stereotypes mixed with an Argento-like whodunit (close-up fetishism of gloves, door handles and various sharp weaponry, plus the typical *giallo* motifs of a strong mother figure, childhood trauma and a haunting nursery rhyme)."[199] It is therefore clear that Zečević as a director has the knowledge of different horror genres and subgenres and how they work, and he uses the elements of the same (in this case, the elements of the slasher subgenre) to create an entertaining and shocking film that primarily has

[198] A giallo film genre is often credited to 20th-century Italian murder-mystery films which contain elements of both horror and thriller regardless of their national origin. Many English speakers use the term to specifically refer to a genre of Italian-produced thriller-horror films, also called "Spaghetti Slashers," with filmmakers like Mario Bava, Dario Argento, and Lucio Fulci coming to mind as masters of the genre. The genre thrived between 1968 and 1978, eventually diminishing its popularity in the '80s.

[199] T.T. Syndrome, http://templeofghoul.blogspot.com/2010/10/t-t-syndrome-2002.html

one goal: to scare its audiences – just the same as any other slasher film made to date. With all this in mind, and after defining the slasher film and its elements earlier, it would be exciting to see what these elements that make a slasher film bring to the Balkan table, using Zečević's *.T.T Syndrome* as a case study, and to explore the concept of slasher film in the Balkan context. Starting with Rockoff and his analysis of the slasher film from its beginnings,[200] he unravels the definition of the slasher film quite plainly: "So what is a slasher? We've all seen them or are at least familiar with their modus operandi. Ironically, detractors of the slasher film have no problem giving what they feel is an accurate depiction—a maniac with a knife slaughtering a group of young, good-looking teenagers in a myriad of gruesome ways."[201] His definition shares some common ground with Nowell's, however, Rockoff concludes that his, and Nowell's definition is too simplistic and therefore inaccurate in certain aspects, as there are films with this kind of categorization in theme that are gory and violent, but more than simply maniac-wielding-knife-and-killing-teenagers film (*The Evil Dead* (1989)). He further elaborates that "...there are some distinctive and consistent elements which are prevalent in enough films that a workable, however malleable, definition of the slasher can be formed."[202] The elements that he is talking about are the sections/frames in which I will try to position *T.T. Syndrome,* to fortify director's statement made earlier. He claimed that this is a classic horror film with all the elements that can be found in this kind of film, which in this case is the slasher film. Rockoff lists the elements of the slasher film as follows: killer, weapons of choice, special effects, setting, past event, the final girl, and the eyes of the killer – the subjective point of view.[203] Since I am referring to Clover, Dika, Nowell, Keetley and Rockoff's work in this chapter, it will be interesting to explore how their similar, but still different understandings of the slasher (or, in Dika's case, the stalker) film can make an impact on a film of the same genre, but the one that was filmed in the Balkans. Keetley's claim about self-reflexivity in the slasher films of the second cycle, I have already noticed, does not fit well with *T.T. Syndrome*'s story, although the film uses references to other horror films and genres, but mostly visually to create an appropriate setting. Keetley claims that the story of the slasher is a story as old as time, and most influential critics, like Clover and Dika have, as Keetley says, "grounded their definitions of the subgenre in its first flourishing from

[200] Rockoff, McFarland 2016, ch.1.
[201] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1, p. 5.
[202] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1, p. 5.
[203] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1.

1978 – 1981", to which she adds that "there are several influential progenitors. Looking at these, offers insight into the critical elements of the always-flexible slasher formula, which is best exemplified in films from that first slasher cycle—films such as *Halloween, Friday the 13th* (Sean S. Cunningham, 1980), and *Prom Night* (Paul Lynch, 1980)."[204] For Keetley, *Psycho* is the most important "slasher progenitor" because "it unambiguously offers us an archetype of the slasher "killer"—a character who is, as Clover puts it, a "male in gender distress"—who is "propelled by psychosexual fury" and profoundly "sexually disturbed"."[205] I found this claim interesting, because although I do see a way to incorporate this Hitchcockian archetype of the slasher killer into *T.T. Syndrome*, it is still vague rather than perfectly clear, especially since the director has made his killer to be an older woman, and a mother, which is where the vagueness comes from essentially. It can be perhaps a mirror image of the Norman Bates' slasher killer archetype, in which the mirror image is the female version of him, older, but with the same "gender distress" and "psychosexual fury" of a woman who identifies with the archetypal male serial killer. Keetley's *Psycho* "slasher progenitor" would fit better in the 1980s Balkan film and horror period (*Davitelj protiv davitelja* film would be a great example of this), as Hitchcockians have had an immense influence on European, and Balkan film at the time. Rockoff also mentions Norman Bates and Psycho in this context of a perfect "slasher progenitor": "There is a prevailing misconception, due in part to the enormous popularity of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween and Friday the 13th*, that the killer in slasher films is always a supernatural bogeyman who wears a battered hockey mask and wields a machete. However, in most slasher films, the killer is an ordinary person who has suffered some terrible—and sometimes not so terrible—trauma (humiliation, the death of a loved one, rape, psychological abuse)" - much like Norman Bates in Psycho was treated and characterised – "it is because of this past injustice that he (or in a few cases, she) seeks vengeance—and the bloodier the better."[206] Drawing from this statement, Zečević's *T.T. Syndrome* indeed falls into this misconception trap, with a serial killer that is an ordinary person, and a woman. However, there is another important "character" here, of

[204] Keetley, Dawn. PREFACE: THE NEO-SLASHER, Horror Homeroom, https://www.horrorhomeroom.com/prefacethe-neo-slasher/

[205] Keetley, Dawn. PREFACE: THE NEO-SLASHER, Horror Homeroom, https://www.horrorhomeroom.com/prefacethe-neo-slasher/

[206] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1, p.6.

supernatural nature, the one that drives the human killer to commit the killings – the ancient evil Kloaka, living in the underbelly of the earth, just underneath the Turkish bath. Even though Zečević follows the slasher film elements as prescribed, it is obvious that he also adds another layer to the character of the killer, which is not that common in slasher film, at least not presented in this way. This ancient evil affects everyone who is in its proximity, and upon awakening on that same night when the group of young people visit the Turkish baths, it starts affecting everyone present. Hence, we see an old unwelcoming woman working at the counter of the dark, filthy Turkish bath who mysteriously disappears soon after our main characters enter the bath to use it. This is an indicator that something is wrong, as the old woman is gone, and the doors to the bath have been locked, limiting the movement of everyone inside. During the film, it is blatantly hinted that she is indeed the serial killer who kills off everyone on that ominous night, as a form of sacrifice to the ancient evil lurking underneath the place. As it turns out, this is a "family" business. The danger rises when the main characters realize that there is more than one person threatening their lives. Hence, Zečević uses the elements of the slasher film and adjusts them to the storyline closely connected to the setting, offering something different to the audiences within the Balkan context. The main characters referred to here, the group of young people, two girls and two boys are accompanied by a dealer who they met when they arrived at the baths, acting like he is in the same horrific situation as them, and for which we later find out that he is one of the old lady's sons. Not much attention was paid to these characters specifically though – the director vaguely lets us in on their personal relationships and offers some glimpses into their mental and emotional state, but overall, all these characters are significant solely for their role in the film: two boys and one of the girls as victims, the dealer as a deceiving crook and a member of the serial killer family, who nonetheless has a bit more substance than others, and one remaining girl as the final girl. Further characters include the professor who is mostly involved in the scenes of torturing the young final girl, and a beggar, who appears on and off in the film but has an important role at the end of the film. There are a few other background characters whose presence throughout the film serves to enhance the atmosphere of fear and claustrophobia. The slasher film is usually defined by the method with which the killer slashes his/her victims, and that includes various weapons of choice, depending on the film's plot and characters involved: "The victims are usually slain by a knife, although any sharp metal object seems to be sufficient. Killings by swords, razors, axes, machetes, arrows, chain saws, power

drills, hammers, swords, spears, saws, scythes, hatchets, darts, sickles and pitchforks are commonplace. The killer, in a burst of creativity, may even use such innocuous household items as a corkscrew or road flares. Sometimes a specific weapon is reserved for a specific villain (Freddy Krueger's finger knives), sometimes it is used as a plot device (*The Toolbox Murders, The Driller Killer)*, and often it is the only convenient instrument lying around."[207] In *T.T syndrome,* the killer uses a meat cutter as his/her main weapon of choice and a specialized saw to cut the bodies he/she drained of blood beforehand into pieces, which are then being discarded in the toilet – is the killer feeding the ancient evil, or is it just a convenient way to get rid of the body? This and other interesting questions arise during the film, some of which might not have a logical answer. Zečević does pay more attention to the role play with the characters in the film, trying to make them more identifiable for the audience; whether the audience is willing to identify with any of the characters on a personal, human and/or non-human level or simply identifying themselves as fans of the horror genre, is primarily up to them. Zečević however offers both options, the latter more accentuated by the homage to the genre present more strongly in the setting of the film, and vaguely through the characterization of the characters. The film does show a fair share of blood and gore in the killing and torture scenes, the mentioned blood draining the victims by tying them upside down and letting the blood flow, and the disturbing scene in the basement as one of the culminating scenes toward the end relies more on the practical special effects rather than anything else, which works well in the cold dark setting of Turkish baths. The setting here was more elaborated and paid attention to than it was to the development of characters, it seems: "Zečević inventively uses the reduced ambiance of an abandoned bath and public toilet near Kalemegdan. With his directorial skills, he creates a tangible threat within a seemingly banal surrounding. Helping him achieve that are his collaborators, such as Veljko Despotović, a scenography veteran. He manages to transform the already "hackneyed" space with peeled walls and cracked doors of the public toilet, long out of use, into an unforgettable horror ambiance that takes on deeper meanings. […] Then there is the director of photography, Vladan Obradović and the producer Milan Peca Nikolić. The composition of frames and their montage is at the same time inspiring and perfectly functional, creative but without unnecessary exhibitions."[208] However, suffering from low budget, the film

[207] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1, p. 7.
[208] Ognjanović, Dejan. U brdima horori: srpski film strave, Niš, 2007, p. 124.

was shot in video technique and later transferred to film roll, and the quality of the image is poor, as well as the lightning, which comes to light toward the end of the film, but it also diminishes the important role of the setting and scenography in the film: "Because of poor lightning, one can barely see the details of an excellent scenography made by the special effects master Miroslav Lakobrija (that is, various body parts scattered on the floor and hung on walls, the making of which required a lot of effort, and they were adequate, but because of the way they were filmed and edited, they barely come to the fore)."[209] Stepping away from the setting, the Turkish baths in the Belgrade fortress situated in Kalemegdan park, next, I will try to answer the questions that arose from watching the film, questions that confused the audiences in connection to this film, questions like what the T.T. syndrome might be and what would be its potential significance, what is that ancient evil lurking underneath the baths, why is it there, what is its significance other than manipulating humans in its vicinity? These answers gained through analysis of the setting (and other elements) might shed more light on *T.T. Syndrome*'s cinematographic value, implying that it deserves a much more prominent place in Serbian cinema than the public has given it up to this date. Settings are sometimes overlooked in different genres and subgenres, however, in slasher films, a specific setting becomes synonymous with films they're in and the familiarity of the setting - for example, when one mentions a camp at the lake, the first thought that comes to mind will most probably be the one connected to the classics of horror genre, like *Friday the 13th* , or the final girl trope and the actress playing her: "Slasher films take place in a variety of different settings. Because the audience for these films is predominately teenage, as are the characters with whom they identify, the location is often a universally recognized place associated with adolescence: summer camp (*Friday the 13th, The Burning, Sleepaway Camp), high school (Prom Night, Graduation Day*), college (*Night School, Black Christmas, Hell Night*) or even the comforting streets of suburbia (*Halloween, Slumber Party Massacre, A Nightmare on Elm Street*). Even if the film isn't specifically set in this milieu, its characters have come from there. Sometimes the characters are intimately familiar with the location, giving them a presumed, however fleeting, advantage over the killer. This knowledge, however, is possessed in vain, for the killer always prevails in the end. Other times it is the killer who has the edge, and the terrified teenagers who stumble into his domain find themselves incapable of coping with the

[209] Ognjanović, Dejan. 2007, p. 124-5.

hostile unfamiliar environment."[210] Thus, as Rockoff so clearly explains, the history of the setting is therefore as important as any other element of the film, as it gives the audience a background story which transforms that unfamiliar environment into a familiar one, in that way toning down the hostility of the space, giving the characters a surviving chance in the audience's mind, even if for a short period of time. More attention needs to be given here to the setting, as it has come to light during this research that the history and the meaning behind the setting in *T.T. Syndrome* forms a very strong "characterization" of it as a space of atrocity and evil, giving it a character thus making it a vital part of the plot. Belgrade fortress is the oldest section of the urban part of Belgrade, and it has been standing proud since antique times, resisting natural and human influences that make up its rich history. Belgrade was first mentioned in history as a city in 3rd century BC as Singidunum by the Celts, and later it was conquered by the Romans. During this period leading to Middle Ages and early modern times, the fortress has endured numerous occupations and military coups, and it was being rebuild in the process. In the centuries following the Middle Ages, the fortress and the city were under constant occupation of Avar sieges, suffering constant destruction from the same. The fortress kept changing its masters, until the 12th century when it became a part of the newly formed Serbian state. In 1500s, the fortress fell in the hands of the Turks, and it has remained under the Ottoman empire rule until the 1800s, during which time it was modernized and rebuilt. The fortress has seen a Great Serbian Migration in the 17th century and a couple of Serbian uprisings in the 19th century, during the period of Turkish reign. It has had a very tumultuous history, also witnessing an unidentified viral outbreak in the 1700s and a plague outbreak in the 1800s.[211] Until modern times, this place has seen and endured more horrors than any other in the area, horrors embedded into the walls of the fortress, telling a story that cannot be overlooked, especially when used as a crucial setting in a horror film. The history and the character of the setting becomes a part of the film storyline, giving an intriguing background to the original plot as an additional level of building terror and suspense. There have even been official accounts by the Serbian army about finding strange items in the underground part of the fortress, such as torture devices, gallows, stakes for impaling and other horrific apparatuses, suspected to have been used by the Ottomans

[210] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1, p. 11.

[211] Ljušić, Rados. "Kako se knez Miloš borio protiv kolere i kuge" [How prince Miloš battled cholera and plague]. Politika (in Serbian). p. 14.

to torture their prisoners.[212] There have also been reports about seeing spectres and evil wraiths inside, which adds to the character of this historical setting turned horror, used in *T.T. Syndrome*. Whether Zečević was aware of the history of the place where he set his film or not, and even when looking at the setting solely within the framework of the slasher film genre without any need or intention of giving it any additional political and social meaning, this setting speaks for itself with its history and adds a completely new and exciting layer to the whole narrative of the film. Thinking about this setting, the Turkish baths with an underground sewer system from Roman times, and the ancient evil that resides withing its walls and underground passages named Kloaka, that further builds on the meaning of what it might represent. According to the MerriamWebster dictionary, Kloaka, or Cloaka has several meanings. For the purpose of trying to understand the term better here, I will focus on the nonbiological meanings offered: 1. sewer - an artificial usually subterranean conduit to carry off sewage and sometimes surface water, which expands onto 2. cesspool - an underground reservoir for liquid waste, and a filthy, evil, or corrupt place or state.[213] Considering the history of the setting from its beginnings, further research brings forth interesting insights. When researching Kloaka myth, a name Cloacina comes up quite often, the meaning of the word bringing forth this new layer mentioned earlier: Cloacina was the patron goddess of the *Cloaca Maxima* (the main drain of the city) and the city's overall sewer system."[214] Over time, the Romans came to also think of her in a multitude of other ways including as the goddess of purity, the goddess of filth and the protector of sexual intercourse in marriage. As such, over the ages, she came to be affiliated with Venus; and gradually became known to many as the *Venus Cloacina*. Now, drawing this new find through the lens of *T.T. Syndrome*'s story, if Kloaka is the ancient evil that can be related to Cloacina, the goddess of purity and filth, an opposition such as this can be seen through the Turkish bath setting and a public toilet, which portrays filth, which was again the intention of the scenographer as mentioned earlier when talking about special effects - he used the setting for what it is, a public toilet, and visually transformed it even more into a filthy evil place of horror and terror. The purity can be understood in the form of a small baby that has been flushed down the toilet by its mother at the beginning of the film, an act of filth and inhumanity, which sets a

[212] Vesić, Goran. Београдска тврђава [Belgrade Fortress]. Politika (in Serbian). p. 16.
[213] Cloaka meaning, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cloaca
[214] Romanasum Files, https://romanasum.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/roman-toilets.pdf

chain reaction of events where filth, i.e., the evil seeks its victims and demands for the offering in order to keep this balance in the eyes of the goddess of the sewer system. As Cloaca is also the protector of sexual intercourse in marriage as the goddess of love[215], but also this ancient evil that demands blood because of the disrespect shown to it in one of the scenes that further the story across a period of time. Two young people, a couple, 20 years after the horrific baby event, seek some privacy within the walls of the isolated Turkish bath to have sexual intercourse. Of course, they are young, not married, and having sex before marriage, in a place of filth and sin that is guarded by an ancient evil goddess who protects certain moral values, no matter how distorted they are, because of the evil aspect, they soon meet their gruesome and horrific death. This reading of the setting and its history puts things more into perspective regarding the story of the film. There is a timeline of atrocities, and the isolation of the setting from the rest of the world only emphasizes the historical background, which is, whether the intention or not, an important part of the plot. The isolation is quite common in slasher films, and it serves a purpose of dividing the characters and isolating each of them, giving them a plausible way out which they usually don't get to use: "These locations are all similar in their isolation. This isolation functions to separate the characters from society at large and negates the possibility of a rescue. However, it is interesting to note that with very few exceptions (*April Fool's Day, Hell Night*), there is nothing physically preventing the characters' escape. In a life-or-death situation, as is always the case in these films, any normal person in control of their faculties would be able to get away. In fact, this is one of the most problematic areas for those who question the slasher film's plausibility. This isolation also symbolically separates the characters from the adult community."[216] A Turkish bath in a historical fortress, with its numerous dark hallways, sewer system and separated toilets perfectly fits into this rationale. However, what Zečević did do differently here, as if adjusting this element of slasher film to create a more hopeless situation, he locked his characters inside the space of filth and horror, not giving them any options to get out, except through the underbelly of the place, which is almost impossible. Zečević did not leave the escape as an option to his characters. Closing every entry, he physically and mentally (evident in the final revealing gore scene in the basement, when the final girl tries to survive the almost comical blood-curdling situation) prevented his characters to escape in any way, from

[215] Soth, Amelia. Venus of The Sewers, JSTOR, September 2021. https://daily.jstor.org/venus-of-the-sewers/
[216] Rockoff, Adam. McFarland 2016, ch.1, p. 11.

themselves, and from the crazy serial killer who is after them. This option serves almost as a reward system - if you endure all the horrors and torture afflicted on you while you're trying to survive, you will be rewarded with a way out – whether you'll be able to do it before you fall into complete madness, that is up to you, the character, in this case – the final girl. Another interesting thing that Rockoff mentions as an element of the slasher film explains the odd presence of what seems to be a beggar, who appears during the film a few times, warning our group of young people about the ancient evil residing there; he is one of the few grown-ups that make themselves known in slasher films – the grown-ups that, coincidentally, and as there seems to be only a few of them, follow a specific role formula: "Slasher films are notoriously devoid of grown-ups, and the few who are present tend to play three general roles: (1) the killer him or herself (*Friday the 13th, A Nightmare on Elm Street*); (2) the wise "seer" or "elder" who offers advice on how to defeat the killer (*Halloween*); or (3) the ineffectual authority figure who refuses to believe or acknowledge the danger at hand (*Hell Night, Don't Go in the Woods … Alone*)."[217] The beggar in *T.T. Syndrome* is therefore performing in the role of the wise "seer", who doesn't just offer advice on how to defeat the killer, he also takes matters into his own hands, quite literally, and chokes the matriarch of the serial killer family, the schizophrenic mother, thus ending this cycle of madness. However, the madness doesn't stop with the deaths of the ancient evil's servants, the serial killers, it seeks new victims in order to survive. Since most audiences were very confused with the mention of a T.T. syndrome that induces complete madness in a person if infected by it, and the story doesn't offer any explanations of what it actually might be, this analysis of the setting, the history that positions the ancient evil within a logical frame of reference in the film, T.T syndrome might be understood as a consequence of this evil influence that spreads like a plague in order to survive for centuries to come. T.T syndrome can therefore represent anything, depending on the audiences and what they can personally relate to, whether it be evil that men do, or real tragic events that changed one's life, or the general situation in the country and the rest of the world, like the global pandemic – Zečević left the interpretation of the syndrome to the viewers, who have complete freedom to create their own explanation for this disease. He created the mould – disease that induces madness, and is continuous, it can affect everyone, it is evil, it spreads like a plague – and with it, the audiences have the option to fill that mould according to their own personal experiences and views. It is an ingenious approach to lure

[217] Rockoff, Adam, ch.1, p.12.

the viewers in the story, making them active participants of the plot, which is imbued with terror and fear because of the nature of the film. Even the poster of the film supports this idea, with the line that warns: The infection is spreading! Regardless of the nature of the film, the choice is there. Slasher films often create a "hook" for the audiences right at the beginning, and with good reason, usually by introducing a past event as a prologue that sets the foundations for the plot of the film: "There are two reasons these slasher films typically employ this prologue, which tends to condense the expository elements of the film into a brief scene. The first is a practical reason, to grab the audience's attention from the beginning and whet their appetite for the carnage to come. After all, it's not the complex characters and lush cinematography of these films which tide them over until the bloody entrée. The second is to give the audience an explanation for the killer's fury, no matter how implausible, ridiculous or unlikely that explanation may be. It is interesting to note that this explanation rarely makes the killer a more sympathetic figure, most likely because it is hardly sufficient to explain the level of psychosis these villains display."[218] The prologue of *T.T. Syndrome* is short but gruesome: It is 1958. A girl enters the toilet in the Turkish baths in the Kalemegdan fortress, she is in pain, and we soon realize that she is in labour. She gives birth to her baby in this filthy, dark desolate place and with madness in her eyes, she frantically starts pushing her new-born baby in the toilet. The shock of this scene, even though the viewer can't see much of what is happening, mostly due to the quality of the film mentioned earlier in this chapter, comes from the imagination of the audiences. The year is now 1982. A couple enters that same toilet to have sex. During the act, they are surprised by a person in a black leather coat and gloves, and kills them both with a meat cutter, ties them both down, hangs them upside down, cuts them in pieces with a saw and drains their blood in a bucket, disposing of the body parts in the toilet. The MO of the serial killer operating in this isolated setting is introduced, alongside the gore that sets the atmosphere for the rest of the film. The scene has been set for our four young people to enter the space of horror 20 years later. The only one out of four of them makes it out alive. It is the final girl – the most famous and changing, adaptable trope in the slasher film subgenre. In Rockoff's opinion, "One of the most enduring images of the slasher film is that of the beautiful heroine screaming in abject terror—her eyes wide with fear—as the killer rapidly approaches. These postmodern damsels in distress, who

[218] Rockoff, Adam, ch.1, p.13.

have been collectively referred to as the "Final Girl",[219] are usually the lone survivors of the killer's rampage. Unlike the helpless schoolmarm of the Western, who is rescued at the last minute by the valiant gunslinger, the headstrong ladies of the slasher film do not rely on their inefficient heroes to pluck them from the jaws (or rather blades) of death. From the outset of the film, the Final Girl is defined by her toughness, resourcefulness, determination and perseverance. In contrast to her friends—whom she finds carved up in variety of places—she survives to fight the killer in the film's climactic sequence."[220] While Clover uses the term final girl, Dika, based on her own choices to define the slasher film, which is in her analysis called a stalker film, her final girl is deemed a heroine. Why stalker? Dika says: "Briefly put, "Stalker" indicates a spatial category, that is, the movement of characters through a space, while "Slasher" foregrounds a narrative action. The spatial dynamic, the control of the cinematic visual field, had been brilliantly constructed by Alfred Hitchcock in *Psycho*, and was subsequently reimagined to dynamic effect in the Stalker Films."[221] Dika further notices that "The Stalker Film, surprisingly like the Western film genre, tells symbolic stories where the heroine, just like the Western hero, is faced with an evil that must be subdued for the nation to continue to thrive,"[222] much like the heroine in *T.T. Syndrome*, who has to fight the ancient evil that will destroy us all, which implies that Dika's heroine is intelligent, but really never free, while Clover's final girl is essentially a pure, innocent and virginal sole survivor of the 1980s films, who gets seemingly liberated every time she escapes or kills the killer. Since Dika's understanding of the slasher film slightly differs from the one Clover instigated, – stalker films' "horror formula [as] best identified by a predominantly off-screen killer who is known primarily by his/her distinctive point-of-view shots"[223] - the final girl trope is by default adjusted to her own theory of it. The Balkan final girl/heroine goes through a painful process of victim turned final girl or heroine, turned mother in the end, which subverts the trope by offering a different cultural reading of it. Played by Sonja Damjanović, the Balkan final girl is an intelligent, delicate young girl, who is also conveniently pregnant at the time she enters the Turkish baths with the rest of her friends. Conveniently

[219] According to Clover.
[220] Rockoff, Adam, ch.1, p. 13.
[221] Dika, Vera. The Stalker Film and Repeatablity, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/10509208.2021.1982627
[222] Dika, Vera. The Stalker Film and Repeatablity, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/10509208.2021.1982627
[223] Koven, Mikel J. The Terror Tale: Urban Legends and the Slasher Film, Researchgate, 2003.

because upon entering the space, she starts felling strange, which means that she feels the evil residing in the baths, a feeling which continues throughout the film. One cannot help but wonder why she is the only one in her group who shows worry and uneasiness from the start. As the story progresses, it becomes clear that she is somehow predestined to be at this place at this specific time, for the ancient evil to consume her. She is delicate, but soon discovers her true strength and determination to keep her unborn baby safe. Even though she doesn't kill the serial killer, the crazed mother figure Margita, she does however survive the torture inflicted on her during the film, and makes it out of the Turkish baths alive...but at what cost? Since Margita was killed, together with her disturbed "family", the ancient evil that is Kloaka, always referred to as a she in the film, needs to continue the cycle of evil in order to survive. Despite surviving the night, our final girl unfortunately gets infected by the evil that tried to end her life, infected by the mysterious T.T. syndrome, thus continuing the cycle of evil, and the infection that continues to spread through her, and possibly her baby. "Evil doesn't die. It never dies. It just takes on a new face, a new name. Just because we've been touched by it once, it doesn't mean we're immune to ever being hurt again."[224] Zečević steers away from the all too familiar and frequently used self-balkanization and the mix of horror and humour, sticking to the formula of the slasher film, implying that a good film can be made in the Balkans without directly referring to the current political and social climate of the country, or the wartime.[225] He uses the subjective camera often throughout the film, a point of view of the killer that is one of the elements of the slasher film, and it is quite problematic, in Rockoff's opinion: "One of the most problematic, controversial and misunderstood formal aspects of the slasher film is its persistent use of a subjective camera. There are numerous stylistic techniques used to designate subjectivity: a handheld or shaky camera; an uneasy tracking shot; strange, awkward or unnatural camera angles."[226] He also keeps away from using action shots, which is what creates the suspense and helps preserve the subjectivity of the camera view, while creating a bond between the killer and the audience: "The prevailing theory states that a subjective camera, by its very nature,

[224] Gerritsen, Tess. The Surgeon, Bantham Books, 2005.

[225] Having said that, it would be interesting to mention the wartime horror film, Živi i Mrtvi (The Living and The Dead, Milic, 2007), a fantasy horror film that deals with the atrocities of war from the past and the consequences of it in the present, where characters travel through dimensions and deal with ghosts of the past. This film got a lot of funding from HAVC, Croatian Audio-visual Centre, but did not perform well upon its release.

[226] Rockoff, Adam. ch.1, p. 15.

represents the point of view of something. In the case of the slasher film, that something is the killer, thereby making the audience vicarious participants in the murders and forcing them to identify with the villain, not the victim. This defines an uneasy and uncomfortable relationship between the audience—who has been conditioned to always root for the hero—and the killer, whose "view" they are adopting,"[227] much like Dika's understanding of the same from the Hitchcock's *Psycho* point of view. Music here should not be neglected either, as it usually serves to warn the audience, rather than the characters in the film, of an ominous presence of the killer. The score for *T.T. Syndrome* was recorded by Andrej Acin, and it creates the atmosphere of terror and suspense from the very start with the opening credits, with its melancholic and very rhythmical melodies, which add to the use of the subjective camera in the film. The purpose of this point of view is "not to become the "eyes" of the killer, but to "fragment the visual field and make the killer's exact position within the film's space unidentifiable. This subjective view allows audiences to feel involved in the "game" of the slasher—the major points of which are figuring out just who and where the killer is, and when and how he will strike— heightening both their enjoyment and excitement."[228] Slasher/stalker film in the Balkans, even though it fits in the western framework, deviates from it when appropriated to the Balkan context and culture, which is refreshing, partly because Balkan society has primarily been a patriarchal, religious one, and having a heroine of this kind, the one who defies the killer, and universal forces of evil at the same time, makes this subgenre not just work in the Balkan context, but also changes its elements and tropes by adapting it to the said culture, and in line with contemporary changes of the same in the West. Add the layer of a final girl turned mother who would do anything to protect her child, not only by surviving, but by sacrificing her sanity, and a refreshed formula and the trope of the subgenre slowly starts to form itself, which could in itself be an interesting contribution to the slasher/stalker subgenre in general.[229] *T.T. Syndrome* gained cult status in Serbia, and today it is very hard to find in an available format. *T.T Syndrome* is not an exercise in style per se; it doesn't retell the same story in a different style, and it leaves the option of creating

[227] Rockoff, Adam. ch.1, p. 15.

[228] Rockoff, Adam. ch.1, p. 15.

[229] Of course, contemporary scholars of the subgenre, in this context offer a space for further analysis iin other fields, of feminism, post-feminism, for example, based on these newfound pillars of the slasher subgenre in the Balkans, which could open new paths and ways of approaching these theories for scholars of Balkan studies, horror genre and appropriate approaches and theories.

a meaning to the audiences rather than the director. Zečević has created a blueprint for future Balkan filmmakers who would dare to explore the horror genre; a blueprint of how to take a formula that constitutes a genre/subgenre such as slasher film and explore it within a different cultural context, without losing the qualities of the filmmaking style distinct for that culture. With its dark scenes of blood, gore and dismemberment, it feels as if *T.T. Syndrome* announces the next stage for horror genre in the Balkans: the emergence and the formation of the "extreme cinema phenomenon", led by the notorious *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010).

Chapter 4

"Extreme cinema phenomenon" and Torture Porn: Life and Death of a Porno Gang (2009) and A Serbian Film (2010)

Serbian cinema, since its inception, has been highly regarded around the world for its quality films that depicted social and political concerns and differences, especially after the WWII. Even though most of the early films were mainly concerned with propaganda connected to Partisans and themes of war, when Yugoslavia was growing into an empire consisting of neighbouring countries, they still gained in popularity, mainly in the Balkans, and are today considered classics in the eyes of many filmmakers, critics and academics. More contemporary films, however, stepped away from this trend, especially during the turbulent times of the Yugoslavian Black Wave in the late 1960s and 1970s, a movement that changed everything. There was more freedom in expressing one's feelings and concerns, censorship had minimal or no influence on the works of young Serbian filmmakers, and all for the purpose of rebelling against the propaganda that had been imposed on the people of Serbia during the reign of Marshall Tito in

Yugoslavia. Equally worrying situation was in Croatia. After the breakup of Yugoslavia towards the end of 1980s and beginning of 1990s, filmmakers involved in the Black Wave, at least the ones who were not prosecuted and forced to leave the country because of the explicit political and social statements made in their films, started making different types of films altogether. The work of Dorđe Kadijević, for example, one of the most prominent directors in Serbia, was concerned with the depiction of rural life, stepping away from all the political problems that were arising in the country. Some of his early films were eerie and were talking about death and loss, which was reflected on the work of contemporary Serbian filmmakers. Younger generations of directors, however, found their own way to express themselves through film, in part influenced by the films from the West which were more than accessible in the Balkans, because of lack of censorship, and in part driven by the need to express their dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs in their country, because of the fall of Yugoslavia and the civil war that came after. One such example is *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010), a film that ended up on the list of most controversial and most violent films in the world to date. *A Serbian Film* is a highly controversial and most recent example of Serbian cinematography, directed by Srđan Spasojević, and written by Aleksandar Radivojević.[230] "Graphic representation and the tradition of artistic transgression", on the other hand, "have complex histories, and the definition of what one takes to constitute extreme is notoriously subjective, slippery and bound by historical and social pressures."[231] That was the case with *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010), still one of the most notorious examples of horror film in the Balkans. Made in the same disparate period of socio-economic and cultural change, *A Serbian Film* claims to be a message to the world that portrays the dark side of Serbia, the fallacy of its government and the suffering of Serbian people, communicated through taboos and extreme violence, perhaps for the purpose of financial gain, among other logical reasons. Another, perhaps a rawer example, is *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* (*Život i smrt porno bande*, Đorđević, 2009), equally extreme as *A Serbian Film*, and, as expected, the one that influenced the idea of it in the first place. Both films depict the way of communication in the Balkans through extreme violence. All the films of the 2000s share some common ground: "They are far more realistic, narrative driven and classical than the key films of

[230] Both Spasojević and Radivojević are the representatives of contemporary independent filmmaking in Serbia, growing up with the legacy of filmmaking that came from older generations.

[231] Horeck, Kendall. The New Extremism in Cinema from France to Europe, Edinburgh University Press, 2011. Appeared in Bloom, Clive. The Palgrave Handbook of Contemporary Gothic, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, p. 720.

the Balkan cinema of the 1990s. It is wrong to understand this stylistic shift as westernization or deviating from an authentic local school. It is quite the opposite, by opting for a classic narrative style these […] authors, and many others from post-Yugoslav countries, question cinematic colonialism. They are searching for the best stylistic tools that could help them deal with a new, open society and characters who seek their place within it."[232] In recent years, a wave of new extremism in film appeared in the Balkans, most notably Serbia, changing the way the rest of the world sees this territory. The already mentioned *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* (Đorđević, 2009), is one of the prime examples of this change. Less known, but equally extreme as *A Serbian Film, Life and Death of a Porno Gang* can be said to be more Serbian than *A Serbian Film* claims to be, in terms of the message these two films are trying to send about the poor state of Serbia and the suffering of its people. "Đorđević used a combination of Balkan creativity and cruelty to portray the senselessness of the conflict between rural and urban regions (and people) of post-war Serbia. To that he added the problems of a backward country in transition, but also the emerging forms of the elementary tool of the modern state - force."[233] The story follows a young filmmaker Marko, who wants to make films that matter, but his aspirations turned out to be unrealistic in the current political climate in the country, so he turns to porn industry. Although it brings him money, the rules of the porn industry restrict his creativity and vision, so he sets out on a tour around Serbia's rural parts, with a team of local porn stars, to create the first pornographic theatre in Serbia. After a traumatic event, Marko and his posse get an offer from a German journalist to make snuff films on the side, because there is a huge market for it outside of the Balkan region. They accept, and that is the moment their journey into degradation starts, leading them in unknown, dark directions. Even though extreme violence is very present in this film, the film also follows political changes in the 2000s in Serbia: the overthrowing of Slobodan Milošević, the country's president at the time, subtly criticizing the politics and the social state of the country. However, the film also diminishes the importance of these political events by incorporating them in anarchic, and almost comical scenes that depict the overall opinion of the director, equally showing the desperation and hopelessness of the new generation struck by these

[232] Jurica Pavičić (2010) 'Cinema of normalization': changes of stylistic model in post-Yugoslav cinema after the 1990s, Studies in Eastern European Cinema, 1:1, 43-56, DOI: 10.1386/seec.1.1.43/1, p. 54.
[233] Terzić, Goran. ŽIVOT I SMRT PORNO BANDE": POLITIKA BALKANA OBJAŠNJENA POTOCIMA SPERME I KRVI, ziher.hr, September 2022.

changes they knew nothing about.[234] All these concerns were exorcised through the use of horror and dark humour. The use of humour in Balkan films is a peculiar one. Considering the type of films made on that territory, which were mostly propaganda, partisan and war and post-war films, the role of comedy in those films was indeed a dark one. Having comic relief scenes in a highly dangerous situations followed by the scenes of violence and death, like in, for example, *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (Dragojević, 1996), a film about the Bosnian war and loss as a consequence of friends having to fight against friends, neighbours against neighbours, created a specific style of dark humour, quite different from the Western one. Often gritty, offensive, personal and of course internal and specific to the mentality, Balkan humour indeed had the effect of causing nervous laughter, fear, sadness, shock and laughter again in the audiences, but because of that, those films were and still are very popular in Serbia and Croatia and are gaining popularity in the rest of Europe. The use of that kind of humour as a comic relief, in a film that is considered as torture porn, among other things, only heightens the feeling of high quality in Serbian filmmaking, since the previously mentioned films are considered as critically acclaimed today. The type of laughter that the audiences experience in that first scene of *A Serbian Film* may not necessarily be a simple reaction to humour, but instead laughter invoked here might be used in a different, more complex manner, as an introduction to the next scene of the film, where things become darker and more violent than any Askwith movie, inducing anxiety and dread along the way. There are a few terms in film studies that might give more insight into the genre conventions that *A Serbian Film* might fall into, and is often classified as, without paying much attention to the multi-layered construct of the film itself, in that way diminishing the effort with which it was made. For example, the term hard-core horror can perhaps clarify this genre confusion regarding *A Serbian Film*, because it offers a mix of two main elements used in the making of the film. It also distances the film from the pornography category and steers it more toward horror, but both are still interchangeable in this context, falling into the category of so-called cinematic realism that became popular post 9/11, and it was used to depict current issues and concerns regarding society, politics, and morale, through the portrayal of realistic violence and torture, not being too far from video clips and photographs shared all over the Internet about

[234] As an example of this, in this particular scene in the film, the images from the news on the TV in Marko's room are subtly showing the news about Milošević's end of political reign in Serbia, while Marko and his friend are doing drugs, dancing, drinking, and vomiting all over the room.

pressing issues of torture and rising violence in the postmodern society, often questioning the morality and humanness of such actions, either in a military or a more domestic context. This provided the audience with a certain type of realism that perhaps they weren't ready to accept or see, or, for example, in the case of *A Serbian Film*, as mentioned by the filmmakers themselves, a type of realism that is equal to the real situation depicted in Serbia, and as the only current way of communicating in the Balkans, implying that the audiences in the Balkans would be more desensitized to this kind of communication through the medium of film and therefore more accepting of the same, as opposed to the Western audiences, who communicate in a different way altogether. The Balkans are the Other, ignored by the rest of the world, often misunderstood and seen as extreme, violent and barbaric, different and isolated from the more civilised Western territories; not mainstream, which can also be said for *A Serbian Film*. After all, the director's intention was to portray this world where the Other is the judge, the jury and the executioner, the monstrous entity devoid of any emotion that thrives in the violent environment. *A Serbian Film* has encountered mostly negative reactions from the critics and the audiences in Europe, UK and the US, usually revolving around controversial issues that make this film ambiguous in its nature. Looking at the reviews from different markets, it is possible to analyse this film and geographically pinpoint the success, or lack of it, in different countries, primarily looking at the most developed film industry markets in the world, the UK, the US, as well as the more overlooked ones, where *A Serbian Film* comes from. Upon first examination of the reviews, it became unclear whether this film is being depicted as an art film or an exploitation film, or even horror, which raised issues regarding these terms and their meaning. Although technically very stylised and filmed in good quality, with a RED Digital Camera, using a lot of wide cinematic angles, thus framing each scene in a distinct, particular and a very artistic way, the themes that appear in the film, however, are considered by most critics and reviewers as quite the opposite, or at least very different from what an art film should be. The term art cinema in Europe was associated with auteur cinema and national cinemas since the 1920s, aimed at niche markets, with small finances put into making such films. The directors of auteur cinema compensated the lack of finances by using amateur actors and basic film sets, in that way focusing more on developing ideas and exploring different narrative techniques, the latter being rather evident in *A Serbian Film*. Going through reviews from notable national and international newspapers, despite the nature of the film and representations of violence, there is a mutual general agreement

that Srđan Spasojević is a superb director, who in a fantastic way directs a bad/cheap storyline. Directing, camera work and editing is fantastic and artistically paced. Special effects are unbelievably realistic, borderline painful. Sound is well connected to the scenes and story. However, for the story, no matter how much it seems to be well thought through, most critics think it's bad and hard to digest for a person of common sense.[235] Themes like pornography, violence, abuse, necrophilia and many other socially unacceptable taboos linger in almost every scene of *A Serbian Film*, making it exploitative rather than anything else, and revealing a new category that this film was rather lightly put into. Exploitation films, as the name itself implies, are films that exploit current trends, taboos or other topics that might be deemed unacceptable in modern society, and for the purpose of financial success. Over the years, films that have been understood as B-movies, low quality, and low culture type of films often fall into the exploitation category. Exploitation films are often divided into classic exploitation film (films made before the 1950s), and more contemporary versions of the same, made from 1960s onwards. "Exploitation cinema is not a genre; it is an industry with a specific mode of production. Exploitation films are made cheap for easy profit. "Easy" because they are almost always genre films relying on time-tried formulas (horror, thrillers, biker movies, surfer movies, women-in-prison films, martial arts, subgenres like gore, rape-revenge, slashers, nazisploitation, etc.). "Easy" because they offer audiences what they can't get elsewhere: sex, violence and taboo topics. "Easy" because they have long targeted what has since become the largest demographic group of moviegoers: the 15-25 age groups."[236] As Roche claims with certainty, the exploitation film is not a genre, and yet it is often described as such. This is, no doubt, because these movies, as a group, share common semantic, syntactic and pragmatic elements that… make up the "complex situation"[237] that is a film genre.[238] "Semantic characteristics include excessive images of sex and violence, bad acting, poor cinematography and sound; syntactic characteristics include taboo themes, and flat characters or basic character arcs."[239] Apart from excessive images of sex and violence, *A Serbian Film* lacks other sematic characteristics. The actors in the film are one of the most popular and successful contemporary Serbian actors, the cinematography is superb, as it

[235] Summarised from numerous reviews from Jutarnji.hr, The Independent, The Guardian, Vecernji List, mojfilm.hr.
[236] Roche, David. Exploiting Exploitation Cinema: An Introduction, Transatlantica [En ligne], 2, 2015.
[237] Altman, Rick. Film/Genre, London, BFI, 1999.
[238] Discussed in Part One, Ch 1.
[239] Roche, David, p. 1-3.

was mentioned earlier in the summary of Balkan and international reviews, the sound compliments the story and actions of the actors in the film perfectly. Nevertheless, when it comes to syntactic ones, the film covered every aspect, from taboo themes (already mentioned necrophilia, abuse, paedophilia, "new - born porn" etc.) to somewhat flat main characters described on very basic levels. If we look at Miloš, for example, the main character in the film, portrayed by the brilliant Srđan Todorović, the character seems like he was simply thrown inside the narrative, expecting the audience to love him and sympathise with him for his unflattering and hard life situation, based on all the misfortunes that happened to him throughout the film, and without building a good enough of a background story to at least give audiences a chance to try and connect with him. He is a very basic character, which is not that common in Serbian cinematography. Usually, the characters in Serbian films are well developed, their stories and backgrounds are meaningful and concise. However, Miloš is stripped off any in-depth layers, torn apart by induced madness, but what is being missed here is the fact that he does not represent only one person in the film; instead, he represents a whole nation, a broken nation, and a dark story about that same nation is being told through him, although in a very unconventional way. It is a hard task to perform, even for an iconic Serbian actor such as Srđan Todorović. However, he manages to wear that weight on his shoulders despite the shallowness of his character. Identified, and classified in The Independent review in the same category with films such as the *Hostel* (Roth, 2005), and *Saw* (Wan, 2004), among others, films that are thought of as the representatives of contemporary exploitation genre, *A Serbian Film* has managed to set itself apart from those films in some ways: "In the market like this year's AFM, full of anaemic vampire movies pasticing *Twilight* and of "torture porn" of the *Hostel* and *Saw* variety, *A Serbian Film* can't help but stick out."[240] Highly stylised and self-conscious, the film leans toward the artistic explanation, but with the themes it is trying to portray, it is often deemed as simple exploitation of random human beings and their understanding of what they know shouldn't be seen. There is the cliché that when people driving cars pass a car crash on the road they slow down and have a good stare. Some could say that this is the only real meaning of *A Serbian Film*. Croatian news portal Dnevnik.hr offered a relatively positive review of the film,

[240] Macnab, Geoffrey. A Serbian Film: Is this the nastiest film ever made? The Independent, November 2010. https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/a-serbian-film-is-this-the-nastiest-film-evermade-2137781.html

relying on the display of quality in filmmaking, sound and editing, saying that "Serbia started off really good when it comes to horror genre, we will see if it's going to stay there."[241] This, although some of the underlying meaning of the statement tends to get lost in translation, poses some issues regarding the genre itself in Serbia, and other former Yugoslavian countries. It seems as if there was no awareness of the existence of horror genre in the past, and it is treated as a relatively new term, taken from the West and its horror influences. It also implies that there was no horror being made before *A Serbian Film*, which is problematic, since my previous research has led me to different conclusions, which is covered and analysed in the first part of this project. It seems that somehow, with these kinds of statements and opinions, the whole culture of Gothic horror films was neglected even though these films are critically acclaimed today, especially the already mentioned work of Dorđe Kadijević, who is considered as one of the first Serbian directors who made the first Serbian (Yugoslavian) horror film, *She-Butterfly* (1973), about a vampire legend based on a novella by a Serbian 19th century writer Milovan Glišić. The word 'horror' is therefore used in the Balkans mostly in correlation to the influences that the audiences took from the Western horror genre, and in contemporary times, as opposed to the 1920-30s, when the term genre was still something that was not talked about much in the Balkans. Since the 1930s, the cinema and the filmmaking was predominantly an auteur one, which was perceived as a part of high cinematic culture, very influential and significant for the Balkans. That is also one of the reasons why Balkan cinematography, especially Serbian and Croatian, are today seen as rich, of high quality, and important with regards to the messages it is trying to portray and issues it is trying to analyse. Horror as a term is today being used loosely and with no reference to any specific cinematography. Instead, it is taken from the Western territory because of the popular cultural influences, and in most reviews, it is used simply as a reference to these same influences in connection to whichever particular film, in this case *A Serbian Film* - evident from the Balkan reviews of *A Serbian Film* that were discussed earlier in the text. Shocking, scandalous, disgusting were the words used to describe it, and the use of the word horror in these articles and reviews was somewhat lacking. Nevertheless, thanks to these shocking and disturbing reviews from all over the world, *A Serbian Film* has become one of the most anticipated films in 2010. However, to circle back to the general opinions regarding this

[241] Lj.F. Srpski film' najviše cenzuriran film u Velikoj Britaniji, Dnevnik.hr, November 2010. https://dnevnik.hr/showbizz/film-tv/srpski-film-najvise-cenzuriran-film-u-velikoj-britaniji.html

film, anticipated or not, Spasojević's film was still considered as "neither particularly stomach-churning, nor is it effective, or tense, nor is it horror, or dramatic, everything stays on – wannabe. It wanted to be critical, subversive, scary but fearless, but it was all these things only on paper. Only the clear message was sent out to its nation."[242] According to the director, the film represents an allegory of Serbian identity and current state the country and its people are in. This kind of controversy and debates that developed around the film itself, as well as the making of it, debates about whether the violence and obscene acts are real or not, for example, read this film as an ambiguous object that is very unlikely to fit into any of the existing cultural categories. When it comes to the meaning of *A Serbian Film*, the directors have been very clear about their intentions, which, despite the clear explanation of what kind of message the film is trying to get out there, still didn't convince most of the audiences:

"There is a feeling of nihilistic self-loathing that runs through the film. In some eyes, after the Balkan wars of the 1990s, Serbia is still a pariah state. The alleged war criminal General Mladić has never been arrested. The memory of Slobodan Milošević hasn't been exorcised. Films like *A Serbian Film* and another equally extreme Serbian movie *The Life and Death of a Porno Gang* play on Western preconceptions about the country and can't help but reinforce them. The very title of *A Serbian Film* suggests that the director and his screenwriter Aleksandar Radivojević are making an allegory about their troubled and isolated homeland. The screenplay is full of references to the corruption and squalor of family life in the country. However, audiences have been responding to it in stubbornly literal fashion and haven't been slow to express their utter disgust."[243]

The director has expressed his own opinion about his country, via the way of expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence. Symbolic fictional figures represent the oppressed people of Serbia, and the use of pornography, excessive violence and taboos in correlation with the fictional characters tried to paint a picture of the current state in Serbia and the way the government is treating their people. This metaphor would be much more successful if the director and the screenwriter paid more

[242] Polimac, Nenad. Srpski film': Može li silovanje bebe biti kritika društva?, Jutarnji List, December 2010. https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/film-i-televizija/srpski-film-moze-li-silovanje-bebe-biti-kritika-drustva-1894506
[243] Macnab, Geoffrey. The Independent, 2010.

attention to the use of metaphor/ allegory as literary devices. In one of the interviews for the Croatian online newspaper TPortal, both the creators of the film claim that pornography, as well as other taboos, are used precisely as that, a metaphor for the already mentioned current social and political state in Serbia, but is it possible, or even necessary, to make a metaphor under the pretence of realism, and without offering any kind of historical background, simply because of the claim that the people of Serbia were used to the "Real" being equal to all the horrific things that exist in the world, under the umbrella of the events from the 1990s war? According to the director, it certainly is:

"Violence on this territory and in the Balkans in general, has become a type of folklore and the means of communication. So, in a certain way, it is connected to this territory, and it is realistically the way people communicate. Violence is more than just aesthetics and what is going on in the film. I think it was necessary for this film because it speaks in a metaphorical way. Serbian and Croatian cinematography are used to observing actuality as reality; therefore, film equals reality, and we are not used to isolating film outside reality. We wanted to create another reality, in which, in an honest way, we communicate, establishing a visor of film reality that explains some things in a satirical way and as an aphorism, kind of like the space behind the mirror. So, we are offering an X-ray of these territories in a psychological and pathological sense."[244] If both the director and the screenwriter have put more effort into developing this metaphor, which would mean that it was crucial for them to step out of the personal bubble of subjectivity in which they trapped themselves during the filmmaking process, this film would probably have a different path of a more artistic and critical value, rather than just being "a violent thriller set in the world of pornography"[245], "deliberately disgusting"[246], and an overall genuinely vile movie, as it was described in most reviews by major UK and US newspapers. The choices that the director and the screenwriter made to make and market this film can be seen as rather odd, since both of them come from families which are well versed in the art of film and filmmaking, and they themselves are no strangers to the horror genre: "Spasojević and his co-

[244] Kolanović, Gordana. ''Srpski film' je nasilan jer se tako komunicira na Balkanu', TPortal.hr, March 2015. https://www.tportal.hr/magazin/clanak/srpski-film-je-nasilan-jer-se-tako-komunicira-na-balkanu-20100729/print
[245] Shoard, Catherine. A Serbian Film becomes most censored film in 16 years, The Guardian, November 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/nov/26/serbian-film-most-censored
[246] French, Phillip. A Serbian Film – review, The Guardian, December 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/dec/12/a-serbian-film-review

screenwriter Aleksandar Radivojević (the son of a famous director Mišo Radivojević) know the subgenre of horror very well, which has, because of the scenes of extreme violence, been called "slash", "torture porn", "gore" or whatever, and whose most famous representatives are the American *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, the Italian *Cannibal Holocaust* and a line of equally provocative Japanese films, so everyone bravely placed it in a Serbian context. And why not? Unlike the film *Life and Death of a Porno Gang*, made earlier by his colleague Mladen Đorđević, who was advocating for the aesthetics of the ugly and fragmentary dramaturgy, *A Serbian Film* was supposed to be top designed product that will lure the viewer inside the narrative…"[247] The narrative process of *A Serbian Film*, however superficial, can still be viewed and analysed in terms of the message the film is supposedly trying to convey through excessive scenes of violence. In a still very patriarchal society, *A Serbian Film* follows Miloš, a former porn star and the male lead of the film. After getting an offer he cannot refuse, from a mysterious director Vukmir, Miloš soon realizes that his life and the life of his family might be in danger. Being coerced into doing vial things to people, mostly women, and captured and drugged constantly, so that his sexual performance stays on top, Miloš becomes a puppet in the hands of Vukmir and his film crew, a machine that is being controlled by someone else. He goes on a drug induced rampage under the pretence of making a film of highest quality. His life, his emotions and his thoughts were not his own anymore and being turned into a monster against his will in order to fulfil someone else's aspirations, he decides, after Vukmir involved his wife and son in the project in the most gruesome way, to kill himself and his family, because death is better than the horrors with which they would have to live for the rest of their lives. The last scene shows Miloš and his family lying dead on the bed in their bedroom, the life drained from them, but their faces peaceful, and the police officers who find their bodies. After seeing them motionless, passive, dead, one of the policemen starts unzipping his trousers, gesturing toward the dead bodies, which implies that the circle of extreme violence performed by the state on the unwilling individual continues and never ends, through acts of different kinds of violence. If we read this scene in the way the director intended when making the film, as an allegory of Serbian people being tortured by their own government, Miloš and his family represent the tortured and suffering people, and the mysterious and shady director Vukmir represents a body in power, the government, which has all the control in and of the state and its people. Before Miloš dies, he

[247] Polimac, Nenad. Jutarnji List, December 2010. Translated from Croatian by the researcher of this project.

kills Vukmir in a fit of ultimate rage, whose last words were "That's cinema!" implying, and as we will see soon after, in the last scene, that the show must go on, and suggesting that this whole experience is in fact, a metaphor, rather than just being a literal exorcism of violence and the demons of a nation. The people of Serbia opposed the government, but not without consequences, which caused them to simply give up, in that way losing control over themselves and their rights and giving permission to what is left of the state to violate them even more. Thus, the show of oppression and violence conducted on the people of Serbia continues, in an endless circle of pain and suffering, mental as well as physical; people gave up on change, and the passiveness and hopelessness became the leit motifs of life in Serbia (which is also the case in other countries of former Yugoslavia). That state of mind in people caused them to only raise their voices, while securely dwelling behind their screens and in the comfort of their homes, rather than confronting the state and what is left of it in order to make things better for future generations. The police, in this case, left as a force for the state after the government's fall in this implied scenario, with Miloš giving up, killing himself and left unprotected and open for anyone to violate him and his family even in death, in this way becoming passive and abject, regain power over the people, the power which was served to them on a plate of passiveness and indifference. Following the contemporary social and political issues in most countries of former Yugoslavia, especially Serbia and Croatia, for example, this reading of *A Serbian Film* makes for a powerful and very truthful statement about the power relationship between the ruling bodies and the people, a statement which was overlooked by the director himself, it seems, on account of the added shock value and the financial gain that presumably followed it. Croatian and Serbian cinematography indeed rely on the realism depicted in most post- 1990s war filmography, equating it very often with the events that occurred at the time and the consequences of these events, in that way erasing the fourth wall which protects the audiences from the themes portrayed in the film. Both Serbian and Croatian cinematography have in a way suffered from the consequences that partisan films in the 50s and post-war films in the 1990s and 2000s imposed on the directors and audiences alike. Without any other option, filmmakers of those countries succumbed to the decisions about the themes portrayed in the films, imposed by the government of both countries in order to get funding for their work, which was and still is quite scarce. *A Serbian Film* was made independently, by a generation that suffered during and after the 1990s war. Independently financed, the film had no forced boundaries from anyone,

regarding the themes the filmmakers decided to portray in it, which gave them complete freedom when making *A Serbian Film.* Nevertheless, that lack of any kind of control over the filmmaking and creative process backfired on them later, during postproduction and distribution of the film itself. They were denied access to most European studios, which made it hard to edit the film, and finish it in due time. Most distributors outside the Balkans did not want to take a risk with a film that is being depicted in the media as "this genuinely vile movie"[248] which builds on the established controversy: rape, snuff, incest, paedophilia, necrophilia, "new-born porn". Furthermore, the film was banned from most popular horror festivals in Europe, UK and the US, and the ones that decided to show it, like the Sitges Film Festival in Spain, suffered grave consequences by the Spanish court and some Spanish religious organisations. In the UK, *A Serbian Film* was one of the most edited films since 1994, according to BBFC[249], suffering scene cuts of almost 4 minutes in order to tone down the explicit sexual violence. In its review of the film, the Independent claims that *A Serbian Film* is "quite repellent", but also goes on to say: "That, though, is not the same as saying that it is a repellent film."[250], and goes on to comparing it with Michael Haneke's art films, seemingly being indecisive whether *A Serbian Film* should be placed in the category of horror, according to its shock value, or the category of art film, as Haneke's films are usually described, no matter how unwatchable they might be to the audiences. On the one hand, "as in Michael Haneke films, the director seems to be challenging the audience to question their own voyeuristic instincts"[251], at the same time not defining the fine line between voyeurism and the absence of the same in this context, which poses an issue for the viewer. On the other hand, the director of *A Serbian Film*, "as in Peter Greenaway's *The Baby of Macon,* …is using extreme imagery for polemical purposes"[252], making it unwatchable to the audiences, at the same time creating the atmosphere of confrontation between himself and those same audiences. Perhaps that is the reason why the audience reception of *A Serbian Film* was so literal and negative. For example, tamer than *A Serbian Film*, Greenaway's *The Baby of Macon*

[248] Macnab, Geoffrey. 2010.
[249] The British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), previously the British Board of Film Censors, is a non-governmental organization founded by the British film industry in 1912 and responsible for the national classification and censorship of films exhibited at cinemas and video works released in the UK.
[250] Macnab, Geoffrey. The Independent, 2010.
[251] Macnab, Geoffrey. The Independent, 2010.
[252] Schulman, Ken. FILM; Peter Greenaway Defends His 'Baby', The New York Times, February 1994. https://www.nytimes.com/1994/02/06/movies/film-peter-greenaway-defends-his-baby.html

tackles religious issues, including the wrath of God and revenge on the people, most unusually, luring the audience to be part of the story in a very theatrical way. "The entire film takes place in a single giant set that includes audience and performers, gathered for an elaborate theatrical masque to celebrate fertility – the community is plagued by barrenness, seen as God's punishment for letting the local cathedral fall into disrepair."[253] The main reason why Greenaway's film was scrutinized was the offensive aspect of the whole film, and having the audiences almost unwillingly becoming a part of the spectacle that offends them, on and in front of the screen, making them watch something as unwatchable as for example necrophilia or paedophilia, is what *A Serbian Film* can relate to as well. Numerous films deal with the problems of legal and illegal pornography, and *A Serbian Film* is no different. Numerous stories exist out there that show the state of society in a less violent and more humane way, and everyone is doing it without the exaggerated cruelty used on their characters, and their audience. Grønstad offers his point of view on this topic in his article, saying that "the unwatchability of the films by someone like Noé, Haneke or Breillat lays not so much on an experiential level as on a philosophical one. Above all, their work seems to be motivated by a need to introduce other ways of seeing and to transcend the threshold of the visible world…The attraction of the illicit for these filmmakers, amounts to an exploratory expansion of the domain of aesthetics, a stretching of the limits of filmicity that would welcome visual displeasure …most, if not all, of the films…are really preoccupied with deeply humanist issues even as they at times seem disturbingly misanthropic. Rather than being stigmatized as representatives of an over-hyped 'shock cinema', I suggest that the films in question more usefully be regarded as an antidote to the numbing complacencies and stock humanity of much mainstream cinema."[254] Despite this useful suggestion, the critics were still adamant in getting *A Serbian Film* away from the screen, and away from a wider distribution. A review of the film from The Guardian states that it is: "A badly acted and directed porn-horror nightmare that aspires to be a satire on the dark heart of modern Serbia."[255] This as well implies that many critics have been confused in which category to place *A Serbian Film*, as I suggested earlier in the chapter, trying to decide whether it is

[253] Variety, The Baby of Macon, December 1992.
[254] Gronstad, Asbjorn. Screening the Unwatchable: Spaces of Negation in Post-Millennial Art Cinema, Springer 2011, pp. 9-11.
[255] Bradshaw, Peter. A Serbian Film – review, The Guardian, December 2010. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/dec/09/a-serbian-film-review

art/exploitation, or pornography/horror, which is seen in most reviews, especially The Guardian ones. The scenes of pornographic violence certainly contributed to this confusion, as well as the notion that the film was considered too pornographic for any kind of cinema release. Although there certainly are many scenes in the film that are borderline pornographic, too violent and repulsive, they still enticed the sense, the feel of horror mixed into the pornographic category. "Hardcore horror meets at the intersection between pornography and horror." Films representative to this mixture of two genres "…have merged "the narrative facets and aesthetic practices of both genres" to produce a low budget, realist horror that forwards an extremely violent content."[256] However, while more "mainstream and commercial films do provide challenging and confrontational examinations of explicit material, they are unable, due to financial and social contracts, to fully utilise the confection of sex and violence in truly extreme ways. The restrictions of extremity placed on these films have done little to dampen their status as purveyors of extreme cinema and, indeed, focus has remained largely within these groupings, particularly 'torture porn'. Hardcore horror is relegated to the margins of this discourse so that, as Carol J. Clover once said of the slasher, it resides "(d)own in the cinematic underbush."[257] The marginal status of hardcore horror films has deemed them as worthless, unimaginative and illegitimate, by academics and critics alike. Can it therefore be possible that critics, when offering their opinion on *A Serbian Film*, support that marginality, either not being able to see or refusing to see the true value of hard-core horror pieces in contemporary society, and the true value of *A Serbian Film* itself, if indeed there is any? Even though the Guardian review says that *A Serbian Film* aspires to be a satire, from this hardcore horror point of view, it might just be that neither the director nor the critics and audiences have noticed that this film is actually more than just a satire, whose greater purpose would be a constructive social criticism; it might bear a more powerful message about the contemporary Serbia (and all the other countries that were once a part of Yugoslavia, for that matter), its politics, society and its people in the end. Furthermore, a hint of humour at the beginning of the film highlights that statement, and it certainly wasn't lost to some critics. The first scene in the film confused most of them and left quite a few questions unanswered as to why humour was used in this kind of film in the first place. It is interesting to

[256] Aston, James. A Malignant, Seething Hatework": An Introduction to US 21st Century Hardcore Horror, Senses of Cinema, September 2016.

[257] Clover, Carol J. Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film, University of California Press, No. 20, Special Issue: Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy (Autumn, 1987), pp. 187-228.

note that one of the reviews from the Independent compares Miloš' porn work shown at the beginning of the film, as a film within a film in a comical scene where his young son watches his dad's "greatest hits" with the comedic blue movies of Robin Askwith: "We see the doe-eyed kid looking innocently as Milo struts his stuff in some ludicrous Robin Askwith-style blue movies."[258] Robin Askwith was a famous English actor, primarily known for his roles in Confessions sex comedies from the seventies. The comedies were a huge success, beyond everyone's expectations, but as the British industry was falling into darkness at the time, there was no money, so instead of six films to be filmed, Robin made only four. The films were a mixture of comedy, horror, nudity and very tasteful sex scenes; pretty tame as opposed to the same, more hard-core, style of movies that were filmed in Europe and the US.[259] To be fair, the level of humour in that opening scene of *A Serbian Film* delightfully reminds of Askwith's films but is nothing unfamiliar or new in the Balkan context; one might say it is far too tame. However, despite the reactions from the general public on the themes and visual representation of violence and taboo, I still haven't analysed *A Serbian Film* in full in terms of the category the film might fall into. Earlier I touched upon the term hardcore horror, as it is generally understood, and Roche's exploitation cinema, for which he firmly claims that it's not a genre but an industry with its own set of rules. I found some similarities between the two in the representation of violence and pornography as being too extreme for the average viewer, which *A Serbian Film* so creatively exploits. The main difference of these categories is the quality, or the lack of it in hardcore horror and exploitation cinema, and this is where *A Serbian Film* and these terms part ways, as the film is considered to be of high quality and borderline art film, despite its brutality and explicitness in the film's scenes. *Life And Death of a Porno Gang* shares an equal fate as *A Serbian Film*, as they are quite similar in the representation of violence and taboo. Both films have more often than not, been shoved into the category of torture porn, a term

[258] Macnab, Geoffrey. 2010.

[259] An interesting review of Askwith's movies and their influence by calling-the-shots.com: "Even by 1974 standards the Confessions were pretty tame stuff. They had more in common with saucy seaside postcards than the hard core bump'n'grind stuff being filmed in Europe and America. The "dirty raincoat" brigade was disappointed by the sex scenes which were played for laughs and filmed in the best possible taste. The critics hated the films because of their success and themes, but their popularity in the end generated a far more meaningful influence: "Forty years later the Confessions series, and a handful of other sexploitation films, have undergone a critical reappraisal. The same newspapers whose contemptuous critics once dismissed them as tawdry tat, now hail them as important "social documents" of public tastes in the 1970s.

that comes with its own set of issues. According to Jones, "'torture porn' appears to refer to a coherent category formed by films that exhibit mutual conventions and values," and to a more common understanding of the term that "torture porn is a sub-category of the horror genre."[260] As I've talked about horror as a genre within the framework of both the genre theory and horror film, and Balkan cinema context in Part One, torture porn will be discussed here mostly in terms of violence, allegory, and moral views, with *A Serbian Film* and *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* in mind, in order to conclude what these two extreme torture porn films might have in common, and how one can highlight their overall value. Torture porn is often characterized as a graphic, violent subgenre, a "a combo of gore and pornography"[261] full of excess violence and gore. Jones argues that perhaps this claim is not as extreme as the term itself implies, claiming that "the notion that torture porn is made unique by its goriness is overpronounced…, as are allegations concerning the amount of violence displayed in each torture porn film. The idea that 'levels' of horrific violence on show at the multiplexes have gone through the roof are hyperbolic."[262] He uses Davis and Natale's demonstration in numbers[263] to support this statement, and soon it becomes evident that the average number of violent acts of blood and gore on screen has not increased since the 2000s; quite the opposite, it has declined, and coincidentally in the period when torture porn has reached its cinematic peak. There exists a notion among critics that filmmakers have invented the torture porn category in order to compete among themselves, where Wigley states that "torture porn is a movement created by filmmakers rather than the press."[264] It is really a one-dimensional way of looking at torture porn, as an important factor was neglected here, and it is the audience's reactions to the acts of violence. We have seen that the audience reception of *A Serbian Film* was nothing short of brutal and at times offensive. These descriptions of violence (repellent, disgusting, excruciating, horrific, and so on), says Jones, "all involve a leap from portrayals to presumed reactions, which are loaded with value judgements"[265], and most people will in fact agree that these kinds of films are indeed

[260] Jones, Steve. Torture Porn. Popular Horror After Saw, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p.13.
[261] McClintock, Pamela. Blood Brothers, Variety, December 25, 2006. https://variety.com/2006/film/news/bloodbrothers-1117956275/
[262] Jones, Steve. Torture Porn. Popular Horror After Saw, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
[263] Davis and Natale demonstrate that the acts of gory violence on-screen has declined between 2003-07, which is the torture porn theatrical boom period (in Jones, 2013).
[264] Wigley, Samuel. Captivity, Sight and Sound, 17:8. In Jones, S. 2013.
[265] Jones, Steve. Torture Porn. Popular Horror After Saw, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

disrespectful, as was the general feeling that hovered over the heads of people born and living in Serbia, after *A Serbian Film*'s release. Jones further explains that "torture porn's violence is subsequently perceived as replacing narrative depth and characterisation", some of the main reproaches coming both from critics and the audience, more connected to *A Serbian Film* than to the *Life And Death of a Porno Gang*, interestingly enough, as the levels of violence performed on the characters in *Life and Death* are higher than in *A Serbian Film*, minus the excessive taboos thrown about in Spasojević's work. *A Serbian Film* has been scrutinized since its release in another 'category' that is evident and has been a part of torture porn since the beginning. The political allegory that the director was trying to convey to the rest of the world, about the horrific contemporary situation in Serbia and the suffering its people have to endure, is a significant, although still an underdeveloped part of torture porn category. This trend leaning toward allegory has been popular among the critics and filmmakers alike, as it is a great way to distance oneself from the opinions released to the press, for example. Jones thinks that allegory, in this sense, "clearly has some legitimacy". It seems that "specific motifs within the films appear to draw on contemporary, publicly contested aspects of torture, thus facilitating the allegorical interpretation".[266] *A Serbian Film* seems to be facilitating this allegorical interpretation without offering any contemporary background for it, which created the confusion around the film with the audiences and critics, who have seen images that weren't there.[267] Apart from creating confusion with allegorical interpretations, and not achieving the desired goal (as discussed earlier in this chapter), Spasojević's film also plays with the narrative structure in a very basic way, paying more attention to the visuals and the sound rather than to the main characters in the story, because of which this film has undergone scrutiny in the eyes of the critics and the audiences all over the world, especially in its own country. Trying to strip it off any category, cinematic or otherwise, everyone is sending a clear message about *A Serbian Film*. Despite the director's and the screenwriter's efforts to send a message to the world about the hard and dangerous political and social situation in Serbia using shock tactics and disturbing imagery to make a powerful statement and wrap it inside the political allegory box, *A Serbian Film* nevertheless, is not an epitome of the Serbian nation and the way of life in contemporary Serbia. It takes more than over-the-top violence, bleak characterisation and a vague storyline to portray a nation and its

[266] Jones, Steve. 2013, pp. 64-65.

[267] I am referring here to a vague, but existent opinion that A Serbian Film talks about the civil wars of the 1990s.

social, political and cultural issues. *A Serbian Film* received backlash from its own people, who made it clear that they do not want to be portrayed in a brutal, realistic to the point of being offensive, in-your-face way that was clearly displayed in the film. Having said that, the audience's view of the moral vision of a film can be blurred with outside influences coming from critics, family and such. Jones states, and in this context of torture porn, I agree that it is imperative to evaluate what is happening on screen first, and then make judgements later, if appropriate: "…in evaluating a film's moral vision, it is necessary to account for (a) actions, not assumptions about virtue or plain distaste for characters' personalities, (b) the evidence supplied by the film itself, not presuppositions about character motivations, filmmaker intentions, or audience responses, and (c) how those elements are combined into a dynamic in the narrative whole."[268] Perhaps in that way, one will be able to see something new and positive in horror films, rather than just dismissing the films based on their categorisation and reviews of others. Shifting the dynamics of this chapter to a new idea that I would like to explore here, and on further and a closer examination of both these torture porn film examples, there is a distinct tread that connects *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* and *A Serbian Film*, the influence of the former to the latter excluded. *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* is clearly more eloquent in sending a message about the devastating state in Serbia at the time, subtly using news clips and commentaries in the background as a template for explaining the overall atmosphere and desperation of people during the political events that changed the course of events in the country, such as the fall of President Milošević in 2009, for example. All these excerpts have set the tone of the film that evokes a vague sympathy and potential understanding of violent actions portrayed in the film, thus creating a small space for the message to be presented about the hopeless political and social situation in Serbia and the suffering of its people. The message that audiences and critics alike agree that was missing and completely lost in translation in *A Serbian Film*, which focuses more on the visceral portrayal of the state of the country and its people through the metaphor of violence and communication through violence and avoids any kind of dabbling into political situation that got the country on the verge of poverty and corruption, except in a concluding scene showing police officers finding the dead bodies of Miloš and his family, who, instead of reporting it, they simply continue the cycle of violence, relinquishing any thoughts of hope for a better tomorrow that the audience might have toward the end of the film.

[268] Jones, Steve. 2013, p. 80.

Looking at both films as standalone examples, *A Serbian Film* fails in its attempt to describe the current situation in Serbia, while *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* simply plays with it, but with more success and clarity than *A Serbian Film*. However, if we ask ourselves if it is possible to look at both of these films as a coherent whole, the answer, however distant and almost hidden in reading of these two films as texts, suggests another option, another angle of looking at these prime examples of Serbian cinematography, despite their overall negative reception with the public. If we consider the fact that these two films were made in 2009 and 2010 respectively, and one was influenced by the other in terms of theme, message, and the treatment of violence shown in the films, the remaining available option on how to analyse these films would be to look at them as a continuation of one another, connected not only by violence, controversy and similar genre, but most importantly, connected precisely with the times that they are so eagerly trying to portray and explain to the rest of the world. Both *Life and Death* and *A Serbian Film* unite in a common message about the state their country and people are in, rather than each having their own message and failing at communicating it. *Life and Death*, with its glimpses of political background from 2009 offers to the audiences an insight into how a country can be manipulated and driven into collapse when politics becomes the only currency, exchanged for lives of real people, while *A Serbian Film* offers the portrayal of consequences of that same situation shown in *Life and Death*, but from a social, rather than a political aspect. That way, the audiences could get the one truly horrifying message about what is going on in contemporary Serbia. The political system and the government that ruined the country led to poverty, corruption, death, the never-ending cycle that could be broken only by complete "re-structurisation" of Serbia's government and its political system.

Chapter 5

Balkan horror today: first Croatian film about exorcism (Exorcism, Matanić, 2017), and a first zombie comedy (Last Serb in Croatia, Ličina, 2019) – redefining the complicated Croatian-Serbian national relationship

From 1991-1995, several countries of now former Yugoslavia experienced horrors of their own. To gain their independence after the collapse of the Union, they ended up violated and stricken by loss, death, suffering, hopelessness, war crimes, corruption - consequences that made an impact on everyone and still exist today, visible through poorly run state politics, robbing its own people and overall neglect of any proper social, political and cultural values. This contributed to an emergence of a different kinds of expression in horror on the territory in 2000s: a Balkan version of rural horror, slasher and the horror of the new extremism, most notable examples coming from Croatia and Serbia, respectively. Dalibor Matanić's horror film *Ćaća* (Daddy, Matanić, 2011) talks about the dysfunctional model of a nuclear family, loneliness, abuse and sins of the fathers in an isolated rural setting of Croatia, communicating the sense of isolation and lack of communication within a father-daughter relationship, which can easily be translated to the state of mind of the people of Croatia, overrun by the sins of the past events. Other examples include the already mentioned *Zagorski specijalitet* (*Specialty Dish from Zagorje*, or *Zagorje Specialty*, Kapac, 2012), which, in a more contemporary way, talks about the depravity of human nature in a corporate world and what happens when that world clashes with the rural, isolated and almost uncivilized mentality in the remote part of Croatia. These films, as well as the ones that fall into the new extremism category, were all made independently, with no financial help from the state (or if any, it was very little help), ministry of culture or any official film association. One of the most prolific contemporary Croatian directors, Dalibor Matanić did not shy away from using horror genre in his work. Instead, he experimented within the bounds of it, utilizing his versatility in filmmaking and his status on the filmmaking scene to go down the road that most of his contemporaries steered away from, because of the reputation that horror genre has had in the Balkans in the past – as a genre that is not financially viable or critically and artistically acclaimed in the rest of the world. He made risks that not necessarily paid off in financial terms, however, these risks delivered in terms of gaining a reputation of being the only Croatian director to make a first film about exorcism in the region. Titled the same, blatantly evoking the familiarity taken from the West, *Exorcism* (*Egzorcizam*, Matanić, 2017) is indeed

the first of its kind in Croatia. Based on true events, the film talks about a girl from a small coastal town Vodnjan, Croatia, who endured the terrors of an exorcism in order to save her soul from the dark forces of evil and sins from the past. *Exorcism* is indeed a very straightforward and simplistic film in terms of the story, which goes down the rabbit hole to portray the abuse in the family through the use of horror genre devices, with an obvious influence from the more famous Western counterpart *The Exorcist* (1973) by William Friedkin, made after William Blatty's novel of the same name, also based on true events: "Based loosely on the reported exorcism of a young boy known as ''Robbie Manheim'' in 1949, Blatty's novel articulates the tensions between the scientific and superstitious Catholic discourses which both desire to ''save'' the child through the characterization of Father Damien Karras, a priest and a psychiatrist struggling with his faith who has researched the occult ''from the psychiatric side''. As Ann Douglas comments, the novel inaugurates the ''family horror'' genre which articulated late twentieth-century middleclass anxieties about the "splitting of the atom of the nuclear family",[269] with Regan, Chris and the absent father Howard "constituting the postmodern familiar cluster in fission".[270] Matanić's *Egzorcism* deals with similar themes that Douglas suggests, where we have a sister/mother as a motherly figure, a possessed child and a figure of the father distorted by sexual abuse of both female figures in his life. *Egzorcism*, described as a psychological thriller, and the first horror about exorcism in Croatia, is a firm example of Douglas' "family horror". For her, "family horror novels are "post-Freudian case studies" which "narrate a crisis, a moment of traumatic disturbance in the external and internal life of a single character or cluster of characters…"[271] which is evident in the narration of Matanić's film, as will be explored in this chapter. Despite the similarities, Matanić's *Exorcism* still functions as a standalone film with little to no reference to the *Exorcist;* instead, it decides to criticize the complex family relationships that often arise from the small coastal regions of the country, fuelled with isolation, domestic violence and grimness of the same. Unlike Zečević, who simply applied the basic slasher film formula to make his *T.T. Syndrome* (Zečević, 2002), Matanić instead plays with the horror conventions of Western films about exorcism, and appropriates them, rather than simply using them, to the social and cultural issues of the region, speaking about important topics

[269] Williams, Sara. ''The Power of Christ Compels You'': Holy Water, Hysteria, and the Oedipal Psychodrama in The Exorcist, Literature Interpretation theory, Routledge, 2011, p. 219.
[270] Williams, Sara, 2011p. 219-220.
[271] Williams, Sara, 2011p. 219-220.

through the genre that has been less than popular in the Balkans since the beginnings of film art on the territory. Film opens with a wide shot of a small-town square. A girl is crossing the road to the other side of the square, she stops, and suddenly starts taking off her panties. An older woman hurriedly walks up to her, dresses her up and drags her away. This first scene sets the tone for the rest of the film. The uneasiness, unpleasantness and almost scary tone at the beginning drags through the rest of the film, with more reveal as the story continues to unfold. And unfold it does, indeed – Matanić skilfully wraps the background stories from all the characters involved into the main storyline, leading the viewer through this horrific journey of darkness and tragedy. He uses closeups for a more intimate point of view to evoke different emotions in a viewer, creating a rollercoaster of confronting emotional states that the characters in the film are plagued with. Over-voicing and overlapping the conversations and discussions between them while showing snippets of their own stories and tragic fates to connect their destinies turns out to be a great storytelling tool for this film, and Matanić knows how to do it so that he doesn't lose the viewer's attention in the process. Relatability is crucial for this kind of story, imbued with intimacy and fear. *Exorcism* was supported by Matanić's own production company, Kino Gerila, which is "a production house behind the first Croatian horror "Exorcism". New projects with similar themes are in development. Film education is part of future plans."[272] This description only confirms what has been said earlier about Matanić – he doesn't steer away from horror genre, instead, he decides to bring the genre to the public, which means that he, as one of the most prolific directors in Croatia, sees the overall potential this genre has in general, especially when explored in the Balkan setting. Other supporters who made making of the first film about exorcism in Croatia possible are local and regional theatres and the town council, which is also a huge step up in collaboration with different institutions to bring this kind of film to life, and a step toward a brighter future of horror genre in Croatia. Next scene in the film gives an insight into the story itself and the main characters, a girl named Maša and an older woman in her life, who we soon find out to be her controlling sister Vera. Maša, a girl at the peak of her womanhood, is running away down a desolate road with a suitcase in her hands, scared and confused. She ends up at the town train station and starts crying. She decides to rest on the bench, and a standard shot of a person's hand clutching into a fist, reminiscent of the stalker shots from slasher films like *Friday the 13* (Cunningham, 1980), points out to error of

[272] Kino Gerila Website: https://kinogerila.com/

Maša's ways and the decision to run away. The scenes get more disturbing by the minute; in the next one, focus is on Vera dragging Maša into their building basement, beating her with a whip while she's kneeling in front of a small provisionary altar. The shadow play in this scene enhances the terror of what is going on and sets the foundation for the complicated relationship between Maša and Vera. It also scratches the surface of the religious background that Matanić is planning to explore further in the film. Around 87% of people living in Croatia are Catholics, invested in their religion and faith to the point of extremes. Family values and values of living a proper life are propagated via the Church and its activities all around the country, and the vision of a patriarchal society is being nurtured daily. A reporter Lidija, and her new cameraman, young Boris, are driving through Vodnjan to meet Vera and Maša. They work for the Family Television, and they managed to procure the permission from church officials to film the exorcism that a priest Viktor Supilo is planning to perform on Maša, as her sister, after nothing else helped, decided to seek help within the religious community after realizing that her younger sister is possessed. There is however an alternate reason for film crew being present at such an event – the Church wants to debunk the exorcism as a ritual because it harms the modern version of the institution. The film crew, however, seeks help of Sofija, a psychologist who was treating Maša using her "mysterious revolutionary method", before Vera stopped her and told her that they no longer need her help or services. Lidija, Boris and Sofija arrive at the building basement to meet a priest who has the permission in written form, and to validate the decision of church officials to film the exorcism. He also has a darker role toward the end of the film, which serves to reveal the final secret of the Artuković family that Vera and Maša belong to. Viktor doesn't agree with the presence of film crew or filming the ritual but has no other option than to comply with the decision of his clergy who see him as a joke rather than a professional. When they all finally meet in the basement, there is already a sense of all of them being connected in some way, through Maša. So far, Matanić "follows a similar narrative trajectory that recurs throughout the horror subgenre we term "exorcism cinema. […] These films tackle similar material from various religious viewpoints and appear to have emerged in two key historical periods: the 1970s and the 2010s".[273] The scenes of horror and terror, torturing the body and the soul of an innocent individual, scenes that made the audiences around the world uneasy and terrified, also: "...

[273] Olson, Reinhard. Possessed Women, Haunted States: Cultural Tensions in Exorcism Cinema, Lexington Books, 2017, p. 1.

inspired filmmakers from around the world to produce their own exorcism films, a trend that continues to this day. Indeed, over the past forty years, whether attempting to capitalize on *The Exorcist*'s success or to push the boundaries of horror cinema, numerous other writers, directors, and producers have put their own cinematic spin on the dual experiences of demonic possession and exorcism rituals. In fact, *The Exorcist*'s highly successful (i.e., financially lucrative) formula now effectively serves as the narrative blueprint for the entire exorcism cinema subgenre."[274] There are some remarkably common themes in films about exorcism around the world, although they were made and produced in different cultural and historical contexts. Matanić adapted his version of exorcism film to the Balkan context, still not steering away too far from the common themes and story plots, or traditional exorcism narratives, as Olsen and Reinhard call them: "a "traditional exorcism narrative" established by *The Exorcist* allegorically explores the oppression of various marginalized groups (mainly women, people of color, and the nonheteronormative). The repeated use of this plot structure requires analysis because it routinely portrays a girl or a young woman as both a threat to those around her and a victim of forces beyond her control. These narratives commonly situate the possessed girl or woman as some dreadful thing that a male saviour (e.g., priest, rabbi) must dispel or repress, thereby restoring so-called normal (e.g., patriarchal, heteronormative, colonial) life. At the same time, however, such films also position the possessed girl as a passive figure incapable of freeing herself from demonic influence, and therefore entirely reliant upon the heroic priest saviour's efforts. Thus, exorcism films simultaneously portray the possessed girl or woman as both the monster and the damsel in distress."[275] However, what differs in this narrative in Matanić's film, is that Maša, as the possessed girl, although being in a passive role most of the narrative, she is not reliant upon the "heroic priest saviour's efforts,"[276] to release her from demonic possession. Instead, the person who releases her from the clutches of hell is her own sister Vera, as we soon find out that she is not in fact Maša's sister, but her biological mother. Vera was consecutively raped and abused by her own father, the patriarch of the family, which resulted in her pregnancy with Maša. As Maša was growing up, becoming a lovely little girl soon to be a woman, as expected, father's attention transferred from Vera to her, and he began to molest her instead. Vera couldn't turn a blind eye

[274] Olson, Reinhard, 2017, p. 2-3.
[275] Olson, Reinhard, 2017, p. 3.
[276] See footnote 261: Williams, Sara, 2011p. 219-220.

to what was happening, so she one day decides to go after her father and Maša in the basement, where the molesting occurred, and she thrusts a knife into him, killing him instantly, and before Maša's eyes. The repression of these horrific events pushed Maša to the edge, and forgetting everything because of shock, but still knowing that something is wrong, Maša becomes a perfect vessel for possession. This turn in saviour roles, from patriarchal heroic individual (priest) to a broken, but empowering woman indicates the creativity that Matanić brings to the table and in horror genre, despite the already set conventions of the same by the West. As far as other characters involved is concerned, their personal stories entwined in such a way that they were brought together in one place to seek forgiveness and redemption from the sins they committed in the past. Calling these life events sins in this instance is justified, looking at the commentary about religion and religious communities ruled by patriarchy that is present in the background throughout the film. The reporter, Lidija, becomes a vial excuse for a woman constantly running after her career, knocking down everyone in her path, because she can't forgive herself for choosing her career instead of having a child; she is guilty of abortion in the eyes of the Church and the society she lives in. Boris the young cameraman, is directly connected to Maša, as they fell in love, but he left her to suffer in the clutches of controlling and brutal Vera. Viktor Supilo, the priest in charge of the exorcism, strayed from his religious path because of a young woman Ada, who he seduced and lead on, just to leave her in the end, which resulted in Ada's death by hanging. The crisis of his faith is obvious here. Sofija, the psychologist, lost her medical license because of her "revolutionary method" of practice, which she tried on Maša as well. Stripped down bare, her method is nothing else than performing a satanic ritual for her own gain. She lost her faith and herself after losing her only daughter, Ada, the same girl who hung herself because of Viktor, the priest. Vera, Maša's sister/biological mother, couldn't forgive herself for hiding the truth from Maša, as the truth could've changed both of their lives for the better and set them free. This ingenious cluster of tragedy between the characters in the film is what makes *Exorcism* so compelling to watch. These connections and emotions that followed each of their stories were enhanced by the actors, who did their due diligence in portraying their roles in the film. Helena Minić Matanić as Vera and a young actress Nika Ivančić as Maša played their roles brilliantly, adding to the whole atmosphere of darkness and desolation on the screen with their facial and bodily expressions and conveying every dark emotion that their characters had to endure. As the exorcism ritual is nearing its end, the events in the basement escalate, and the state of mind of

each character starts to deteriorate as they are confronted with their sins. Maša is completely taken over by the demonic presence lurking in her body, adamant not to let her go anytime soon, and the next scenes involve her running violently through the basement maze in a proper Regan from the *Exorcist* fashion, and everyone else trying to catch her and subdue her so that they can finish the ritual. Found footage style of filming is primarily used here, as the shaky, handheld camera feel perfectly describes the emotional and physical state of everyone involved. They manage to subdue Maša in the end, strapping her to a chair, and Viktor, despite his deteriorated emotional state, still manages to redeem himself by forcing the demon to tell him his name (as expected here, the demon's name is Josip Artuković, the father of both Vera and Maša, who didn't want to let go of either of them even after his death, tormenting them for the rest of their lives. He mumbles the words "deus terra" toward the end, loosely translated "god on earth", which also indicates the importance and power he has given himself and his role over Vera and Maša) and to finally banish the demon out of Maša's body, by finishing the exorcism ritual. What saved Maša's soul was her mother's love and forgiveness of both toward one another. The ending sees Maša, and everyone involved moving on from this horrific experience and their own past, everyone except Vera. She lets go of Maša but can't seem to let go of her own past and abuse. We see her dragging a body of the priest who was delivering the permission to film the exorcism from the beginning, now dead from injuries that Maša inflicted on him while she was possessed, into the basement boiler room. Opening the door of the boiler room and dragging the body inside, Vera also reveals to the audience where the body of her father was conveniently stashed after she killed him. She leaves the priest's body inside, closes the door and places herself in front of a what seems to be a bloody wall that she was "cleaning" every time she was distressed and affected by her past. The ending is dark only for Vera, because, even though she saved Maša, she couldn't forgive herself for the things that she has done. She stays trapped in her own mind, bound forever by her own inner demons. Douglas' term "family horror" could explain familial connections that Matanić makes between the characters in order to illustrate human desire for love, forgiveness and acceptance within a family circle and the overly patriarchal society of the Balkans, in whichever version this circle may appear (the priest as the lover of the psychologist's daughter, who seeks revenge for her daughter's death, Vera as Maša's sister and biological mother, the possession as the presence of the abusive, dead father, inability of the reporter to become a mother). The ending of the film is twofold, and therefore not easy to fit in a

theoretical box. A happy ending for most characters who experienced forgiveness and absolution from their sins, and an unhappy ending for Vera, as she couldn't forgive herself for her own, and Maša's abuse, by their father. One could say that she is stuck in her own version of "deep horror", "a sense of the meaninglessness of human life".[277] As Schlobin explains, "deep horror's basic law is that existence is completely nihilistic and entropic. Humanity and humane exist only as prey, and deep horror threatens "…the intact psychological system that takes its strength from life."[278] Vera seems to be the most complex character in the film, as she is the one possessed by the hatred for her father, because of which she unwillingly became a prisoner in her own deep horror story that never seems to end. Apart from Schlobin's deep horror concept and Douglas' family horror, and some basic similarities with Friedkin's *The Exorcist*, Matanić's *Exorcism* doesn't seem to follow in the footsteps of the theoretical aspects that were used in the analysis of *The Exorcist,* but is instead a standalone example of how exorcism cinema mentioned earlier would be able to grow as a concept within the Balkan context. As this film is the first and only film about exorcism made in Croatia and Serbia (former Yugoslavia), there are no case studies that would perhaps help expand the analysis using other theoretical approaches, especially the ones using psychological approach and perhaps Freudian concept of demonic neurosis, that seem to be prevalent in the analysis and understanding of films like Friedkin's *The Exorcist*. Olson and Reinhard claim that while films of exorcism cinema "do not explicitly endorse or advance any sort of anti-feminist, misogynistic, racist, or homophobic ideologies, they nevertheless reflect the tensions and struggles that occur at a societal level between countercultural forces and traditional modes of thinking,"[279] which is on the other hand evident in Matanić's *Exorcism*. The film portrays these struggles and tensions in the Balkans, disseminating them in pieces only to put them back together to make sense of them, and to present it to the audience in a different, more open way.

[277] Geary, Robert F. The Exorcist: Deep Horror? Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, 1993, Vol. 5, No. 4 (20) (1993), pp. 55-63.
[278] Schlobin, Roger C. Children of a Darker God: A Taxonomy of Deep Horror Fiction and Film and Their Mass Popularity, Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts, 1988, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1) (1988), pp. 25-50.
[279] Olson, Reinhard. Possessed Women, Haunted States: Cultural Tensions in Exorcism Cinema, Lexington Books, 2017, p. 3.

The Last Serb in Croatia (Ličina, 2019) is another "first" in these regions. Interestingly enough, Matanić was involved in making of this film, as a consultant from HAVC[280] (Croatian audio-visual centre, a funding body founded by the government), and one of the most relevant aspects concerning this film is that it is a coproduction, a collaboration between Croatia and Serbia, with the financial and artistic backing from institutions and individuals from both countries. As noted in chapters 1-3 of Part Two of this project, most horror films that were made were mostly independently funded, without backing from the state, or they were student projects (see Chapter 2, *Zagorski specijalitet* (Kapac, 2012)). Dalibor Matanić and Dejan Šoša, consultants with HAVC at the time of filming *The Last Serb in Croatia,* obviously wanted to stir things up when they suggested and lobbied for this film project to come to life, while the director himself, Predrag Ličina, teased the audiences with humoristic political innuendo on his socials, even with the title of the film itself, clearly showing that he was not afraid of the backlash that might follow his film.[281] *The Last Serb in Croatia* (2019) plays out in Croatia, seven years after the bankruptcy of the country.[282] Clean, potable water supplies are running out, and water becomes the most precious thing, reserved only for the rich. The main character is an extrovert Mićo, who drives a convertible, obviously having a lot of money, as he repeatedly mentions to everyone he meets during the film. Apart from being a direct witness of how water transforms people into flesh eating zombies, he also has a secret of his own; his real name is Milan Motika, which means that he is a Serb minority living in Croatia, which turns out to be of crucial importance for the future development of apocalyptic events - for some reason, Serbs who live in Croatia are immune to the virus that turns everyone else into zombies. In an article from Jutarnji.hr, a popular Croatian news publication covering the news about the film, director Ličina mentions his reasons for choosing his film to be about zombies:

"Why did he [Ličina] opt in for a story about zombies? Because that kind of story hasn't been done yet in Croatian filmography, but we had that in Serbian filmography, because horror and

[280] HAVC (Hrvatski audiovizualni centar; Croatian audiovisual centre) is a Croatian public institution that deals in promotion of audiovisual activities and audiovisual culture. Finances for their projects are secured from the state budget.

[281] Polimac, N. POSLJEDNJI SRBIN U HRVATSKOJ Kako je sniman i o čemu govori najiščekivaniji hrvatski film, zombi komedija Predraga Ličine, accessed January 25, 2020, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/posljednji-srbin-u-hrvatskoj-kako-je-sniman-i-o-cemu-govorinajiscekivanijihrvatski-film-zombi-komedija-predraga-licine-8246162

[282] Hypothetical event has not happened, at least not yet.

fantasy are more appreciated in those parts. He immediately thought about including international relations in that kind of a story, because what's the use for zombies who just level down a town or a place; that has already been done numerous times in world cinemas. He liked *Dead Snow* (Wirkola, 2009). […] The movie gained cult status among the audiences, it had a sequel, and several copycats, which convinced Ličina that zombie stories must be something special. Another important inspiration for him was the South Korean *Train to Busan* (Sang – ho, 2016), in which the passengers of a high-tech train from Seoul to Busan have to face the epidemic that turns people into zombies. True, that film appeared after Ličina's project has already been given a green light, but it helped him in elaborating visual finesses for his own film."[283] Other important characters include Hrvojka Horvat (her stage name), a Croatian version of a Wonder Woman and an epitome for nationalism, with her costume and her catchphrases that hint to the pride that nationalism in Croatia brings to its people, and it is a big part of people's lives, which is also problematic; however, nationalism has been ridiculed because of the extremes people bring it to, so these catchphrases today are being used oftentimes to parody this kind of mindset. Her real name in the film is Franka Anić, yes, she's Croatian, and she is a morphine and cocaine addict, which is how we meet her for the first time in the film. Mićo ends up in a hospital trying to save a kid that he just ran over with his shiny convertible, a kid that has obviously been bitten. Running away from zombies with the kid in his arms, he rationalizes that this act of kindness, which is more of a poor thinking and even poorer evaluation of the situation, will make people inside the hospital more likely to let him inside to safety. Obviously, this whole event goes awfully wrong, when people find out that the kid is not his daughter, as he was claiming earlier just to get inside, and that she is infected. Of course, the zombie kid now attacks everyone, which significantly reduces the number of survivors in the hospital, with hordes trying to get inside. Mićo comes up with a plan to get a corpse from the morgue and throws it out of the window as a bait for the hordes to move away from the main entrance so that they can escape. In the morgue, Mićo, to his surprise because he is a huge fan, finds the body of none other than the national heroine from the films, Hrvojka. However, it turns out that she is not dead after all, only overdosed from heroine, flatlined and came back to the land of the living, asking for more drugs!

[283] Polimac, N. POSLJEDNJI SRBIN U HRVATSKOJ Kako je sniman i o čemu govori najiščekivaniji hrvatski film, zombi komedija Predraga Ličine, accessed January 25, 2020, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/posljednji-srbin-u-hrvatskoj-kako-je-sniman-i-o-cemu-govorinajiscekivanijihrvatski-film-zombi-komedija-predraga-licine-8246162

This scene is a proper fandom parody, imbued with this specific kind of dark, punchy Balkan humour that is present in most Balkan films, especially in Croatia and Serbia. As he was looking under the sheets to choose an appropriate corpse, suddenly one of them springs up in a sitting position right in front of his face, and his natural reaction is to punch it in the face, which he did. But, as soon as he realizes that he punched his heroine Hrvojka, Mićo starts yelling all the catchphrases at Hrvojka extatically, obviously excited and happy with her presence, despite her looking like a corpse, and playing with her shield. Great timing in the scene and the actor's reactions to one another set the comical tone for the film from that moment on, in a grand-guignol-esque fashion. The film is full of Croatian – Serbian references and contradictions, playing with both their identities and distinct mentality, and not just on screen. Hristina Popović, the actress who is playing the Croatian national heroine is in fact a Serbian actress. Ličina in this way mixes up the whole story about parodying nationalism in Croatia and Serbia, even on a casting level, and he made sure that he covered every aspect of his project with parodying references, internal, national and regional jokes, portraying that distinct love-hate relationship that Croatia and Serbia developed throughout history, especially after the 1990s wars. Not just that; he also sneaked in the myth about Great Slovenia: "Ličina's film must be the only one that mentions the myth about Great Slovenia. This wasn't by accident, at one time he [Ličina] was shooting a commercial in Istria, Croatia not too far from Slovenian border, and in one of the houses he noticed a geographical map that outlines with precision what exactly our neighbours are aspiring to: of course, Istria was included in Great Slovenia, and border with Croatia was moved all the way to Vrapče (near Zagreb, the capital of Croatia, which is situated in Central part of the country). Those types of phantasmagorias fit perfectly in the quirky world of *The Last Serb in Croatia*."[284] One of the characters in the film, a mysterious Slovene woman Vesna, involved in a conspiracy beyond international, and Earth borders, brings this political imagining perfectly to light and makes it a crucial part of the story, as the end of the film will soon reveal. Let's not forget the allusions to contemporary political and social situation around the world – in the midst of the outbreak, and since Croatia was the zero point of spreading the virus, the country was surrounded by an electrified barb wire, and isolated accordingly. Put together by chance, our

[284] Polimac, N. POSLJEDNJI SRBIN U HRVATSKOJ Kako je sniman i o čemu govori najiščekivaniji hrvatski film, zombi komedija Predraga Ličine, accessed January 25, 2020, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/posljednji-srbin-u-hrvatskoj-kako-je-sniman-i-o-cemu-govorinajiscekivanijihrvatski-film-zombi-komedija-predraga-licine-824616

characters Mićo, Hrvojka, Vesna, Maks, a young skinhead from Croatia with an identity crisis, which is hilariously portrayed as Maks, after being bitten and turning into a zombie, turns back into a human due to having both Croatian and Serbian genes, a life fact that his mother was hiding from him all his life. The contradictory nature of his character makes him a perfect leader in the new world order, a transformation that no one expected as a consequence of finding a cure for the outbreak. They all venture out of the infested Zagreb and to the countryside, in a small Serbian village called Slavujevci, where they meet Drakula family who own a bed and breakfast nearby. This is where the relationship between Croatia and Serbia really comes to light – what it actually is, why was it formed in the first place, love and hate imbued with humour, internal jokes and mocking each other's identities despite all of them having the same Balkan mentality. The ridiculousness of these situations describes the life and opinions of people in both countries very accurately. "As the finale is slowly closing in, our merry bunch of renegades have an encounter with Bosnians through the barbed wire fence, where they exchange mockery and jokes based on nationality, Albanians are also involved somehow, as well as a council of international scientists representing all major countries in the world, all of them stationed in space on a space station. It turns out that the outbreak in Croatia was simply an experiment executed by them, to test the resilience and importance of these countries and their people...and possibly out of boredom. The finale of the film is hilarious, with completely new transformations..."[285] coming to light. The already mentioned idea and aspiration of Greater Slovenia had its counterpart in Serbia as well, in Milošević's idea of Greater Serbia. Greater Serbia was an idea that included overall Serbian unity in terms of culture, nation etc., but what the efforts to make this happen showed were the "real fears of cultural fragmentation in reputedly one of the most homogeneous of South Slavic nationalities. Slobodan Milošević, …the paramount Serbian leader, is therefore as keen as any of his non-Communist predecessors to foster the homogenization of Serbs throughout the Western Balkans, that is, beyond Serbia itself."[286] Obviously, the only way that this idea could become a reality was to use excessive violence. Both these nationalistic and

[285]Polimac, N. POSLJEDNJI SRBIN U HRVATSKOJ Kako je sniman i o čemu govori najiščekivaniji hrvatski film, zombi komedija Predraga Ličine, accessed January 25, 2020, https://www.jutarnji.hr/kultura/posljednji-srbin-u-hrvatskoj-kako-je-sniman-i-o-cemu-govorinajiscekivanijihrvatski-film-zombi-komedija-predraga-licine-824616

[286] Ramet, Sabrina P. Balkan Babel, The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević, Routledge 2018., p. 12.

highly political aspirations involved conquering a part of Croatia, or all of it, because of its rich natural resources and good connections with the bordering countries. The main characters end up in a refugee camp led by Slovenes somewhere in the middle of nowhere, where Mićo and Hrvojka, after accidentally discovering that the cure for the virus is a mix of homemade schnaps and Serbian blood, come up with a solution to get out of the whole Slovenia – Croatia – Serbia mess they got themselves into. They decide to mix the cure on the spot and distribute it to the zombies in cages in the camp, waiting for better days. Now, keeping in mind that only Serbian minorities in Croatia cannot get infected by this zombie virus, and the infected come from Croatia, Slovenia etc., when Mićo distributes the cure to everyone with the help of a young boy from the refugee camp who knows his way around it, especially when no one is watching, all hell breaks loose. Indeed, the cure worked, but because of the Serbian blood as one of the major ingredients, the cure instead of curing everyone, when getting in touch with non-Serbian blood, it upgraded the mindless zombie monsters into conscious, powerful zombie leaders - a completely new race, the Neoserbs (Greek neo-new). The allusions to nationalist ideas of Great Serbia and Great Slovenia that fired up hate between these nations are completely put aside with the formation of a new race of Neoserbs in the film, allowing Ličina to show the absurdity of these ideas that were present in Balkan history until recently, also commenting on the ridiculousness and farfetched political, geographical and cultural delusions that came with them. Led by now completely transformed Maks, and Vesna, who got infected because of her own poor judgement, this new race of zombies is far from your standard decaying, slow, flesh-eating zombies – these monsters are calculated, robotic, conscious and with one plan on their minds: to take over Croatia, and the rest of the world. Zombies in *The Last Serb in Croatia* were portrayed as a mix of Romero's zombies, *Dead Snow* and *Train to Busan* monsters, which were all a huge influence on the director, bordering in the end with robotic aliens from any 1980s sci-fi film, which gave a sense of growth in the transformation of the monsters to the film. The man responsible for the portrayal of zombies in the film was Miroslav Lakobrija, a Belgrade Master of Special effects, who also made gruesome special effects and disturbing scenes in *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010), and he was also responsible for the realistic look of zombies in *Zone of The Dead* (Konjević, Todorović, 2009), the first zombie film made in Serbia. *Zone of The Dead* was a standard zombie film set in Pančevo, Serbia. The story is equally standard, however, Todorović and Konjević did employ bigger outside names for this film. Ken Foree and Kristina Klebe,

playing two Interpol agents, were given a task to transport a dangerous criminal across Serbia when they all get caught up in a sudden outbreak caused by the deadly toxin that turns everyone in zombies. The most interesting part in this film is, surprisingly enough, the setting of the outbreak – Pančevo. Pančevo was the place of Pančevo massacre during WWII, where German Wehrmacht armed forces executed over thirty people under the guise of disturbing the recent peace treaty. The first zombie film in Serbia is significant only because of the fact that it is the first zombie film ever made in the country. Using standard tropes of a zombie film and adjusting it to the regional style of filmmaking is what made this movie watchable, however, apparently it encountered quite a bit of negativity from the audiences. Nevertheless, it did get more positive comments regarding the two main actors Foree and Klebe, stating that they are the only reason to watch it, which is possibly why the director chose to cast them, as their names alone will resonate with the viewers. Special effects were also a reason for positivity, going further to say that the zombies had a better story than the film and the humans themselves (the film starts with a found burial ground in Chernobyl in 1983, where the spread of the toxin really began after the group unearthed the dead bodies that were infected. We later find out that the prisoner the Interpol agents were transporting already knew that, because he witnessed his father, who worked in Chernobyl, turning into a zombie). On IMDB, the highest rating that the *Zone of The Dead* scored was an 8,[287] with such reviews referring to it being an old school film, and mentioning Todorović's exploration of Carpenter's style of filming, which can be noticed in the camera technique and the changeability of the same, hence steering the whole atmosphere of the film in the Carpenter style 1980s direction and feel, which is one of the most interesting traits of this film. Looking at the *Last Serb in Croatia* then, compared to the *Zone of The Dead*, the film is a step up in every way when it comes to horror genre in Croatia and Serbia. One can call it a very, if not one of the most successful, attempt in horror genre in both countries to date.[288] The finale of the film brings hope for the future of Croatian-Serbian relations in reality, hope for a better, brighter future for the characters, and for horror genre itself. Mićo, Hrvojka and the young boy who helped Mićo distribute the cure are the only ones left alive after world military decides to nuke Croatia with a human bomb, that kills all humans and leaves nature intact, in order to

[287] Zone of The Dead: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1191971/reviews

[288] I am saying "one of" with the She-butterfly (Kadijević, 1973) in mind as the first Yugoslavian/Serbian horror ever made; its contemporary status as a classic confirms the quality of Kadijević's work in every sense.

stop the threat, vanquishing Neoserbs, and everyone else into oblivion. The natural order of things is restored. A Croatian Wonder Woman, a Serb in Croatia and a young boy are the only ones left alive. It is up to them to rebuild the world and start all over again. The release of the *Last Serb in Croatia* was held up because of the current pandemic. When talking to the distributors, they made that kind of decision at the start of the COVID pandemic because of the nature of the story of the film, and they thought it would be insensitive to release the movie about a national and in the end global virus outbreak during the real pandemic occurring in the world. Now, the pandemic drawing to better times with the implementation of safety measures, vaccines in every country in the world, and plenty of drinking water, *Last Serb in Croatia* is finally available to watch on HBO Adria (it had its premiere in regional cinemas right before the pandemic started), and as of recently, on Netflix.

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in Part One and Part Two of this research project, horror genre has always been present in Balkan cinema, since its beginnings. The 1920s and 1930s saw the beginnings of film as an art form in Croatia and Serbia through amateur work of filmmakers like Oktavijan Miletić, one of the most prolific film auteurs of the period, who also, together with Paspa, contributed to the creation of ciné clubs, formed to educate the public and cinephiles about this new art form and to contribute to the development and popularization of film. In this period of exploring film, filmmakers were influenced by the West and the rest of Europe. Miletić for example drew inspiration from Fritz Lang films, whose work revolved around the thriller and horror genres, using elements of both, as well as keeping in mind the social occurrences and news such as the news about the Dusseldorf vampire, the case which was the main inspiration for Lang's now classic film *M*. Furthermore, *M* inspired Miletić to create a series of short amateur films

exploring different disturbing characters, oftentimes putting them in dark, gothic atmospheric settings and scary situations in order to explore certain aspects of human nature, but in an approachable way, by using humour. Hence, most of his films had a parodic element, approaching a scary situation through humour, blurring the boundaries between reality and dreamlike state that Miletić's characters were most found in. From these examples we can see the obvious influence coming from Hollywood and German expressionism, which at the time were no strangers to horror genre in the films they were making and producing. Further glimpses of horror as a cultural form could be seen in the archival material from both countries in the form of film journals and magazines. Some of the most popular film publications (*Cinema Revija, Film, Film Žurnal*…), apart from talking extensively about film as an art form and the development of the same, also created most of their content which was modelled on the Hollywood star system. Beloved actors and actresses, interestingly enough, mostly worked in the genre of horror, and were most famous for precisely those kinds of films. Conrad Veidt, Lon Chaney, and the like were among the favourites, often being described with words that clearly implied their connection to horror genre films (fantastic, scary, fear, monster...). Chapter 1 of Part One of my research project therefore explores the existence of horror as a genre in the Balkans, which was "imported" in a way through influences from other countries and major world film studios, and it was being used in filmmaking at the time, exploring the creativity of the genre that was not understood as one just yet. To support these claims, I have attached visual evidence from the Croatian Film Archives that clearly shows the attitudes and interests of the audiences in the 1920s and 1930s. Images from some of the most popular film journals and magazines such as *Cinema Revija, Film, Film Žurnal* depict interviews with major figures from horror films and productions, European and Hollywood ones, including the already mentioned Conrad Veidt, and Boris Karloff, who was the audiences' favourite. The growing fascination with works of Fritz Lang was evident, and seen in articles and reviews of his films, especially his thriller *M*, and standalone pieces of writing that praise his expertise as a director (Part One, Chapter 1). This archival evidence, as well as the appropriate explanations that follow them, clearly show the awareness of the audiences and filmmakers from the 1920s-30s that horror as a genre exists, and that it was slowly finding its way into Balkan cinema life, which in turn refutes the general opinion that first traces of horror in the Balkans started showing themselves in the 1970s. I also tried to explore genre theory, and tried to apply it to the period, which showed that

not only genre theory is changing and therefore is not easy to adapt to a certain period of time (same goes for horror), but it also revealed some problematic points which will come to light and form in a more concise way later on (1970s, 1980s-90s and after), like the consideration that European cinema does not exist as such (Elsaesser), and by extension, that the views regarding Balkan cinema are the same (Grgić). However, they both claim that both cinemas do exist, but in the shadow of world cinema. Another problematic point was the style of filmmaking which turned out to be the identifying style for Balkan cinema, the style that used the concept of self-balkanization (concept denoting the terms Nesting Orientalism by Todorova, and Nesting Balkanism by Bakić Hayden) as a reaction to the same stereotype that came from the West. Genre was forming itself through all these occurrences, and it continued to strive in this environment of the Other, as the Balkans are often considered to be. Support for this argument also came from analysing and adjusting genre theories as seen and understood by Altman, Jancovich, Hutchings and Tudor, who all saw these problems arising within genre theory, including the displacement of genres that was visible, prevalent, and obvious occurrence that marked the early period of film. This displacement of the genre was also visible in the Balkans, which I think led to horror being almost invisible as a genre in those times. As far as the next period is concerned, 1970s films of horror, mostly made by Đorđe Kadijević, are considered to be the beginnings of horror genre in the Balkans, in Yugoslavia more specifically. Obviously refuted with research from earlier time period using the archival materials as evidence, nevertheless, this period gave way to making films of horror and Gothic atmosphere that criticized the society by way of creative filmic expression. Historical overview of this time period has helped me identify what is considered to be the first proper horror film made in Serbia (Yugoslavia), the *She-Butterfly* (Kadijević, 1973), which revealed concerns with repressed sexuality, fear of death and difficulties of rural life using folklore of the country as a template to build on in terms of storytelling. Other intriguing films that came from this period and were approached in the same way regarding the analysis are *Devičanska svirka, Sveto mesto*, both directed by Kadijević, and some examples of ontological horror, as noticed by Lazarević Radak (*San doktora Mišića, Prokletinja,* directed by Pleša in 1973). This chapter outlined and described the political and social circumstances in which these films were made, mostly focusing on the Yugoslav Black Wave, a movement in film that demanded complete freedom of expression and rebellion against the political system in such creative arts as film. The analysis of this period

gave me a clearer picture of where horror as a genre is heading, especially after the dormant period in 1940s-50s, where it seemed that horror, as well as any other genre besides partisan epics, was deleted from film history and replaced by propaganda and partisan films. This period is important to mention, because it led to the rebellious era of experimental films of every genre possible in the 1960s-70s (Yugoslav Black Wave), which in turn led to horror gaining traction and getting a chance for a comeback in the 1980s. Horror hence emerged from the ashes of the dying propaganda films and started to build itself up on the foundations of free expression and rebellious creativity from young filmmakers with a bright future. From that moment on, horror as a genre has been present in one form or another all through the 1980s and 1990s, when political, social and cultural events like the 1990s wars and the fall of Yugoslavia dictated the themes in creative works such as film, often using humour and parodying these same events, in that way making a statement and giving commentaries about the mentality that was considered violent and barbaric in the rest of the world. Self-balkanization style found its way into the lives of the people, embracing the general stereotypical impression the West has about the Balkans. Horror films made during that turbulent period experimented with the folklore of both countries, such as vampires, witches, and crime in general, using figures like serial killers, influenced by Hitchcock's work, to further parody the mentality of their own people and the chaos created in the political and social sphere, which was supported by an extensive analysis, as well as comparison, of two horror comedies made in the 1980s-90s, *Davitelj protiv Davitelja* (Šijan, 1984) and *Krvopijci* (Šorak, 1989). Part Two of this research project concerns the more contemporary view on horror in Croatia and Serbia, using more academic sources from established academics in the genre in order to try and position horror in the Balkan context, to set the foundations for defining the genre, subgenres and categories in question, by analysing horror films as they were influenced by the West. Therefore, one can observe the application of the horror genre and its subgenres formula/e on Balkan contemporary films, such as slasher subgenre in the films of Dejan Zečević, the concept of Slenderman, digital horror and the digital campfire storytelling via an amateur and independent YouTube series *Croatian Files* (2013), zombie films in the works of Todorović, Konjević and Ličina, and exploitation cinema films that produced some of the most notorious films on this territory, like *A Serbian Film* (Spasojević, 2010) and *Life and Death of a Porno Gang* (Đorđević, 2009) in 2000s. The main argument while analysing these two case studies came from the message these two films were trying to portray to its

audiences, a message about the degradation of Serbia and its people. However, both films, understood separately, failed to deliver that message, so I have introduced a new idea that would make more sense in terms of the message coming from both films. I argue that both *A Serbian Film* and *Life and Death*, when looking at them as parts of a whole, are more successful in delivering the message, because at least one of them offers some kind of political and social background (*Life and Death of a Porno Gang*), which helps understand what the directors were trying to say. Analysing reviews from national and international newspapers and exploring the categories that these two films might fall into helped me get a clear understanding of both these films, and their reception with the audiences around the world (these were anything but positive), which led me to the idea of a shared message about the state of contemporary Serbia. I tried positioning these two case studies in the hardcore horror category (Aston) and exploitation cinema (Roche), which showed that there are traces and some shared elements of these categories in *A Serbian Film* and *Life and Death*, however, the category that I would fit these films into was the one of torture porn. I came to this conclusion by analysing and using Jones' excellent work on torture porn, laid out in his book of the same name. The key issues that arose from all these examples were not explicitly connected to horror as a genre, but rather because of the messages and the portrayal of complicated political, social, and cultural hardships these films tried to convey and show to the rest of the world. As Dyer and Vincendeau rightfully claim: "We don't know what the prospects for popular European cultures are and we shall not make much headway on that front until we know what those cultures are and have been."[289] What this means is that without a proper historical, political, social and cultural background and framework, with all these information often missing in the said films, what is left are the violent and problematic scenes in which the context of the Balkan situation disappears precisely because of the lack of the appropriate framework to position these issues in a way that everyone who is not from the Balkans will be able to understand when watching the films. Despite that, horror genre still has its place in the contemporary Balkan cinema, as some filmmakers like Matanić and Ličina recognize the value of it, financially and creatively. They refuse to give up on it, which also changes how the Balkans are perceived outside of its borders. Having a proper framework and context in Balkan horror films allows the contemporary filmmakers to explore in more detail the complexity of the love-hate relationship between Croatia and Serbia, and the issues that follow it

[289] Dyer, Richard. Vincendeau, Ginette. Popular European Cinema, Routledge, 2006, p. 12-14.

today, using the distinct filmmaking style that Balkan filmmakers have been nurturing for a long time. Horror genre in Balkan cinema is present and evolving, changing the financial and creative climate in contemporary Balkan film industry with films like the *Last Serb in Croatia* (Ličina, 2019), the most recent example of a first Croatian zombie comedy made in collaboration with both Croatia and Serbia in terms of creativity and actors, which is an indicator that relationships and overall national perception are changing for the better in this rich and developing, albeit very complex, Balkan cinema environment. I haven't considered many theoretical approaches when analysing *The Last Serb in Croatia*, as this case study primarily served to support my argument about the complicated relationship between Croatia and Serbia – this first zombie horror comedy perfectly portrays that relationship which formed itself due to historical events such as the civil wars of the 1990s, and the mentality of both countries. Analysing this case study using textual approach wonderfully explained and portrayed the core of this love-hate relationship, which has been and still is, evident in most films of contemporary Balkan cinema. Mentioning *Zone of the Dead* in this chapter was an added bonus, as this is the first zombie film made in Serbia, however, if I were to dive into zombie film theory using only these two examples, I would expect that this is a too broad of a research topic, that delves into a genre that isn't yet officially defined in the Balkans, much like the slasher/stalker subgenre for which I only have one case study to work with (*T.T. Syndrome*, Zečević, 2002) and exorcism cinema (*Exorcism* (Matanić, 2012), which is for now, the only film about exorcism in these parts). For *T.T. Syndrome*, apart from textual analysis of this case study, I used the theoretical framework that outlines the slasher film formula, using and following Rockoff's approach to the genre, and Clover and Dika's theories for the same. I found that for example, Dika's understanding of the slasher genre, in which she deviates from Clover's approach and calls the subgenre stalker film, and Clover's final girl finds her equivalent in Dika's heroine, Dika's approach fits better in the Balkan context, primarily when talking about the final girl/heroine. Balkan final girl, as I call it, is more similar to Dika's heroine, which is an intelligent woman who is never free, but manages to defeat not just a serial killer, but all other evils, and sacrifices herself and her sanity either for her family or for the greater good, like the final girl/heroine in *T.T. Syndrome* does; as opposed to a young girl, often a virgin, who earns her freedom after confronting the serial killer, much like in any other slasher film. With exorcism cinema, as Chess and Newsom call it, who focused on less known films about exorcism in their analysis, I also applied the concept of family horror by

Douglas, and further analysed by Williams, a "genre which articulated late twentieth-century middle-class anxieties about the ''splitting of the atom of the nuclear family"[290], which supported my analysis of *Exorcism*'s dysfunctional familial relationships between the main characters, and made sense of the topics such as family abuse, repressed sexuality, crisis of faith that Matanić tackles during the film. Also, Schlobin's term deep horror fitted perfectly when analysing one of the main characters, Vera, and her emotional and devastatingly degrading states, because one of the main premises of deep horror is that there are no happy endings, only misery and pain for the characters in question. When talking about family, I used the concept of what I call a dysfunctional nuclear family in Chapter 2, with which I have tried to discover whether there is a possibility to talk about rural horror in the Balkan context in this way. I adapted the nuclear family concept to a dysfunctional nuclear family using Matanić's film *Ćaća* (2011) as a case study, and the conclusions led me to believe that there is a huge potential for this genre to live and survive in the Balkans, as Matanić most often explores the dysfunctionality of family and degradation of human character, which is portrayed in *Ćać*a as well. Other examples, like *Zagorski specijalitet* (Kapac, 2012), even though it shows some elements of the slasher film, I think that this case study would fit better in the rural horror concept, again because it portrays the dysfunctional nuclear family (in this case, the family of cannibals) who would do anything to preserve the rural idyll, or anti-idyll, according to Bell, and to defend the way of life these concepts offer. Because the understanding of the rural in the Balkans deviates from the western understanding of the term, it is focused more on the atmosphere and being used as a device to explore and explain the harsh rural life in almost all regions of the Balkans, and the inner state of the people involved. What I noticed while trying to support my arguments, and explore problematic points in this research, is that each of these genres, subgenres, categories have not yet been officially defined in the Balkans, and that my research on them here might serve as a starting point for actual process of defining these terms and concepts in a more elaborate and in-depth way in the future. This research project only scratches the surface of the potential that horror genre has when utilized in the Balkan context. Hopefully in the future, there will be an opportunity to fully explore the genre and its subgenres and categories, which will hopefully contribute to this, and other, existing research.

[290] Douglas, in Williams. 2011.

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