

**Transnational Lines of Circulation:
New Film Movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia
(1962-1982)**

by

Nevenka Stankovic

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation examines the relation between New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film (1962-1982). The comparison of two cinemas coming from different political systems, capitalist and socialist, is possible today thanks to a new cultural awareness that has emerged since the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. My understanding of comparative analysis as a process of circulation, rather than a comparison between two separate, static entities, locates these two film movements in the wider cultural and cinematic milieu unfolding in the 1960s. In my reading, New Film movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia are the cinemas of political awareness comprehending reality as being historically and politically conditioned, and portraying it through direct social and intellectual engagement. I analyze six films by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Dusan Makavejev, Margarethe von Trotta, Zika Pavlovic and Wim Wenders.

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DEDICATION

To my parents

Chapter One

Introduction

New Image in Theory

Until now no one has looked at the relations between New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film. The downfall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989 provoked political and social change. This change in the politico-historical and theoretical settings in the last two decades, prompted by the transnational exchange of ideas, created conditions for entering into unexplored domains of Film Studies. It became possible to think about previously inconceivable comparisons of cultural entities emerging from different political systems, capitalist and socialist, such as New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film in the 1960s and 1970s. Of course, there is a critical difference between laissez-faire capitalism and its social-democratic counterpart. And to be sure, there is also a critical difference between Stalinist communism and Titoist socialism. But what my point is here is that the aesthetic circulation of these notions transcends differences in their economics. I will demonstrate throughout this work how the circulation of ideas shaped this relationship.

This new cultural awareness resulted in innovative approaches in Film Studies which understand comparisons grounded on the notion of circulation,¹ rather than on the principle of a comparison between the two separate, fixed entities. In other words, the

¹ David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* Princeton University Press, 2003, pp. 5-6.

method of comparison founded on a compare and contrast model becomes the question of comparisons based on the exchange and flow of ideas. Such an approach provides an insight into the phenomenon of cultural exchange between different national cinemas. Both German and Yugoslav new cinemas belonged to the wider cultural and cinematic context unfolding in the 1960s.²

The cultural scene at the time, with its permeability of national borders, was a site of transnational filmic exchange that began after WWII and accelerated towards the end of the 1950s and into the early 1980s. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden assert in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* that “Cinema has from its inception been transnational, circulating more or less freely across borders and utilizing international personnel. This practice has continued from the era of Chaplin, Hitchcock and Fritz Lang up to contemporary directors like Ang Lee, Mira Nair and Alfonso Cuarón.”³ Yet, it is the new development in the image perception, beginning with Italian Neorealism and French New Wave that was the basic precondition for the New Film movements. This new understanding of images and image-making that circulated between national cinemas in Europe, also reevaluated Hollywood cinema, thus enabling transnational exchange and circulation of pictures to take place.

The New Film movement is about a new filmic language. I will begin my discussion with Pier Paolo Pasolini’s analysis of a new filmic practice in the text, “The

² See, for example, Stuart Liebman’s article “Why Kluge,” in Stuart Liebman ed., “Alexander Kluge: Theoretical Writings, Stories, and an Interview,” special edition of *October*, no. 46, Fall 1988, p. 7. Liebman supports his thesis that Kluge does not see cinema as an autonomous artistic medium by bringing into a close theoretical and cinematic affiliation examples from new film movements at the time. He asserts that “The films of Kluge might be more usefully compared to Godard’s *Two or Three Things I know About Her* (1967), or Makavejev’s *Innocence Unprotected* (1968) and *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* (1971) – which bear a closer resemblance to his own.”

³ Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden eds., *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Frances Group, 2006, p. 2.

Cinema of Poetry” that he read during the first New Cinema Festival at Pesaro in June of 1965.⁴ I will then proceed to Gilles Deleuze’s theory of filmic developments in *Cinema 1* (1986) and *Cinema 2* (1989), in which he theoretically illustrates Pasolini’s analysis. “The Cinema of Poetry” describes the goals of the new cinemas as they emerged at the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties. Pasolini specifies the stylistic features of the cinema of poetry, concluding that the “recent technico-stylistic tradition [of the] ‘cinema of poetry’ [...] is senseless unless one then proceeds to examination of this phenomenon in relation to a larger political, social and cultural situation”:⁵

The alternation of different lenses, a 25 or a 300 on the same face, the abuse of the zoom with its long focuses which stick to things and delete them like quick-rising loaves, the continual counterpoints fallaciously left to chance, the kicks in the lens, the tremblings of the hand-held camera, the exasperated tracking-shots, the breaking of continuity for expressive reasons, the irritating linkages, the shots that remain interminably on the same image, this whole technical code was born almost of an intolerance of the rules, of the need of unusual and provocative liberty, a diversely authentic and pleasant taste for anarchy, but it immediately became law, a prosodic and linguistic heritage which concerns all the cinemas in the world at the same time.

Of what use is it to have identified and, in a way, baptized this recent technico-stylistic tradition the “cinema of poetry?” A simple terminological convenience, evidently, and which is senseless unless one then proceeds to a comparative examination of this phenomenon in relation to a larger political, social and cultural situation.⁶

⁴ Pier Paolo Pasolini, “Cinema of Poetry,” in *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, ed. Bill Nichols, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1976, p. 543.

⁵ Ibid., p. 557.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 556-7.

“The Cinema of Poetry” is Pasolini’s programmatic text, the auteur’s announcement, inviting the New Film auteurs to employ the most recent developments in filmic language to portray society by disclosing its social, political and cultural contradictions and problems. And indeed, both German and Yugoslav filmmakers in the sixties and the seventies utilized cinema to analyze their respective societies. The specific filmic tools that filmmakers like Fassbinder, Makavejev, von Trotta and Wenders used to understand, portray and destabilize the dominant social, political or economic forces, show how these auteurs employed, in Pasolini’s words, the “cinema of poetry.” Pasolini asks:

[...] how can the “language of poetry” be theoretically explainable and practically possible in cinema? I would like to answer this question by exceeding the strict domain of cinema by widening the issue and profiting from the liberty which my particular position – between cinema and literature – assures me. I will therefore, for the moment, transform the question: “is the language of poetry possible in cinema?” into this one: is the technique of free indirect discourse possible in cinema?[...] But first I must specify what I mean by “free indirect discourse.” It is simply this: the author penetrates entirely into the spirit of his character, of whom he thus adopts not only psychology but also the language.⁷

Here Pasolini emphasizes that the picture cannot be seen or created without understanding the intermingleness between the image and the language. Deleuze’s theory of the image development is related to Pasolini’s text. In *Cinema 1* and *Cinema 2*, Deleuze theorizes that cinematic images after WWII underwent a transformation from movement-image or action-image to time-image or mental-image. He asserts that the Second World War was a breaking point since “the post-war period has greatly increased situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know

⁷ Ibid., p. 549.

how to describe.”⁸ This situation has provoked change in the philosophy of image-making related to the understanding of time. It resulted in the creation of a new image that treats time as an object in itself, which gave birth to the French New Wave and other subsequent new cinemas all over Europe and the Americas.

In the new image, the empirical, chronological succession of time gives way to “relationships of time” expressed in the “direct time-image,”⁹ which Deleuze defines as the mental image. In his words, this is “*an image which takes as its object relations, symbolic acts, intellectual feelings.*”¹⁰ He credits Hitchcock with the introduction of the mental image into cinema, produced by a camera-consciousness which is no longer “defined by the movements it is able to follow or make, but by the mental connections it is able to enter into.”¹¹ This mode of image creation in which a “camera-consciousness” prioritizes the function of thought rather than the description of a space,¹² gives privilege to the sequence shot over montage. This is understandable since the sequence shot denotes “*the intellectual relations of the spectator to the image [...]*” With analytical montage, on the other hand, the spectator needs only to follow the guide, to let his attention flow with that of the director who chooses for him what he should see.”¹³ Here Bazin talks about the image that offers the viewer a visual choice. In other words, it is not only the filmmaker who is in the position to make a choice over what detail of the narrative and visual scene will be given priority, as is the case with montage. The

⁸ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986, 1989, p. xi.

⁹ Ibid., p. xii.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1986, p. 198.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 23.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See: Jean-Louis Comolli’s citation of Andre Bazin in “Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field,” in Nick Browne ed., *Cahiers du Cinema: 1969-1972 The Politics of Representation*, vol. 3, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 231.

sequence shot offers to the spectator many visual components at once. The visual field of this kind of shot is crowded with different subjects and objects. Such an image not only offers the viewer a choice, but it also allows for her or his visual choice. As a consequence, the notion of creation itself is transformed as well. The viewer becomes the creator of the meaning that goes beyond the auteur's intentions, thus perpetuating new meanings based on the position of the observer.

It is this development in picture-making that results in the crises of the movement image. Deleuze delineates the time frame of this process as it developed in Europe: "it is first of all in Italy that the great crises of the action-image took place. The timing is something like: around 1948, Italy; about 1958, France; about 1968, Germany."¹⁴ Italian Neorealism, as the first in a line of new images, in its multi-leveled treatment of reality, brings forth a distinctive language of optical and sound signs.

This cinematic apparatus has substituted the action-image of realism which was based on the independence of its objects for the mental image of relations. Italian Neo-realism portrays these relations as broken, piecemeal, fragmentary, developing through dispersive situations and weak connections.¹⁵ The French New Wave "has retraced the path of Italian neo-realism for its own purposes – even if it meant going in other directions as well," in which "a cinema of seeing replaces action." In other words, by freeing itself from the action-image, it contributes to "the rise of optical and sound situations,"¹⁶ which would change the ways in which films are made and viewed.

Here again, the cinema had to invent a new filmic language in order to project images of relations which then have to be both seen and read: "readable as well

¹⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, p. 211.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 207-11.

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 9.

visible.”¹⁷ New forms of montage and cutting are employed and film became concerned not only with the content and the visual language, but also with itself. Self-reflexivity in terms of the question of representation and mimesis is best described by Godard himself: “it isn’t blood, it’s some red.”¹⁸ These changes in understanding the substance and role of an image would not be possible without the introduction of new technical devices in cinematography. French New Wave directors promoted independence in filmmaking by using technical developments such as fast-emulsion film, lightweight cameras and sound recording equipment which facilitated location shooting along with experimentation and improvisation.

These technological innovations produced new cinematic images. From now on, rapid exchanges of scenes, jump cuts, shots beyond an axis of 180 degrees such as in Godard’s 1959 *À bout de souffle*, attention or the novel combination of extremely long takes and the violation of the 180 degree axis, as seen in his 1967 *Weekend*, became a standard visual vocabulary which French auteurs used extensively in their pictures. This change in the function of filmic images is a denominator of the French New Wave. André S. Labarthe explains that “Resnais and Robbe-Grillet are doing in cinema what certain abstract artists have long been doing: they are offering not a story, but a sequence of images belonging to the same level of realism which is the film, and it is the spectator who introduces the depth.”¹⁹ A cinema of pictures, which offers a field of visual choices to the viewer, has substituted those filmic forms that were created as ready-made scenes for passive viewing, thus ushering in a new era of mental images and the active spectator.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ See: Andre S. Labarthe: “Marienbad Year Zero,” in Jim Hillier ed., *Cahiers du Cinema: The 1960s*, vol. 2, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1995, p. 57.

New film movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia were part of this process of cinematographic development. These two cinemas have been examined either as “national cinemas,” like in Anton Kaes’ *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*,²⁰ and Daniel Goulding’s *Liberated Cinema, The Yugoslav Experience 1945-2001*,²¹ or as cinemas positioned vis à vis Hollywood, as in Thomas Elsaesser’s *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*.²² I will conceptualize and compare West German and Yugoslav new films from the position of the transnational cinematic system of circulation and exchange. My interest in comparing these cinemas is based on the fact that there are related theoretical and visual filmic features between these cinematographies – despite the difference in their histories or social systems, capitalist and socialist – which can serve as a launching board for reaching new insights.

The subject of this dissertation is the ways in which New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film auteurs, R.W. Fassbinder, Margarethe von Trotta, Wim Wenders, Dusan Makavejev and Zika Pavlovic engage their films with socio-political, historical or individual concerns that resulted in changing the cultural maps of their respective countries. I will show that these cineastes, regardless of their diverse political and cultural origins, carried out their filmic works along the lines of circulation with “multiple entryways.”²³ I understand “lines of circulation” as a rhizomatic concept which is in tune with Deleuze’s explanation that “Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the

²⁰ See: Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 1989.

²¹ See: Daniel Goulding, *Liberated Cinema, The Yugoslav Experience 1945-2001*, Revised and Expanded Edition, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002.

²² See: Thomas Elsaesser’s *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005.

²³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987, p. 12.

rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways.”²⁴ These Deleuzian rhizomatic schemata offer appropriate images to describe the ways in which the new cinemas of the 1960s and 1970s sprung forth, touching, spurring or influencing and stimulating each other. This connection or affiliation is best denoted as their social engagement.

In this section I have established that the new understanding of images and image-making were preconditions for the New Film movements emergence, beginning with French New Wave, which revaluated Hollywood cinema enabling thus transnational exchange and circulation of pictures to take place. I also brought forth the authors, Goulding and Kaes, and their critical-historical analyses of Yugoslav and German cinemas in order to lay out a theoretical background, which will serve as point of reference for my dissertation in terms of history, and to which I will be returning throughout this work.

The next segment explores the cultural involvement of New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film into the questions of history and politics.

²⁴ Ibid.

New Film between New Image and History

In my reading, New Film movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia are cinemas of political awareness in which responses to reality often take the form of a radical reaction to social or political conditions and direct intellectual engagement, such as, for example, Kluge's et al. *Germany in Autumn*, Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism (WR)*, or Pavlovic's *Ambush*.

Both cinemas confronted the filmic settings of their respective countries in a radical way. The German film industry after WWII was in the grip of the U.S. government that controlled the film production and distribution, and the films which were screened were mostly American. In terms of the domestic film production, the German government "would encourage only the most politically innocuous and cheaply made films, thus creating a 'Bavarian cottage industry' that could never compete with the lavish American cinema."²⁵ These films, known as the *Heimat* films, with their autistic and escapist treatment of reality, governed the German cinema scene from WWII. It is this filmic scene that New German Cinema confronted at the beginning of the 1960s. This confrontation meant that the New German Cinema filmmakers engaged in history and the Nazi past. In the case of New Yugoslav Film, its filmmakers also had to deal with the filmic setting they encountered in their country. They undermined the official filmic representation of history that was based on mythologizing wartime Communist resistance in Partisan films.²⁶ Goulding analyzes the progression of the Partisan films from their postwar naiveté and undeveloped plot lines to the point of public manipulation through

²⁵ Timothy Corrigan, *New German Film: The Displaced Image*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983, p. 4.

²⁶ See: Daniel Goulding, op. cit., pp. 85-101.

formulaic scenes of clashes between the Partisans and Germans during WWII in which the former always end up as victorious.²⁷

At this point it is important to specify the usage of the terminology, such as “communism” and “socialism,” which I use throughout this work. In *Yugoslavia as history: twice there was a country*, John R. Lampe examines the history of Yugoslavia as a country that existed twice. What Lampe denotes as “the first Yugoslavia,” was a country founded as the “Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes,”²⁸ in 1918. The second Yugoslavia was instituted by the Communist Party and its leader Tito in 1946 under the name “Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia.”²⁹ The country’s name was changed in the “Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia” in 1963. The Communist Party considered that their political goals regarding the country’s prosperity can be accomplished only through the “evolution of socialist political, economic and social forms and ‘consciousness,’ by means of which the Yugoslav peoples were to move through socialist democracy towards communism.”³⁰ Here Rusinov explains that the Yugoslav Communists saw their country as a socialist state on its way to communism. The role of the socialist Yugoslavia in the context of the bipolar Cold War world will be discussed to a greater extent later.

Another point of convergence between New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film would be the ways in which these cinemas were financed. In both cases, a system of government subsidies supported production. In the case of Yugoslav New Film and the

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 16-32, 48-54.

²⁸ John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as history: twice there was a country*, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 111.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 233.

³⁰ Dennison Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948-1974*, London, U.K.: C. Hurst & Company, 1977, p. 14.

Yugoslav system of film financing, production and distribution, subsidies were tied to admission taxes. This semi-commercialization of the Yugoslav film industry “reached its apogee in the late 1960s”³¹ when Yugoslav feature film production was at its greatest level. I will discuss the system of subsidies which was designed to aid rebirth of the German film industry later in the chapter.

Yet, in what ways do the political and aesthetic engagement of these two cinemas present themselves? Around which issues do they revolve, and how are these concerns related to each other?

Chapter Two, “Cinemas of Political Awareness,” attempts to answer these questions by examining the historical circumstances in which the cinemas in question came into being and operated, thus laying the groundwork for developing an argument through the comparative analysis of films. Here, I discuss the problems of the individual thrown into the jaws of history, which is conceptualized as a memory of displacement and death as seen in Fassbinder’s 1977 *Eine Reise ins Licht* (*Despair*) and Makavejev’s 1971 *WR: Misterije organizma* (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism*), (*WR*). I also intend to examine the various socio-political aspects related to identity formation with which these films are respectively engaged, such as the problem of subjectivity, gender politics, inclusivity, and/or sexual and political liberation. As these questions occupy much of the auteurs’ concerns, I will devote particular attention to understanding the paths of the visual and narrative language which Makavejev and Fassbinder use in their films.

Chapter Three, “Destination History,” is devoted to the state terrorism examined in von Trotta’s 1981 *Die bleierne Zeit* (*Marianne and Juliane*) and Pavlovic’s 1969 *Zaseda* (*Ambush*), films which I see as closely related because of their shared themes of

³¹ Daniel Goulding, op. cit. p. 38.

terrorism. Although there is a significant time gap between these two films and the social circumstances they examine come from opposing social formations, namely capitalism and socialism, they share points of convergence when it comes to the states' methods in their efforts to preserve the status quo of their existence, in other words, to follow and perpetuate forcefully traditional patterns of power relations.

In Chapter Four, "Cinemas of Desire and Critiques," I compare Fassbinder's 1973 *Angst essen Seele auf* (*Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*), (*Ali*) with the fictional part of Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, and Wim Wenders' 1974 *Alice in den Städten* (*Alice in the Cities*), (*Alice*) with Makavejev's 1967 *Ljubavni slucaj ili tragedija sluzbenice PTT* (*Switchboard Operator*). My main interest here is to examine the relationship between the city and the individual by analyzing the ways in which different social formations display similarities and differences. In the case of Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, this problem is related to the position of guest workers in German society. While Wenders' film engages cities and towns in America and Germany in order to deliver the message of capitalist societies affecting individuals on both sides of the Atlantic, though in a different manner, Makavejev situates his love story in the city of Belgrade, the capital of a socialist country. I am particularly interested in revealing the modes in which capitalist and socialist/communist cities operate in terms of an individual's position and the impediments which they encounter with the structures of power and authority. What are the ways in which an individual positions herself or himself towards power structures? How does this relationship affect identity politics, which are closely related to the question of gender?

The time-frame I investigate in my dissertation is bracketed by two important historical events in film: the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962 and R.W. Fassbinder's death in 1982. While this time period includes all the German films I take into consideration, films belonging to the New Yugoslav Film movement were all completed during the years of 1963-1972. These films were simultaneously initiators and products of the circulation of ideas unfolding in the public sphere of international film festivals. The film theoretician Goran Gocic, analyses this communication:

The Film Festival in Cannes turned out to be an ideal vehicle for filmmakers Emir Kusturica and Aleksandar Petrovic and their 'ethno' works. For the 'politically aware' *auteurs* of the 'black' or 'new' Yugoslav film of the sixties – Dusan Makavejev, Zivojin Pavlovic and Zelimir Zilnik – this was 'politically perceptive' Berlinale: each of these directors was awarded at the festival. Pavlovic won the 'Silver Bear' as the best director in 1967 (for the film *Awakening of the Rats*), and Makavejev won the Special Jury Prize in 1968 (for *Innocence Unprotected*). This Berlinian ode to the Yugoslav cinema culminated in 1969 when the festival presented ten titles within the 'Yugoslav Film Week' and the festival top prize was awarded to Zilnik's *Early Works*.³²

In other words, these filmmakers were involving themselves around Europe. It is this circulation and exchange of ideas that shaped their filmic expression. Despite the fact that West Germany and Yugoslavia during the Cold War period did belong to opposing political orders, namely capitalist and socialist, nevertheless they share related ideas.

Yugoslavia, a socialist country, was led by life-long president Tito, who was also one of the leaders of the Nonaligned movement. This movement was formed in 1955 by Tito, the president of Egypt, Nasser and India's first Prime Minister, Nehru as an

³² Goran Gocic, "Early and Late Works: The Cinema of Zelimir Zilnik in the Period of Transition – From the 1960s to this Day," in *Zelimir Zilnik: Above the Red Dust*, Beograd: Institut za Film, 2003, pp. 87-8.

international organization of states considering themselves as not aligned with either of the Cold War blocs.³³

West Germany, under the governance of the Christian Democratic Union spanning the period of the Adenauer era from 1949-1963, was followed by a brief period of Ludwig Erhard and Kurt Georg Kiesinger from 1963-1969. Kiesinger's 1966-69 "Grand Coalition" between the two largest parties, which introduced new emergency acts that allowed for basic constitutional rights such as freedom of movement to be limited in the case of a state emergency, was a reason for the fierce opposition and student protests.³⁴ The formation of the Red Army Faction in 1968 was another result of 1960s unrest. During the 1970s, which was largely a socio-democratic period under the leadership of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, the RAF organized a series of terrorist acts aimed at the state political and industrial establishment that resulted in a profound disturbance of the German social and political scene. New German Cinema and directors, such as Kluge, Fassbinder and von Trotta examine these tumultuous years in their films.

In this section I have laid out both the concept and program of this work, as well as the time frame of films which are examined. The next portion serves as a model of the analysis that I employ.

³³ See: Alvin Z. Rubenstein, *Yugoslavia and the Nonaligned World*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970, pp. 77-78 passim.

³⁴ See: William Carr, *A History of Germany 1815-1990, Fourth Edition*, London, New York, Melbourne, Auckland: Edward Arnold, 1991, pp. 382-7.

An Exemplary Prelude to the Analysis

Taking into consideration such diverse social circumstances, the question would be whether it is at all possible to compare filmic works created in different political and cultural circumstances, treating problems idiosyncratic to the specific environment and reaching answers which can only be applied to particular social circumstances?

For example: how can Fassbinder's 1974 *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* – having for its main concern the problem of the *Gastarbeiter* and their position in German society, which was a product of the German economic boom of the 1960s be related to Makavejev's 1965 *Man is Not a Bird* that is “set in an industrial town in eastern Serbia”³⁵ and explores the workers' position in a socialist, self-proclaimed classless society? It is obvious that both films, regardless of the differences of the political and economic systems in their respective countries, investigate social problems from positions that are politically engaged. By portraying a marriage between an older German cleaning lady, Emmi, and a young *Gastarbeiter* from Morocco, Fassbinder's film discusses contentious issues such as the foreign workers' position in Germany at the time, as well as the social taboo of marriage between an older woman and a younger man.

The hero of *Man is Not a Bird*, a middle-aged engineer from Slovenia contracted to work in an industrial town in eastern Serbia, serves Makavejev to expose deeply ingrained problems in socialist Yugoslavia: appalling working conditions, housing shortages, backward social attitudes towards women, scarce cultural events, lack of education and miscommunication among the population. The questions which the film raises are highly contentious, even more so because authorities tried to keep them

³⁵ Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 122.

invisible, propagating the slogan of a “classless society.” Yet, how do the themes and subjects of these films relate to each other?

Though both pictures allow for diverse critical comparative analyses – one of which would be the relationship between the individual and the family in a wider social context, or the concept of the films’ visual language – the possibility of comparison between these two films lies precisely in the subject matters they are treating. In Deleuze’s words, both films are based on “the new consciousness of minorities” and “the new modes of narrative with which literature has experimented,” thus promoting the image which “no longer refers to a situation which is globalizing or synthetic, but rather the one which is dispersive. The characters are multiple, with weak interferences [...]”³⁶ The new modes of narrative, as Deleuze put it, were promoted in the *nouveau roman* which served as the foundation on which French New Wave was built upon. Its main prerogatives were experimentation both with style and content, which are seen in their fragmented and fractured states. Deleuze emphasizes that this multiplicity of characters whose relationships are weak or broken is first seen in Italian Neorealism, which served as a precursor for the French New Wave to develop new aesthetics of fragmentation. Subsequently, this mode exerted its influence on all new film movements including both German and Yugoslav cinemas. It is within this conceptual, historical visual frame in which Fassbinder’s *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and Makavejev’s *Man is Not a Bird* develop their socio-political critiques.

Both films, although from different positions, comment on the immigrant’s movement throughout 1960s Germany and its prosperous economy. Whereas Makavejev treats the problems of Yugoslav workers who eventually became *Gastarbeiter* with all

³⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, pp. 206-7.

the subsequent problems attached to their existence in Germany, Fassbinder investigates the problems of the guest workers from multiple conceptual positions. Although Fassbinder does not treat the question of Yugoslav workers³⁷ in Germany *per se*, he does acknowledge it at the end of the film in the character of a young Yugoslav woman, Yolanda. The woman is initially discarded from the group of the German cleaning ladies who perceive her as a foreigner and not belonging to the same, working social stratum. It is Emmi, with all her personal experience of this problematic situation, who helps a young woman become accepted in the group. The character of Yolanda, who exemplifies German xenophobia that is not related to skin color, can be seen as a bridge between the racism typified in the character of Ali and all other foreign workers who belong to both categories of social misunderstandings and prejudice. It may appear to some that xenophobia precedes racism, but I believe that the two are the same.

Still, in order to access any comparison of these two film movements, it is important to delineate clearly the idiosyncratic developments and operational systems which governed the production and reception of the respective films. There are great numbers of filmic features in both cinemas which are distinctive to each nation. Nevertheless, the problem of the comparison does not rest solely on the possibility to match films strictly from one national cinema with another or the characteristics of one culture with another, but rather on the question of finding specific affiliations that can serve as a ground for developing a further understanding of both cinemas seen from a

³⁷ For Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* in Western Europe, see: Dennison Russinow, op. cit., p. 251. Russinow asserts that “The official total of Yugoslav *Gastarbeiter* in Western Europe was approaching 800,000 by 1969, nearly 22 per cent of total domestic employment, both public and private.” In Yugoslavia, they were designated as the “workers who temporarily work and live in foreign countries.”

new position. These affiliations, I will, show are meant to support my argument that transnational circulation was widespread at the time.

This direction would entail investigation into the concept of transnational cinema. It is necessary to establish these parameters from the outset, since the designation of national cinema *per se* becomes too narrow to describe the host of allegiances and meanings attached to both German and Yugoslav New Cinemas. As discussed previously, these two cinemas grew out of the political and cultural circumstances and necessities in their respective countries, but have since been established in the intellectual setting of international cinema thanks to the lines of circulation of the cultural dialogue in the new film movements in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. Jim Hillier in “New Wave: The Global Impact of the French New Wave,” studies the impact of the French *nouvelle vague* which spread widely in the late fifties and early sixties, from the British Isles to Eastern Europe, to countries such as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia. Hillier emphasizes:

In Germany the 1962 Oberhausen Manifesto, openly indebted to the *nouvelle* [...] *vague*, called for a new indigenous German Cinema of *auteurs* and attacked their own “Daddy’s cinema”; with the introduction of loans for first features and the establishment of a film school in the mid 1960s, the New German Cinema began to emerge.³⁸

The notion of the Yugoslav New Film that I use throughout this work requires an additional explanation which elucidates this term in a more profound way. Yugoslavia ceased to exist during the 1990s due in part to a gradual but violent and bloody

³⁸ Jim Hillier, “New Wave: The Global Impact of the French New Wave,” in www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/New-Wave-THE-GLOBAL-IMP., p. 1.

disassembling through the civil war, whose consequences only recently started to fade. This process covered an entire decade in which each of the former Yugoslav republics became an independent country. The roots of the dissolution of Yugoslavia are manifold: historical, social and political, and this question goes beyond the scope and interest of this dissertation. The time-frame which I investigate here is limited to the time of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, when the country consisted of six republics and was governed by Tito (1945-1980). New Yugoslav Film, produced from the second half of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, is considered to be the most productive and successful period in the Yugoslav film industry. In the history of Yugoslav cinema, New Yugoslav Film is also known as Black Wave Film. This designation was forged by the communist authorities who felt that their absolute power was threatened because of New Film's engagement with various social and political themes. I address this issue at great length later in the dissertation.

At this point, it is important to emphasize that the directors who belonged to the New Yugoslav Film movement were mostly from Belgrade. All the international awards these directors won at the festivals in Berlin, Venice, Paris or Carlovy Wary were won under the banner of Yugoslavia. The filmmakers considered themselves to be Yugoslav directors. Consequently, in film historiography and criticism, this movement is designated as New Yugoslav Film.

Goulding in his *Liberated Cinema, The Yugoslav Experience 1945-2001* addresses this problem by linking the emergence of "new film tendencies" with what he designated as "republican ascendancy."³⁹ Goulding uses this notion to indicate the political process of decentralization that dominated during the sixties. Accordingly, he

³⁹ See, Daniel Goulding, op. cit., pp. 62-85.

follows the emergence of new film in all three of the most prominent republican centers, Belgrade, Ljubljana and Zagreb. Yet, most successful in terms of the international film awards, as well as regarding political engagement and critical stance towards the system, were New Film directors from Belgrade such as Makavejev, Pavlovic and Petrovic, to name some of the most prominent. My dissertation is devoted to New Yugoslav Film, as it was known during the time of its emergence and most successful years in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s.

In summary, New Film movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia were involving themselves in a process of the cinematic development in the transnational cultural arena. The reason for my choices of the particular films is my belief that these pictures reacted to the historical, political and social problems in a radical way. Their filmmakers developed a new filmic language, and contributed to the transnational cinema substantially. Today, after the fall of Yugoslavia, it becomes more important to reevaluate the modalities in which Yugoslav film participated in a wider cultural circuit. Both Yugoslav and German auteurs not only engaged themselves to examine the reality of their respective countries, but they also offered the possible solutions to social problems they treat. I will show the ways in which these filmmakers accomplish their cinematic goals.

I have grounded my research project on a wide variety of deconstruction theories as well as theories of visuality, feminist film theory and critical historical analyses. My research plan, methods and techniques involve different disciplines such as film, literature, history, sociology and art history.

The next chapter examines the historical and political social circumstances that serve as a background for New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film. I also discuss, compare and contrast Fassbinder's *Despair* and Makavejev's *WR* and the questions of individual dislocation, memory and death.

Chapter Two

Cinemas of Political Awareness

It is common wisdom by now that the New German Cinema can not be explained by extracting its common features. Elsaesser emphasizes that “One must guard against the supposition that there is a unified group or movement [...] The new German cinema of the late Sixties and Seventies [...] has its existence inside a field of force, a triangle made up of the German film industry, the hegemony of Hollywood over Europe, and the media policy of the Federal German Government.”⁴⁰ Similarly, Julia Knight asserts that critics tried to “identify a variety of aspects as common denominators,” but the New German Cinema, “resisted clear generic delineations.”⁴¹ Although this cinema cannot be characterized as a “unified group or movement,” there are certain common features. They lay primarily in the fact that the New German Cinema is a cinema of political awareness. This aspect is related to all of its filmmakers, regardless of the subject they are treating in their pictures.

During the 1960s and 1970s, acclaimed New German Cinema auteurs, such as Fassbinder, Kluge, von Trotta, Sanders-Brahms, Wenders, Syberberg, Herzog and Schlöndorff, to name the most prominent, engaged in their films with difficult and often controversial questions. They created world-renowned films which treated a broad array

⁴⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, “The Postwar German Cinema,” in *Fassbinder*, ed. Tony Rayns, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 1.

⁴¹ Julia Knight, *Women and the New German Cinema*, London, New York: Verso, 1992, p. 1.

of social, political, historical, ideological, gender or identity issues and put the West German film industry on the international scene in the 1960s and 1970s.

The fact that New Yugoslav Film was also a cinema of political and social awareness is probably the most important characteristic that allows for these two cinemas to be compared. Similar to New German Cinema, New Yugoslav Film can not be described as a cohesive film movement. However, whereas the New German Cinema followed the goals declared by its predecessor, Young German Film in the 1962 *Oberhausen manifesto*, New Yugoslav Film not only was never constituted as a group with the declaration of goals, it did not even have some forerunner to rely on. What can be considered a harbinger of the new film was a group of filmmakers and cinema enthusiasts who were affiliated with the community institution, *Kino klub "Beograd"* in Belgrade. They experimented with film throughout the 1950s bringing new themes and styles, "which had led to imaginative breakthroughs in animated film, and in documentary, short, and experimental film."⁴² Some of them are: Kokan Rakonjac's *Rain and Love* (1958) Makavejev's *Don't Believe in Monuments* (1958); Pavlovic's *Triptych on Matter and Death*; Marko Babac's *The Girl and the Wind*. This youth group propelled the new film modalities, and thus created a fertile ground for subsequent actions which lead to the development of a full-fledged New Yugoslav Film. It is important to notice that Yugoslav animation became internationally acknowledged in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Goulding asserts that "[...] Zagreb Film animators produced a remarkable series of witty, abstract, ingeniously designed meditations on the tragi-comic paradoxes and ironies of the modern life [...]."⁴³ In 1961, Dusan Vukotic's animated film *Ersatz*

⁴² Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 61.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 59.

(*Surogat*) won “[...] the first Academy Award for animation granted outside the United States.”⁴⁴

Makavejev situates the beginning of what he calls, “modern Yugoslav film” in 1961 when “first, professional, so called ‘personal’ films were shot.”⁴⁵ He asserts in the same text that a new way of looking was created, which was devoted to “seeing the world as it is, without literary or ideological interventions.”⁴⁶ The term “new Yugoslav film” was initially related to the cluster of films made by young directors who, in the second half of the 1960s, began receiving the highest international film festival awards and thus put Yugoslav cinema for the first time on the international scene in the most representative way.

Gocic’s article, which I cite in the First Chapter,⁴⁷ enumerates some of the awards. In order to present the more accurate picture of the New Yugoslav Film participation in the transnational filmic scene in the 1960s and 1970s, I list here other awards that its directors won at International Film Festivals: Pavlovic’s film *When I am Pale and Dead* won the best film award at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival in 1968, and his film *Ambush* won the Golden Lion⁴⁸ at the Venice Film Festival. Zelimir Zilnik’s film *Early Works* won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1969. Makavejev won the FIPRESCI award for *Mysteries of the Organism* at the Berlin Film Festival in 1972, and the same year this film won the Louis Buñuel Award at the Cannes

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Dusan Makavejev, “Kokan Rakonjac ili besciljni pogled kroz prozor,” [“Kokan Rakonjac or the aimless stare through the window”] trans. mine, *Sineast*, no. 17, 1969-70, p. 18.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ See: Goran Gocic, op. cit., pp. 87-8.

⁴⁸ The Venice Film Festival changed the Golden Lion award policy in 1969. Pavlovic explains that this year the Festival awarded the Golden Lion to all films that entered the official selection. See: Milan Nikodijevic, *Zabranjeni bez zabrane: zona sumraka jugoslovenskog filma* [Censored without Censorship: The Twilight Zone of the Yugoslav Film] trans. mine, Beograd: Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, 1995, p. 22.

Film Festival. The list of awards enumerated here does not exhaust all the awards these filmmakers won in the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s at the international and domestic film festivals, nor are all directors related to New Yugoslav Film who won awards stated here. I am mentioning those filmmakers who are most relevant for the thesis of this work.

Thematic involvement in these films covers a wide selection of the social fabric comprising different societal groups and specific problems. These films used subdued filmic language bordering in many cases on documentary reportage to investigate the question of workers, problems of social exclusion and the position of women or groups on the fringes of society. By engaging their interest with “some other reality,”⁴⁹ in other words, with everyday socialist actuality burdened by problems ranging from concealed class differences, poverty, lack of true freedom to disillusionment, these films challenged official representations of reality. Goulding in his *Liberated Cinema* talks about the reaction of Communist authorities:

No sooner had the curtain dropped on the 1969 Pula festival of Yugoslav feature films than an eight-page supplement to *Borba* appeared, titled “The Black Wave in Our Film.” The term *black film* had its origins in the short-lived *black series* of Polish documentary films made in the fifties, the Czech *dark wave* films of the sixties and the French films of black pessimism of the thirties, especially those of Marcel Carné. The author of *Borba*’s special supplement, Vladimir Jovicic, provided an updated version of the term as applied to contemporary Yugoslav film [...] The term *black film* rhetorically replaced *new film* or *open cinema* and dominated the polemics of the time.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Milan Vljacic, “Sta hocе ti ludaci?” [“What Do These Lunatics Want?”] in Milan Nikodijevic, op. cit, trans. mine, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 79.

By situating the term “black film” in a wider cultural context, Goulding positions New Yugoslav Film in a transnational filmic setting.

The *black series* of Polish documentaries in the 1950s is considered to be a critical period of Polish cinema that prepared the setting for filmmakers like Andrzej Wajda. This filmic group comprises documentaries, such as Andrzej Munk’s 1954 *The Stars Must Burn*, in which he explores actual life of the mine workers and the dangers they are exposed to, as well as Jerzy Hoffman’s 1954 *Are You Among Them?* that reacts to Stalinist Socialist Realism by exploring everyday social problems.

As opposed to the *black series* of the 1950s Polish documentary films that became widely known only after the dissolution of Communism in the early 1990s, the Czech *dark wave* films, as part of Czech New Wave that emerged in the 1960s, participated extensively in transnational cinema. Films, such as Milos Forman’s 1967 *The Firemen’s Ball* and *Loves of a Blonde*, as well as Vera Chytilova’s 1966 *Daisies*, or Jiri Menzel’s 1966 *Closely Watched Trains*, and Juraj Herz’s 1968 *The Cremator*, were circulating at international film festivals. With their interest in the individual existence and identity themes they treated reality in a way that discards Social Realism promoting intellectual and artistic freedom in filmmaking.⁵¹ The third origin of the term “black wave” that Goulding mentions is the “French films of black pessimism of the thirties, especially those of Marcel Carné.” Goulding refers here to certain films of French Poetic Realism, which were “[...] based on realist literature or original scripts and usually set in working-class milieu [that] treated pessimistic narratives and night-time settings, and a dark,

⁵¹ See: Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1997, pp. 632-7.

contrasted, visual style prefiguring American film noir.”⁵² The films of Marcel Carné, 1938 *Hôtel du Nord* and *Port of Shadows*, as well as Pierre Chenal’s 1933 *The Nameless Street* and/or Jean Renoir’s 1938 *The Beast in Man* are some of the best known pictures of this style.

The phrase “Black Wave Film” became a synonym for the New Yugoslav Film and it was used both in a derogative meaning by the official criticism and also by film critics who supported young filmmakers. In order to understand the intersection of film and politics in Yugoslavia, it is important to grasp the configuration and meaning of its cultural scene. Titoist Yugoslavia fostered special ties with the West almost throughout its whole history from 1945-1980.⁵³ It was the politico-structural bipolarity of the world that determined the Communist Yugoslavia’s position in world politics. In the Cold War setting, this country played a particular role as a buffer zone between the two blocs. Its geo-political position allowed Yugoslavia to detach itself from the eastern communist bloc and to follow its own path to socialism, economically supported by the West.

At the moment when Russia threatened Yugoslav independence, after the break with Stalin in 1948, Titoist Yugoslavia found the space for political maneuvering in the bipolar Cold War world by turning to the adversary bloc. The American attitude was to preserve Yugoslav integrity and to support Tito as an “independent heretic in the communist sphere.”⁵⁴ Vladimir Dedijer, the Yugoslav historian and Tito’s friend writes in his book *The Battle Stalin Lost: Memoirs of Yugoslavia 1948-1953*: “In the cold war,

⁵² Ibid., p. 345.

⁵³ Tito died in 1980, and this year can be considered as the end of the “Titoist era,” after which the disassembling of Yugoslavia began that ended in the civil war in the first half of the 1990s.

⁵⁴ Predrag J. Markovic, *Beograd izmedju istoka i zapada 1945 – 1965* [*Belgrade between east and west 1945 – 1965*], Beograd: Novinsko-izdavacka ustanova, 1996, p. 85.

Yugoslavia was guided by the principles of the U.N. charter: equal cooperation among all states, opposition to blocs and aggression from any quarter. She was thus able to break through the wall isolating her and to establish good relations with a number of small and medium-sized states.”⁵⁵ Such a development in the Cold War political scene was the main precondition for opening the Yugoslav political and cultural spheres.

Only three years after the Yugoslav-Soviet schism in 1948, Yugoslav Communists adopted modernism as the official representational system. The national cultural arena was ready to use and implement the new possibility, since for most artists this came as a continuation of their artistic work before WWII. The meeting of architects, in Dubrovnik in 1951, served as a springboard for launching the modernist aesthetic.⁵⁶ The architects promoted the modernist International Style in architecture, at the same time abandoning Socialist Realism as obsolete. *Exact 51*, the artistic group practicing abstract art, was formed in Zagreb in 1951. Petar Lubarda, a prewar painter, won the Grand-Prix at *Sao Paolo Biennale* for his associative abstraction painting in the spring of 1953.

Modernism as an artistic expression in architecture, literature and art was adopted equally in all of the Yugoslav republics, and the three biggest cities, Belgrade, Zagreb and Ljubljana were leading centers. Such a development signaled Yugoslav Communists’ intent to mark the distinction from the Soviet type of communism not only in terms of ideological differences, but also differences in the system of visual representation reacting against the Soviet socialist realism. The introduction of modernism, based on self-expression as opposed to socialist realism and its collective roots, could have been

⁵⁵ Vladimir Dedijer, *The Battle Stalin Lost: Memoirs of Yugoslavia 1948-1953*, New York, The Viking Press, 1971, p. 270.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 523.

adopted only after liberalization in the sphere of politics. It was the Sixth Party Congress in 1952 that promoted the spirit of liberalization by redefining the Party's role from one related to control to one based on decentralization of Party's activities. The congress declared that "without a 'democratic struggle of opinions' the development of science and culture would be seriously impeded."⁵⁷ It is this change in the politics of self-expression that provided the ground for the introduction of modernism in architecture and art.

For Titoist Yugoslavia, modernism and its aesthetics carried out two basic premises: firstly, it was a sign of difference from the Soviet type of communism; secondly, it was a trope for progress and novelty, equated during these years with the Party program of postwar renewal. As the 1950s progressed, so did the rhetoric of industrialization, modernization and new technological devices in the service of the socialist vision. It was believed that progress would help socialists to reach the future, which was however situated in an indefinite time. Whereas Western postwar art reflected existential trauma, art in Yugoslavia produced the image of reality aimed at conveying postwar optimism coming from the idea of an unlimited progress provided by communism. Post-war Communist Yugoslavia underwent the process of industrialization and re-building that created the picture of a bright reality supported by communist rhetoric. This model of the infinitely progressive future gave the authorities credibility. It also served, along with communist ideology, as a unifying force geared to level national differences among Yugoslav peoples. An obvious indicator of such policy was public art.

⁵⁷ Gerson S. Sher, *Praxis, Marxist Criticism and Dissent in Socialist Yugoslavia*, Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1977, p. 12.

Revolutionary and war monuments, consisting of ambitious sculptural projects executed primarily in the modernist style that celebrated the Communist victory over fascism during WWII, spread throughout Yugoslavia in the first two decades after the war. Yugoslav Communists used abstract forms as emblems of power. Their abstract shapes exploited the whole repertoire of phallic forms aimed at expressing a rhetoric of power. (Figure 1.) It was in this social climate that a modernist aesthetic epitomized by the International Style in architecture and abstraction in painting and sculpture acquired the status of a trope for progress and modernism. It became a bold and courageous statement of a Communist country in search of its *modus vivendi* between the two blocs.

Although it would not be quite accurate to think that all Communist structures readily adopted modernist discourse – there was a decade-long quarrel between so called, “Modernists” and “Realists,” engaging literary and art critics assembled around two literary journals, *Delo* [*Opus*] and *Savremenik* [*Contemporaries*] – it was already clear in the early fifties that Modernism had won.⁵⁸ Markovic asserts that “It is considered in literature that the peak of the conflict between Modernists and Realists was the *Delo* - *Savremenik* controversy [...]. Probably, the conflict was inspired by the Party itself [...] in order to serve as a picture of unrestrained freedom of creation.”⁵⁹ The artistic scene served the same purpose to show “unrestrained freedom of creation,” and was replete with abstract art exhibitions held in Belgrade: French Modern Art paintings from the collection of Belgrade National Museum in 1950; Contemporary French painting in 1952, 1958, 1963; Contemporary Dutch painting in 1953; Henry Moore in 1953 (with an introduction in the catalogue by Herbert Read); American Contemporary painting in

⁵⁸ See: Predrag Markovic, op. cit., pp. 389-413.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 404.

1956, 1961.⁶⁰ It is worth noting that the rhythm of these exhibitions was in some cases determined by international politics. The visits of foreign dignitaries were often followed by an appropriate exhibition. Thus, when the “Committee for Cultural Ties with Foreign Countries,” at the end of 1950s, was asked to include a figurative painter in future exhibitions abroad, one of the members of the Committee answered that “[...] figurative painting would only be suitable for an undeveloped country.”⁶¹ Abstract art became national art. From 1954 on it began to “[...] officially represent the country at the Venice Biennial.”⁶² The advent of modernist art ran parallel to, in Rusinow’s words, the “Yugoslav economic miracle”⁶³ between 1953 and 1965. The literary and art critic Sveta Lukic, talks at the end of the 1950s about the modes in which Communist authorities put art into the service of politics:

The fact is that both the politicians and ideologues at the time needed proof of freedom of ideas in literature and culture in order to undermine Soviet dogmatism. However too much independence of mind in domestic literature went beyond official plans and desires. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia was more interested in scoring a foreign policy goal against the Soviet Union than in securing genuine internal freedom for Yugoslav culture [...]. Such an assessment is supported by none other than Milovan Djilas, the party ideologue [...]. In his book *Legenda o Njegosu* (1952) he says: “Leave politics to us politicians, while we leave aesthetics to you writers. It is obvious which of these is more important.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 425. It is important to note that many of these exhibitions were touring other cities in Yugoslavia, such as Zagreb and Ljubljana.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 428.

⁶² Bojana Pejic, “Socialist Modernism and the Aftermath,” *Essays*, www.aspects/position.org, 1999, p. 7.

⁶³ Dennison Rusinow, op. cit., p. 139.

⁶⁴ Sveta Lukic, *Contemporary Yugoslav Literature. A Sociopolitical Approach*, ed., Gertrude Joch Robinson, trans. Pola Triandis, Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1972. Originally published in Yugoslavia by Prosveta, Belgrade, 1968, under the title *Savremena Jugoslovenska Literatura 1945-1965*, p. 105.

Modernism in architecture and monuments, painting and literature offered an aestheticized vision deriving from an indiscriminately positive understanding of reality. Lukic, who describes the fifties as a period of de-dogmatization and liberation, also emphasizes that during this period “[...] an extremely strong and merciless polemic against socialist realism was instituted. To fill the void left by cultural Stalinism a new aesthetic was adopted which may be called socialist aestheticism.”⁶⁵ Lukic expected art to refer critically to reality. He criticized the Yugoslav art scene for failing to establish any relation to immediate reality, and for taking a stance which reflected the taste of the bureaucratic structures. This author asserts that the real aestheticism in Yugoslav art reached its full sway between 1955-1962, during which period, literature exercised a “[...] theoretically raw, undifferentiated and unrelativised aestheticism [...]”⁶⁶ Markovic in his *Belgrade between East and West* explains the relationship between culture and politics in Yugoslavia:

After 1948 the regime had to search for support in the population, and culture. But, the very foundations of the system, Party monopoly on political life, and state monopoly in economy, were only slightly modified. All reform attempts were stopped, when they had dared to question these bases of power. So, Yugoslav culture and everyday life were almost entirely westernized, but political life and economy remained basically eastern.⁶⁷

Whereas Communists put art and literature in the service of their foreign affairs as examples for the freedom of expression, film production, however, was run by different cultural politics. Film was almost entirely excluded from “de-dogmatization and

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 73.

⁶⁶ Sveta Lukic, *Umetnost i Kriterijumi*, [Art and Criteria] trans. mine, Belgrade: Prosveta, 1964, p. 195.

⁶⁷ Predrag Markovic, op.cit., p. 524.

liberation” processes that occurred in the visual arts, architecture and literature. The emerging film industry immediately after the Second World War, and to a great deal during the 1950s, was a carefully orchestrated enterprise by the Communist authorities. Film served as a propaganda tool for domestic purposes. Daniel Goulding investigates the importance of film as an ideological weapon:

From its inception, the newly founded national cinema was guided by party-line orthodoxy, which conceived of film as the most important mass medium for reaching all levels of society and possessed as its greatest goals: 1) the idealistic confirmation and reification of the revolutionary past, i.e., the National War of Liberation and its heroes, and 2) the confirmation and reinforcement of revolutionary élan required to construct a new Marxist-socialist state.⁶⁸

Goulding’s analysis explains the crucial reason for the different treatment which film had *vis à vis* other visual arts, such as architecture and painting. This discrepancy, from the early 1950s, defined cultural politics in Yugoslavia. Whereas film production during the 1950s was ideologically important because of its “mass medium” influence, and, as such, under the grip of Communist authorities, painting and architecture were free to indulge in Modernism. Modernist art – with its basically elitist nature because of the limited influence on the broader public, workers and peasants – played the role of an ideological weapon in the struggle against the Soviets and for gaining support from the West. Film, however, having direct access to the wider public, had a crucial role in carrying the Communist message to the masses. In the first five-year period 1945 – 1950, film served as an educational tool in creating consensus in the public regarding Communist goals and

⁶⁸ Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 7.

the party role in implementing them. Aesthetically and theoretically, film was based on the principles of Socialist Realism. It followed a set of rules, such as a clear message and definition of the bad and good, clear-cut character types, didactic meaning and positive and optimistic conclusions. The Soviet Union and its official artistic style, Socialist Realism, were the main inspirational source for Yugoslav filmmakers in the first 15 years after the war.⁶⁹ As much as this may sound paradoxical, this is not so, since such a film politics was linked to the circulation of power. In other words, Communist authorities in Yugoslavia used Socialist Realism not to imitate the Soviets, but to promote their own power structures.

As a Communist party construct, film did not reflect reality. Goulding in *Liberated Cinema* quotes Herbert Eagle that “contemporary socialist reality is presented not *as it is*, but with a substantial (though inaccurate) admixture of *what is supposed to be* according to ideological positions,” that the films be “clear-cut,” and finally that the film’s assessment of a situation, past or present, “be ultimately optimistic.”⁷⁰ Eagle explains Communist authorities’ intentions to use film media for the representation of reality seen from the position of their proclaimed goals and not from the position of an ordinary person and her or his everyday life. Such a highly guarded film politics, directed towards providing agreement with the authorities, produced a homogeneous filmic expression. The repertoire of the post-war Yugoslav film was meager. It was limited to Partisan films treating the war, in other words, Partisans and their struggle against the Nazi occupation and domestic traitors, and the documentary and short films that engaged themselves with socialist reconstruction after the war. All of them were indiscriminately

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

positive in their message of hailing the Party. The genre of Partisan films was a Communist cultural construct aimed at educating domestic public in the history of WWII and the Party role in the liberation of the country.

The film production was entirely subsidized. For several years after the war, films imported from the USSR dominated the market. As Yugoslav foreign policy turned sharply towards the West, so did the repertoire of film imports. From 1950 on, the United States emerged as “the dominant exporter of films to Yugoslavia.”⁷¹ Taking into consideration that this was also the period during which the USSR, and its official artistic style, Socialist Realism, exerted a dominant influence on Yugoslav filmmakers in the 1950s, one can assume that Yugoslav Communists, by giving the advantage to the U.S. films, found a space for balancing between the Cold War powers. In 1954, for the first time, Yugoslavia entered into a coproduction system with foreign studios.⁷² The Basic Law on Film in 1956 changed the way film production was financed. The system of state subsidies was abandoned in favor of a tax system in which seventeen to twenty percent of the admission ticket was directed to film production.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Yugoslav film scene experienced the introduction of new themes. Besides Partisan films and those treating postwar reconstruction and workers’ lives, pictures of everyday life emerged. These films were made by directors coming from different parts of the country, such as the Belgrade director, Vladimir Pogacic and his 1957 *On Saturday Evening*; the 1961 film by Bostjan Hladnik from Ljubljana, *A Dance in the Rain*; and the 1963 film by Branko Bauer from Zagreb, *Face to Face*. As previously mentioned, the Yugoslav animated film *Ersatz*

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 37.

⁷² Ibid.

(*Surogat*), won the Academy Award in 1961. This shows an unusual position of Yugoslavia - in between East and West. As much as the Academy Award for animation was the source of pride for both the Yugoslav people and the Yugoslav Communist authorities, this fact did not change the situation in the film cultural scene that continued to be governed by Communist policy that precluded any substantial critical engagement of cinema.

It was this political and cultural milieu during the 1960s in which New Yugoslav Film appeared as an important cultural product coming from a Communist country. It was also during these years that the important social phenomenon of the “foreign workers” emerged. Although at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, Yugoslavia experienced an economic boom, the Yugoslav labour force, in great numbers, gradually moved to the West because its thriving economy provided jobs.

In this situation, young Yugoslav directors found themselves increasingly at odds with the Communist hypocrisy. These filmmakers expressed their criticism in their pictures in the second half of the 1960s. This conflict between culture and politics in Yugoslavia, to a certain extent reflected the culture of widespread upheavals provoked by libertarian ideas regarding personal freedom, dissatisfaction with the Vietnam war and poverty in Third World countries that circulated throughout the West in the Sixties. In Arthur Marwick’s words, it resembled “[...] the image of ‘a mini-renaissance’ [...]”.⁷³ This social environment, consisting of “the various counter-cultural movements and subcultures [...]”⁷⁴ was produced by a general cultural shift that happened in

⁷³ For an extensive analysis of the 1960s cultural phenomenon, see: Arthur Marwick, *The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974*, Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

identity/gender politics at the time. It spread all over Europe and America and culminated in the upheavals of 1968 which questioned existing frameworks of morality and authority.⁷⁵ Some think that there is a certain parallel to be drawn between 1968 and 1848, if not in terms of the similarities between historical causes, then in terms of the widespread popular zest to confront and undermine authorities and governing bodies.

The cultural and political atmosphere of global unrest throughout the 1960s and its aftermaths in the 1970s were a common denominator of youth in their search for a better world. Both German and Yugoslav young filmmakers were part of this experience, which they transposed in their filmic works. This fact provides a basis for different types of comparisons. In *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*, Kaes asserts:

As part of an international youth culture, the so called Woodstock generation, a movement also arose in the Federal Republic that radically altered the consciousness of the postwar generation. For the first time in the West German democracy, the students (and many others) took a stand against the state and institutional authority [...]. All this revolutionary energy that galvanized politics as well as culture must have affected Fassbinder deeply.⁷⁶

A similar situation of taking a “stand against the state and institutional authority” happened in Yugoslavia during the series of student demonstrations in June of 1968, which came as an outburst of youthful discontent with social conditions. The Yugoslav student demonstrations were also happening for the first time as in the West German democracy, but in this case the state was “a socialist democracy.” The students at the Belgrade University were the main actors in these upheavals. They initially declared a protest against the poor conditions in the students’ dormitories but the protesters soon

⁷⁵ See: Ibid., pp. 112-8.

⁷⁶ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 76.

changed their objectives into more ambitious demands for “[...] a real democracy, real worker’s self-management, [and] an end to unemployment [...]”⁷⁷ Student demonstrations turned into bloody clashes with the police, demonstrators overtook the Faculty of Philosophy and Academy of Art. The students also required that the “red bourgeoisie”⁷⁸ should be stripped of its benefits. This notion of the “red bourgeois” was derogatory and denoted those strata of communists who acquired immense wealth not shared by the population.

Milovan Djilas, the Communist dissident, who during WWII and after it belonged to the highest Communist ranks, discusses this problem in his book, *The New Class*. Here Djilas examines the Communists’ ruling mechanisms and their accumulation of wealth, which was the product of their positions in the Party nomenclature. In other words, the higher the position in the Party system, the greater the riches. This structure in the Communist ruling strategy was never seriously challenged. In *The New Class*, Djilas does precisely this. His analysis is detailed, because of his personal experience as a high-ranking Party member.

The author asserts that the new class, in order to preserve its wealth, was ready for certain concessions to the masses, turning at the same time these “[...] democratic measures into positive methods for consolidating the position of the ruling classes.”⁷⁹ Student demonstrations surprised the Communist authorities. After several days of tensions, conflict ended with Tito’s sentence: “The students are right!”⁸⁰ Djilas’ analysis

⁷⁷ Tariq Ali and Susan Watkins, *1968 Marching in the Streets*, London, U. K.: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998, pp. 108-9.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ See: Milovan Djilas, *The New Class*, New York: Frederick A. Preager Publisher, 1957, p. 67.

⁸⁰ Tariq Ali and Susan Watkins, op. cit. p. 108.

in *The New Class*, proved to be accurate in its prediction of the Communist ruling strategy, since the regime was ready to make certain concessions to the students, but these were only superficial measures.

The student protest, which ended with Tito's demagogic promise that things were going to change, did not lead to improved social conditions. Communist authorities had initiated substantial changes in the planning of the central part of the city, with an obvious intent to erase student protests from public memory by wrapping it in the formula of urban development. The government intervention implied rearrangement of the University buildings that served as a stage for the protest. These buildings, which were situated close to each other, offered an opportunity for the circulation of people and ideas not only amongst the students, but also with the wider city population which helped students to endure several days of the police blockade.

Thus, in the name of progress, the nineteenth-century building of the Faculty of Philosophy – whose large inner courtyard and sturdy obscure walls gave protection to the students during their upheaval – was exchanged for a new one that was built in the tradition of modernism, bright, transparent and easy to manage. The Academy of Theatre and Film was also endowed with the new building across the river, in New Belgrade. Within a few years after the protest of 1968, the University architecture in the city had been changed. The new University itinerary envisioned the possibility of regulated circulation. By dispersing the landmarks of the student unrest, authorities not only impeded the possibility of new upheavals, but they also tried to intervene into the public memory.

Despite such official efforts, the student demonstrations of 1968 acquired a cult status among the youth and captured their imagination for many decades. In the same way in which Fassbinder's work was affected by "revolutionary energy," Makavejev's *WR* was part of the intellectual milieu produced by the student protest. Furthermore, it can be said that even before it had been pronounced and required in the 1968 student protest, an impetus for change was a substantial ingredient of the intellectual climate at the time and as such was a central moving force for all New Yugoslav Film directors. However, the Communist system itself in Yugoslavia was regarded by filmmakers as different from those in the Eastern bloc countries.

In an interview, Makavejev explains this intellectual fervor for change supported by his belief that the communist system in Yugoslavia was not hermetically closed or intolerant: "I simply could not believe that the system can not be changed."⁸¹ In this sentence, Makavejev expresses the attitude of the young Yugoslav filmmakers who created their films believing that their work could help this social change.

The drive for change was a moving force that put young German filmmakers into motion at the beginning of the 1960s. The New German Cinema had begun its life as the Young German Cinema in an "institutionalized" way with the Oberhausen Manifesto⁸² at the Oberhausen Film Festival in 1962. This is the text of the manifesto:

The collapse of the conventional German film industry has finally removed the economic basis of an intellectual attitude that we reject. Thereby the new film has a chance to come alive. In the last few years German short films by young authors, directors, and producers have received a large number of prizes at international festivals and have found international critical recognition. These

⁸¹ Interview with Dusan Makavejev in Milan Nikodijevic, op. cit., trans. mine, p. 33.

⁸² For the manifesto see: Eric Rentschler ed., *West German Filmmakers on Film: Voices and Visions*, New York & London, Holmes & Meier, 1988, p. 2.

works and their success show that the future of the German cinema lies with those who have proven they speak a new cinematic language. In Germany as in other countries the short film has become the school and experimental laboratory for the feature film. We declare our intention of creating the new German feature film. This new film needs new freedoms: freedom from the conventions of the commercial film industry. Freedom from influence by commercial partners. Freedom from domination by special interest groups. We have concrete artistic, formal, and economic conceptions about the production of the new German film. We are collectively prepared to bear economic risks. The old film is dead. We believe in the new.⁸³

How the German film industry looked in the period of the Oberhausen Manifesto is perhaps best described by Fritz Lang who, after returning to Germany in the late 1950s, shot three films there between 1958 and 1960:⁸⁴

After fourteen months working there, two years ago now, I finally and definitely gave up the idea of making another film in Germany. The people you have to work with there are really unbearable. Not only because they don't keep their promises, written or otherwise. The film industry (if you can dignify with this name the miserable remains of what once made the country world-famous in film production) is now run by former lawyers, SS-men and exporters of God knows what. Their main work consists of organizing co-productions in circumstances that keeps their books well in the black even before work's been started on the film.⁸⁵

⁸³ James Franklin, *New German Cinema: From Oberhausen to Hamburg*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983. pp. 26-7.

⁸⁴ These three films were: *Tiger of Bengal*, *Journey to the Lost City* and *The 1000 Eyes of Dr Mabuse*. For Fritz Lang's return to Germany, see, Lotte H. Eisner, *Fritz Lang*, London, U.K., Secker & Warburg, 1976, pp. 383-404, and Wim Wenders, "Death is no Solution: The German Director Fritz Lang," in Wim Wenders, *On Film: Essays and Conversations*, London, U.K.: Faber and Faber, 2001, pp. 111-5.

⁸⁵ Fritz Lang cited in Wim Wenders, op. cit., p. 112.

It is this deplorable situation of German cinema from the end of WWII, which the young German filmmakers encountered at the beginning of the sixties. As Lang points out, the film industry was run as a business for gaining profits regardless of the quality of films. The Americans did not put much effort to change such a situation because they saw Germany as the market for Hollywood films. Elsaesser discusses these circumstances in *New German Cinema: A History*:

[...] since part of the old UFA organization survived both the nationalization of the central production unit at Neubabelsberg (which became the East German State company DEFA), and the Allied Forces' deconstruction measures, there was an ominous impression of continuity with the infamous recent past of German cinema. The Americans had, for instance, in their zeal to license only reliable (that is anti-communist) Germans, encouraged the more right-wing and politically opportunist members of the profession to take over rebuilding the German film industry. One of the officers charged with 'denazifying' film industry personnel reported how in practice his task was impossible, 'since virtually all directors, writers, actors, cameramen and technicians (qualified to make films) had been more or less active members of the NDSAP (the Nazi Party).'⁸⁶

Although there is a period of twenty years between the circumstances Elsaesser describes and that of Lang's account of German Cinema at the beginning of the 1960s, no substantial changes had been made in the film industry. It is this stalemate Lang discusses in his statement, and which young German filmmakers denote in their manifesto as the collapse of the conventional German film industry.

⁸⁶ Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema: A History*, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989, p. 13.

By signing the manifesto, Kluge and twenty-five other young *Autoren*, denounced the “Papap Kino” and promoted a different approach to national cinema. They pronounced German commercial film industry of the first two post-war decades dead.

In 1964, the *Kuratorium junger deutscher Film* was established to produce and promote films by young filmmakers. In Stuart Liebman’s interview with Alexander Kluge, the filmmaker explains the difference between the French expression of “*la politique des auteurs*”⁸⁷ and that one of the “*Autorenfilm*.”⁸⁸ “We took the words and changed the meaning. With the *Politik der Autoren*, the financial as well as the artistic responsibility was one [...] the Oberhausen group wanted to change the modes of production.”⁸⁹ The Film Subsidies Board was created in 1968 to provide the federal financial backing program. Whereas the system of subsidies always poses the possibility for the authorities’ intrusion in the decisions about what kind of films are going to be made, James Franklin explains that the *Kuratorium*, the Interior Ministry West German television, and “even the controversial Film Subsidies Board”⁹⁰ enabled “the rebirth of quality filmmaking in Germany.”⁹¹

Beginning with the Young German Film in the early 1960s, New German Cinema in the 1970s investigated the question of national history, which they understood as a prerequisite for tackling other social issues. Elsaesser describes the historical situation of the post-WWII Germany: “By the mid-1970s the feeling was fairly widespread among intellectuals and even some politicians that something more profound had gone wrong in

⁸⁷Stuart Liebman, “On New German Cinema, Art, Enlightenment, and the Public Sphere: An Interview with Alexander Kluge,” op. cit., p. 24.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 24-6.

⁹⁰ James Franklin, op. cit., p. 33.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

West Germany [...]. Germans seemed morally stagnating, ultra-conservative, self-deceiving in their certainty, and above all, blind to the insights into their national past.”⁹²

The political climate was such that it was clear that the real break with the past had never been accomplished. For Fassbinder, post-war German history was a question of missed chances and failed possibilities:

I believe that especially in Germany much is happening right now which indicates that the situation is developing in a backward direction. More precisely, I would say that in 1945, at the end of the war, the chances that existed for Germany to renew itself were not realized. Instead, the old structures and values, on which our state rests, now as a democracy, have basically remained the same.⁹³

If this socio-historical post-war situation in West Germany is compared with the circumstances in Yugoslavia at the time, these are two contrasting historical pictures. The Yugoslav Communists saw themselves as liberators from Fascism and based their post-war politics on the program of renewal and change of the old social order. Yet they accomplished this change both by political means, but also by bloody clashes with their political enemies. What is comparable between these two countries, however, is a disillusionment of the post-war generations. Similar to the German filmmakers, Yugoslav directors also felt that the ruling strata missed the chances to build better and more just societies.

In Germany, such a socio-historical situation imposed itself with the utmost urgency. The filmmakers understood that the trajectory leading to transformation and the international recognition of West German film was burdened by its national history. Kaes

⁹² Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder's Germany: History, Identity, Subject*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996, p. 25.

⁹³ Ibid.

emphasizes that: “The new directors no longer considered German history as taboo; they subjected contemporary West German society to critical scrutiny; and they gradually overcame their lack of ease around images depicting their own country.”⁹⁴ It was precisely this “lack of ease around images” that was the main battleground for young filmmakers in the 1960s and 1970s. In his text, “That Entertainment: *Hitler*,” written in 1977, Wenders fiercely criticizes Joachim C. Fest’s and Christian Herrendoerfer’s film *Hitler: A Career* for re-appropriating and thus reinforcing the Nazi propaganda images to talk about Hitler. Wenders tells here about Germany’s decades long “profound mistrust of sounds and images about itself” which was the reason for its occupation by “foreign images” that were present in the German cultural milieu from WWII. He continues:

I don’t think that any other country has had such a loss of faith in its own images, stories and myths as we have. We, the directors of the New Cinema, have felt this loss most keenly: in ourselves as the absence of a tradition of our own, as a generation without fathers; and in our audiences as confusion and apprehension... This defensive attitude on the one hand and lack of self-confidence on the other have been slow to dissolve, but the process, which will take a few more years yet, may one day create the feeling again that images and sounds don’t have to be something imported, but can deal with this country and can even stem from it. There are good reasons for this distrust, for never before and in no other country have images and language been treated with such a complete lack of conscience as here; never before and in no other place have they been so degraded to impart nothing but lies. And now there’s a film which, with an incredible sense of irresponsibility, claims these images as the heart of the matter and tries to sell

⁹⁴ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 10.

them as ‘documentary material’; in fact it *sells* them again and yet again, and thereby once more projects the same lies.⁹⁵

In this article, Wenders talks about the TV program *Aspekte* which was supposed to discuss the film, but it missed the opportunity to talk about its filmic language concentrating instead exclusively on history, without even mentioning Fritz Lang who fled Nazi Germany: “Because of this thoroughly demagogic treatment of images, everyone in Germany who was responsible and competently involved in the production of moving pictures left this country.”⁹⁶ This is crucially important to emphasize since Wenders – precisely because of the void that the Nazi imagery meant and without recognizing this visual rupture in a right way – does not see that there is continuity between his generation and that of Lubitsch, Lang or Murnau. The problem of historical continuity became a vexing question for the whole generation of New German Cinema filmmakers, which they understood as closely related to their filmic engagement. Kaes discusses this problem:

The legacy of the National Socialist film – an instinctive distrust of images and sounds that deal with Germany – has deeply preoccupied the younger generation of German filmmakers for the past quarter-century. How were they to find and create images of Germany and German history that deviated from those of the National Socialist film industry? The disjointed German film tradition caused Wenders to look to American directors like John Ford for his stylistic inspiration.

⁹⁵ Wim Wenders, op. cit., pp. 100-1.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 101.

[...] An uncompromising rejection of the National Socialist film tradition has in fact become the secret unifying force of the New German Cinema since 1960s.⁹⁷

As previously noted, Elsaesser mentions the fact that the entire film establishment in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s had played an active role in the Nazi film industry. He emphasizes that the auteurs of the New German Cinema tried to solve the problem of continuity in different ways that often lead them to search for the models in both transnational cinema of Hollywood as well as in German cinema.

In what sense, however, could the authors of the New German Cinema consider themselves as the “sons” of the Weimar cinema, or even grandsons? [...]. Were the films of Wenders, Herzog, Fassbinder rewriting the Weimar cinema or Nazi cinema? [...]. In a very public gesture, Fassbinder “adopted” Sirk as his father, Wenders did “mourning” for Nicholas Ray, and Helma Sanders-Brahms paid fulsome tribute to Defa-director Wolfgang Staudte.⁹⁸

It is this problem of continuity of the New German Cinema imagery which Wenders repeatedly returns to in his book *On Film*. In the article, “Death is No Solution: The German Film Director Fritz Lang,” he emphasizes:

I don’t think that there is a tradition in the films of Herzog, Fassbinder, Schroeter, Miehe or anybody else that harks back to that period. Our films are new inventions [...]. I think I know why *Der Spiegel* asked me to write about Lang: he’s present in *Kings of the Road*, they talk about the *Nibelungen*, you see two photographs of him, one of them from *Le Mépris* [...]. In this film about the

⁹⁷ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, “American Friends: New German Cinema and Hollywood,” in *Hollywood and Europe*, eds. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Steven Ricci, London: BFI Publishing, 1998, p. 7.

consciousness of cinema in Germany the lost, no, the missed father has introduced himself, somehow crept in.⁹⁹

However, as previously mentioned, New German Cinema auteurs, a generation “without fathers,” based their filmic language both on the conversation, as Elsaesser points out, with the Hollywood cinema, as well as with the Weimar cinema. In Kaes’ words, these young filmmakers wanted to “serve as a critical voice in the life of the Federal Republic as a filmic counterpart to the group of writers assembled in the influential ‘Gruppe 47.’”¹⁰⁰ James Franklin asserts: “Whatever the sources of the narrative material in recent West German films, the themes frequently reflect a concern for social issues and political questions.”¹⁰¹ Wim Wenders announces that “Every film is political.”¹⁰² In order to engage their films in a politically and socially meaningful way, the New German Cinema directors had to develop new visual and narrative strategies and they found their filmic apparatus in the films of the French New Wave auteurs.¹⁰³ As previously discussed, this new cinematic language, developed along the lines of circulation stemming from the New French Wave, acts as a unifying force of the new film movements throughout Europe, comprising both German and Yugoslav new films.

German filmmakers deployed their films to investigate Germany’s Nazi past, the national revival and economic boom during the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the political terrorism of the 1970’s. Their films brought forth both collective, or national, and personal, or everyday, themes. The way these auteurs treated national history conjures up

⁹⁹ Wim Wenders, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁰⁰ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁰¹ James Franklin, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁰² Wim Wenders, op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁰³ See: Jim Hillier, “New Wave: The Global Impact of the French New Wave,” p. 1.

the notion of a programmatic structure which can delineate their filmic work as a joint effort to deal with the conjunction of the German past and present. I think here of Wenders' *Road Movie Trilogy*: *Alice in the Cities* (1974), *The Wrong Move* (1975), *The Kings of the Road* (1976); Fassbinder's *BRD Trilogy*: *The Marriage of Maria Brown* (1978), *Lola* (1981) and *Veronika Voss* (1982); Von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane* (1981); Kluge's et al. *Germany in Autumn* (1978) and Helma Sanders-Brahms' *Germany, Pale Mother* (1980). It took almost two decades for the New German Cinema to get a proper reception from the domestic public.

In his *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema*, John E. Davidson quotes the opinion of one of the filmmakers from Berlin, Karl-Heinz Laabs, who says that "I know no other 'national cinema' that has less support or interest from people of that nation than the New German Film."¹⁰⁴ There were many reasons for the domestic audience's rejection of New German Cinema. The themes treated in films, such as their engagement with historical, political or social topics, could not attract the public accustomed to "Papap Kino" and its pastoral thematic. The German public accepted new film auteurs only after international recognition and awards were given to them.

This fact could be yet another point of similarity between the German and Yugoslav new film movements. Yugoslav auteurs experienced dismissive attitudes from their public as well. This observation requires further exploration, since the reception of the New Yugoslav Film was conditioned by the censorship which in most cases was not banning in court but rather of more subtle forms. It is worth mentioning here that only one film was banned by a court decision. The Communist authorities resorted to more

¹⁰⁴ John E. Davidson, *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 4.

subtle measures, such as showing the film in July or August, or to stop its screening shortly after the film's release. This type of soft censorship was related to the limited number of screenings, or film screenings for a specialized public.

Seen in this light, the question of these films' reception is obscured by the fact that the Yugoslav public at large did not even have the opportunity to see many of these films. Goran Gocic, in his article "Early and Late Works: The Cinema of Zelimir Zilnik in the Period of Transition – From the 1960s to this Day," emphasizes that

[...] around 1973 Yugoslavia suddenly started pronouncing its most talented directors enemies of the state [...]. Makavejev, Petrovic and Zilnik left the country in 1973. One should bear in mind the fact that this was not only Serbian but also European cinema elite. [...] it is clear that one of the most prestigious and most liberal European film industries was, to put it bluntly, officially outlawed at the beginning of the seventies. For the Yugoslav film, this was a tragedy equal to the hypothetical disappearance of Wenders, Fassbinder and Herzog from the German film at the peak of their careers.¹⁰⁵

Here Gocic draws a parallel between Yugoslav and West German New Film directors both in terms of their importance for their respective national cinema culture, but also as the auteurs belonging to transnational cinema. Moreover, with this hypothetical explanation, Gocic describes the damage which was inflicted upon Yugoslav film in the early seventies when the most important New Film directors left the country. When Communist authorities realized that their strategy of selective censorship did not prevent these filmmakers from continuing to produce films about the fallacies of the system, they employed different modalities of pressure ranging from non-funding to negative social branding through a system of cultural forums.

¹⁰⁵ Goran Gocic, op. cit., 91.

The problematic of censorship remains one of the most crucial questions when discussing New Yugoslav Film. In comparison with New Yugoslav Film, New German Cinema did not have censorship problems, such as those Yugoslav filmmakers encountered, apart from the specific decision process of the Film Subsidies Board, for which Franklin emphasizes that “Politically and socially critical films... are far less likely to receive subsidies than noncontroversial works,”¹⁰⁶ New Yugoslav Film lost its battle with the censorship authorities. The film critic Milan Vljacic says that in the short period spanning from 1969 to 1973, Communist authorities, “[...] in their ideological madness used the black wave film formula to incapacitate the most important auteurs at the time.”¹⁰⁷ Yugoslav film at the end of 1960s and in the early 1970s had to deal with extremely disconcerting, concealed forms of censorship. Such a system was slowly eroding the potential and élan of the New Film auteurs and it eventually cut the wings of the movement. In answering the question, “Is the censorship an *exclusively* political category?” Pavlovic says:

Censorship is the taboo’s instrument of defense against its demystification. Taboos are the ethics’ and the moral’s razor blades and they exist in all social spheres, not only in the political arena [...] I wouldn’t say that censorship is only in the interest of politics. More than that, censorship exists to protect deeper collective, mythic human needs [...]. Yet we have to reconcile an eternal truth with restrictions which were imposed by censorship, which had never, literally never, gone against the freedom of expression. Often, censorship and limitations were incentives to concentrate creative potentials [...]. My generation (in the 1960s) was in a constant state of upheavals in all spheres. In art, theater, literature and film.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ James Franklin, op. cit., 33.

¹⁰⁷ Milan Vljacic, “What do these lunatics want?” in Milan Nikodijevic, op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Zivojin Pavlovic in Milan Nikodijevic, op. cit., trans. mine, pp. 13-4.

It is this propensity for upheavals, which, as the driving force of New Yugoslav Film provided its engagements in all spheres of the social and political life throughout the 1960s until the beginning of the 1970s when the movement was blocked. As New Yugoslav Film auteurs encountered an extremely hostile reception from the authorities, most of them left the country in search of better conditions. Makavejev initially left for Amsterdam, where he made *Sweet Movie* in 1974. Pavlovic went to Ljubljana, where he encountered more favorable circumstances than in Belgrade. During the 1970s, a new generation of filmmakers was studying at the Prague Academy of Film under the guidance of Milos Forman. This generation was known as the “Prague School.” They became a driving force of Yugoslav film during the second half of the 1970s and 1980s, among which the most awarded was Emir Kusturica. Yet, the filmic imagination of New Yugoslav Film, as well as its social engagement, remains a point of reference for generations to come. This feature of New Yugoslav Film is comparable with New German Cinema.

This segment has been devoted to understanding the social circumstances in which New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film developed. The comparison of socio-historical conditions, in which New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film emerged, offers a picture of two contrasting post-war historical situations. Whereas Germany struggled to rebuild after Nazism, Yugoslav Communists, who saw themselves as liberators from Fascism, based their politics of renewal on communist ideology and on an open international politics. However, in some cases, this ideology also meant bloody clashes with the Communists’ political enemies. What is analogous between these two countries, is a disillusionment of their post-war generations. The New Yugoslav Film

directors shared with their German counterparts the position that the ruling strata in their respective countries missed the chance to build better societies.

The imaginative social intervention of these two cinemas is the subject of the following section that compares and contrasts Fassbinder's *Despair* and Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*.

Re-imagining Memories of Displacement and Death:

Fassbinder's *Despair* and Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*

For the people, history is and remains a collection of stories. It is what people can remember and what is worth being told again and again: a retelling. The tradition flinches at no legend, triviality, or error, provided it has some connection with the battles of the past. Hence the notorious importance of facts in the face of colorful pictures and sensational stories.

HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER¹⁰⁹

The subject of Fassbinder's 1977 *Despair* and Makavejev's 1971 *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* is the conjunction of the historical/public spaces and intimate memory spaces. The films treat personal agonies such as displacement and death, which unfold in specific historical and social circumstances. *WR* is about the German psychoanalyst and sexologist Wilhelm Reich's life, work and death in the U.S.A. in the 1950s, and the libertarian culture of the 1960s which put Reich's teaching of sexual liberation into practical use.

¹⁰⁹ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 107.

Despair is the film adaptation of Vladimir Nabokov's book for which Tom Stoppard wrote a script, and which is considered one of the best film adaptations. Stoppard, by closely following Nabokov's text, tells the story about a Russian émigré, a chocolate factory owner who lives in Berlin in the 1930s who witnesses the Nazis ascendance to power. A closer look at the film conjures up the themes of disruption, dislocation, displacement. Understood in the Deleuzian sense of the word, displacement invokes simultaneously "movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization" which are at the same time imaginary and real. "Territorialities, then, are shot through with lines of flight testifying to the presence within them of movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization."¹¹⁰ Seen in this light, both Fassbinder and Makavejev perceive spaces of geography and memory as territories of history. They understand the present as being conditioned by the past. Close to Benjamin's concept that "For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably,"¹¹¹ they see history as a domain in which present and past are intertwined. Both auteurs deploy a narrative/visual nexus which conjures up history as traces of memory residing beyond historical story-telling.

Cinematographically speaking, the auteurs deploy different cinematic strategies to accomplish the same feeling of desolation and abandonment at the end. The auteur of *Despair* uses long takes and sequence shots and *WR* is based on specific montage techniques. The films' protagonists, Fassbinder's fictional character Hermann Hermann and Makavejev's historical hero, Wilhelm Reich, serve to portray history as being ruptured, in which the apparent and the hidden simultaneously and uncannily reside. The

¹¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 55.

¹¹¹ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. and intro. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, p. 255.

auteurs talk about history, by eschewing the traditional representation of history that relies on classical narrativisation as a tool for discussing the past.

Their films create a new language of history embedded in specific visual and narrative techniques. While Makavejev approaches Reich's story from different angles by devising its reappearance throughout the film in a multiplicity of forms, documentary footage, voice-overs, interviews and photographs, Fassbinder treats the history of Nazism in *Despair* by playing with the history traces through the omens which Hermann Hermann perceives in his everyday life only on a subconscious level. In Žižek's words these hidden signs function "as if the universal and the particular paradoxically *exchange place*: what one encounters in the center instead of the universal is a kind of 'particular absolute.'" ¹¹² In other words, Fassbinder uses a conventional mode of story-telling which is undermined by the ambiguity of the process in which "the universal," or the historical course is not in the centre, but "the particular," or personal. In order to make this strategy possible, the film deploys cinematic language of self-reflexivity and deconstruction. In "Murder, Merger, Suicide: The Politics of *Despair*," Elsaesser emphasizes that the film "[...] deconstructs the melodrama in so far as it represents the process of doubling and splitting directly, and it deconstructs cinematic representation by naming the camera as the term which is in play between actor and spectator." ¹¹³ Elsaesser talks here about Fassbinder's visual mechanisms which he uses simultaneously to support and deconstruct traditional narrative process. Fassbinder uses images that lead the viewer's attention to the camera itself. The auteur does it by making the process of filming visible to the

¹¹² Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptoms*, New York and London: Routledge, 2008, p. 141.

¹¹³ Thomas Elsaesser, "Murder, Merger, Suicide: The Politics of *Despair*," in *Fassbinder*, ed. Tony Rayns, London: British Film Institute, 1980, p. 51.

viewer through the usage of long takes and camera movements that visually put the spectator in the scene s/he is watching.

Makavejev's filmic language in *WR*, as previously mentioned, operates with different filmic codes, relying mostly on the principle of montage and short sequence shots. In comparing Makavejev's *WR* and Fassbinder's *Despair*, I will show how these directors, by using different visual and narrative techniques, reach the same conclusions. In other words, they deconstruct classical Hollywood narratives through the application of new filmic languages. This strategy, which eschews conventional narrative tools employed in a classical structure, results in a change of visual and the narrative cinematic systems that serves to promote new ways of examining history.

Although there is a considerable body of work in film criticism devoted to *Despair* based on a variety of different approaches, three of these readings prove to be particularly productive for this analysis. They are: Thomas Elsaesser's "Primary Identification and the Historical Subject: Fassbinder and Germany,"¹¹⁴ published originally in *Ciné-Tracts*, 1980; Wallace Watson's "RWF,"¹¹⁵ published in *Sight & Sound*, 1992; and Edward Plater's "Fassbinder's *Despair*: A Political Allegory."¹¹⁶ Whereas Elsaesser's article combines a Freudian/Lacanian reading with historical and visual analysis, Watson examines the autobiographical origins of the film, and Plater announces in the article title his understanding of *Despair* as a political allegory. My reading reveals the connection between the filmic apparatus and the film's theme in

¹¹⁴ See: Thomas Elsaesser, "Primary Identification and the Historical Subject: Fassbinder and Germany," *Ciné – Tracts*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1980, pp. 43-52.

¹¹⁵ See: Wallace Watson, "The Bitter Tears of RWF," *Sight & Sound*, vol. 2, no. 3, July 1992, pp. 24-29.

¹¹⁶ See: Edward Plater, "Fassbinder's *Despair*: A Political Allegory," *Literature Film Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1985, pp. 222-233.

which the auteur deconstructs the concept of representation as the strategy of discussing history, which is the main prerequisite of the traditional filmic treatment of history.

Fassbinder portrays the historical moment of Nazi ascendance to power by using an elaborate, almost baroque visual system. The combination of visual overabundance, complex narrative and detached acting works as a distraction for the viewer. By tearing down the logical structurality of the Hollywood visual paradigm, which is comparable to that of Makavejev's destruction of the Hollywood narrative structure, Fassbinder's cinematic strategy provokes in the spectators not only an emotional, but also a cognitive response. The public is able to react proactively, as opposed to the passivity of the conventionally structured Hollywood narrative, which, supported by the same quality of the visual language, treats the audience as an inert, uniform and predictable receiver of the emotional stimuli. Fassbinder makes his public feel and think critically of social problems, its ramifications and its solutions.

Despair begins with the establishing shot of a lighted window seen through tree branches and a thick curtain of rain drops. The camera, in its struggle to "see," moves through the impediments in front of it, twigs and a deluge of rain, zooms in and captures the faces of Hermann Hermann (Dirk Bogarde) and Lydia (Andrea Ferreol) behind the window. This camera movement simultaneously offers the viewer an obstruction of vision and the voyeuristic pleasure of a passer-by on a cold rainy night, having a short glimpse of a pleasantly lit room. The spectator is intrigued with this voyeuristic invitation to peep through the window, which produces new expectations. When Dirk Bogarde starts uttering nostalgically and with a heavy accent, "We lost Russia for ever... What a relief it was to hear Kremlin bells and know that soon we would be safe and warm around

the samovar; how these Berlin winters bring it all back,” the spectator becomes aware that Bogarde’s acting communicates the film’s message not only from the position of the cinema but also one coming from the Brechtian theatrical tradition.

With this scene, Fassbinder introduces the story about the Russian émigré, Hermann Hermann, the chocolate factory owner, who flees communist Russia after the October Revolution and from the 1920s, with his wife Lydia, lives in an elegant modernist apartment in Berlin. By presenting Hermann’s melancholic speech at the beginning of the film, Fassbinder announces the film’s themes of memory and displacement that would later become the nucleus around which the problematic of identity, dissociation, history, violence and death unfolds in the picture. The auteur treats the problematic of dislocation through impressions and traces of the protagonist’s memory of the past. This narrative and visual filmic strategy gives the viewer the possibility to participate in many ways, ranging from intellectual engagement to identification with the character.

It is a known fact that Fassbinder’s cinema interactively fuses Hollywood narrative pictures with a Brechtian distancing model by means of fetishizing the cinematic apparatus. He accomplishes this by camera work, which “both imitates and subverts conventional Hollywood camera codes.”¹¹⁷ The opening scene of *Despair* is an example of this approach. Fassbinder here manipulates conflicting technologies of vision in order to produce the awareness of the visual process.

The auteur invites the viewer to indulge in the voyeuristic pleasure of watching, while at the same time preventing clear access to the object of viewing, thus frustrating both the vision and the imaginary. Fassbinder uses camera movement not only as the

¹¹⁷ James Franklin, op. cit., p. 133.

entry point into the narrative, but also as a visual text in its own right in the development of the characters' emotions, relationships and their experience of social reality. Elsaesser writes: "One might say that in Fassbinder... there is a preference for paratactic sequencing with little interest in action-montage. Identity is a movement, an unstable structure of vanishing points, encounters, vistas and absences. It appears negatively, as nostalgia, deprivation, lack of motivation, loss."¹¹⁸ Elsaesser's comment refers to the ways in which the film engages the spectator on an emotional level through the usage of images that invokes her or his personal memories as a point of reference.

Yet Fassbinder's cinema, with its "[...] highly visible cinematic signifier [...],"¹¹⁹ in other words, with its blatant interest in deconstructing technologies of vision, is never exclusively self-reflective. It is also a tool for commenting on social reality, history and politics. Thus the auteur fuses two basic interests to deconstruct both the filmic language as well as the historical narrative. By revealing the visual strategies of the filmic text, in other words by deconstructing and impeding the visual, the filmmaker makes history more visible. The filmic text does not allure the viewer with the images. Instead, it provides the spectator with the space to explore her or his emotional response, and simultaneously to reach a perception of history that is critical and investigative.

Fassbinder himself does not talk about *Despair* as dealing with historical or political issues. In an interview with Christian Braad Thomsen, who describes the main theme of *Despair* as the "identity problem,"¹²⁰ Fassbinder basically agrees with this observation and continues with an explanation that

¹¹⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, op. cit., p. 46.

¹¹⁹ Cathy Johnson, "The Imaginary and 'The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant,'" *Wide Angle*, vol. 3, no. 4, 1980, p. 25.

¹²⁰ Tony Rayans, op. cit., p. 98.

Despair came from an awareness that in everyone's life there comes a point where not only the mind but the body too understands that's 'all over.' I want to go on with my life, but there will be no new feelings or experiences for me. Everything will be repeats [...]. At this point most people start to rearrange their lives. *Despair*, for me, is about someone who doesn't stop at that point, but tells himself that a life which consists only of repeats is no life at all. And instead of committing suicide [...] he openly decides to become insane. He kills a man he thinks is his double and tries to take over his identity, even though he knows very well that they are not look-alikes.¹²¹

Fassbinder's statement plays with the viewer's perception by bringing it into incongruous relationship with what the auteur wants us to recognize, i.e., that the film's basic concern is the question of a middle-aged man's identity crisis, and what the film actually shows and discusses. Although Fassbinder in this interview does not talk about German 1930s society, which is the immediate setting for his hero's personal life crisis, the way the film portrays the social circumstances gives the viewer a myriad of clues about the historical situation at the time. These visual clues or vignettes are given in a form of short sequences occupying fringes of the film's narrative.

By using Hermann's personal drama as a screen behind which the national tragedy develops and unfolds, *Despair* is an analysis of the Nazis coming to power. To develop this study, the auteur employs a rhizomatic thematic structure which does not put the subject of the Nazis in the center of the film's narrative interest, but develops it through a multiplicity of side-stories. This strategy brings into view a wide variety of concepts and their conjunctions: identity, double, displacement or gaze. Deleuze writes:

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 99.

History may try to break its ties with memory; it may make the schemas of memory more elaborate, superpose and shift coordinates, emphasize connections, or deepen breaks. The dividing line, however is not there. The dividing line passes not between history and memory but between punctual “history-memory” systems and diagonal or multilinear assemblages, which are in no way eternal: they have to do with becoming; they are a bit of becoming in the pure state; they are transhistorical. There is no act of creation which is not transhistorical and does not come up from behind or proceed by way of a liberated line.¹²²

The problem of talking about history, for Deleuze, lies in an understanding of the slippages residing between history and memory. If the story about history is linear, it can be deceiving, since history and memory are interlocked into the “history-memory” systems based on multilinear transhistorical narratives in the state of perpetual becoming. When Fassbinder talks about history in *Despair* he does so by telling the story of the 1930s and the Nazis, which, although not being motivated by the narrative, stands as a Deleuzian diagonal line that weaves through the body of film as a story in its own right. This is a story about violence, which, as a metaphor for the time of the Nazis is a free-floating signifier in the film that ties together all other lines in the dense visual and narrative fabric. In “Primary Identification and the Historical Subject: Fassbinder and Germany,” Thomas Elsaesser emphasizes that

Fassbinder’s highly systematic textuality is not so much a fetishization of technique as the result of inscribing in his films and addressing a historical subject and a subjectivity formed by specific social relations. What is historical, for instance in films like *Despair*, *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, or *Germany in Autumn* is the subject – as much as subject-matter.¹²³

¹²² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, op. cit., p. 296.

¹²³ Thomas Elsaesser, op. cit., pp. 45-6.

Elsaesser asserts that Fassbinder portrays his film heroes as closely tied with and subject to the socio-historical circumstances, and that they are historical subjects. If the hero of *Despair*, Hermann Hermann, is a historical subject, he seems completely outside the historical moment. The film operates as an intricate system of transparent tableaux or places, each carrying different stories, and each running its own course. The fact that different narratives in the film do not intersect is a device enabling the auteur to tell the story about Nazism in a way that does not rest on the principle of the Hollywood narrative system and the system of cause-effect narrativization. Fassbinder talks about the past by conjuring up history as traces of memory residing alongside historical storytelling. How does the auteur do this? Primarily, as previously mentioned, by using the story about Hermann Hermann as a screen that harbours the story about Nazism told through little vignettes or sketches which have no direct repercussions on the identity crises narrative. In other words, Fassbinder does not tie these scenes with the story of Hermann in a direct way. By contrast, the auteur weaves the stories of Nazism and the film's hero identity crises through the multilinear side-stories that appear as unrelated. Yet tied together, they form the meaning of the film, which is the poignant story about Fascism.

Fassbinder sets up the picture of the social scene which originated, promoted and harbored Nazi ideology. The film operates with the imprints or traces of history. In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Derrida talks about the concept of the archive, which, "shelters in itself, of course, this memory of the name *arkhē*. But it also *shelters* itself from this memory which it shelters: which comes down to saying also that it forgets

it.”¹²⁴ This understanding of history is related to the unstable site of memory, which Freud understands as a trace left on the children’s “Mystic Pad,” the pad on which one writes but at the same time erases what one writes. For Derrida, there is always temporal delay since the meaning is never transmitted directly. Derrida emphasizes that according to Freud, inscription, impression, imprint or memory/archive is “indissociable from the death drive. And thus from destruction.”¹²⁵ Derrida discusses the paradox that the death drive, which is “anarchivic,”¹²⁶ destructive, is at the same time the origin of an incentive to preserve memory.

There would indeed be no archive desire without the radical finitude, without the possibility of a forgetfulness which does not limit itself to repression. Above all and this is the most serious, beyond or within this simple limit called finiteness of finitude, there is no archive fever without the threat of this death drive, this aggression and destruction drive. This threat is *in-finite*, it sweeps away the logic of finitude and the simple factual limits, the transcendental aesthetics, one might say, the spatio-temporal conditions of conservation.¹²⁷

In *Despair*, Fassbinder preserves the memory of the time of Nazism. The film, similar to archives, shelters this memory that is threatened by forgetfulness. The auteur utilizes the traces of memories of death that his characters recall randomly throughout the film’s narrative and visual texts in order to create the memory web. In Derrida’s sense of the words, it is a death drive on both the personal and the socio-cultural level that is the subject of *Despair*. The auteur portrays all social groups which participated either as

¹²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz, Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996, p. 2.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

victims or executioners in the Nazis' deadly game: Jews, Russians, Gypsies, with an inactive or corrupted, i.e., Nazified bourgeoisie, as well as Brown-shirt squads. The film depicts the palpable tension of the historical moment by using straightforward pictures of the Nazis demolishing Jewish shops, Nazis walking the street in an everyday manner alongside a man, possibly a WWI veteran, who walks with crutches. There is a man, Hermann's employee Müller, with a Nazi armband, in a Russian Orthodox Church, present at his boss' Hermann's religious service, or the scene of Hermann in the post office picking up the letter under the name "Pushkin" that provokes the post office worker's extremely unfriendly reaction. Fassbinder employs these scenes to portray everyday life during the years in which the Nazis emerged as the leading political force in Germany. The film represents violence as a signifier for Nazism. Yet the representation of cruelty in *Despair* is not exclusively tied to fascism. It spreads beyond obvious manifestations of violence in the streets and cafes to reappear in Hermann Hermann's final action of the murder of Felix, his supposed double. Although it is tempting to suggest that Fassbinder portrays the historical moment of the Nazis coming to power by transposing the historical tension into the madness of his hero, this is not so. Rather the auteur talks about the atmosphere of oblivion in which Hermann resides. His identity crisis, which he resolves by deciding, in Fassbinder's words, to "become insane,"¹²⁸ is presented in the film as coinciding with the social madness around him to which he pays only superficial attention.

In an interview, Fassbinder does not make any open connection between his hero's personal life-crisis and that of 1930s German society. On a personal level,

¹²⁸ Tony Rayns, op. cit., p. 99.

Fassbinder records history only through traces of memory in the form of reflections, long forgotten or accidentally heard voices and sudden visual impressions. His hero perceives the world of Nazism's coming to power through omens he is not entirely aware of. He grasps them only on a subconscious level, which gives him a view of his life as being "dissociated." They are, in Derrida's words, "memories of death,"¹²⁹ which are inscribed in Hermann's existence and they encircle him in his surroundings. Hermann, who fled Russia after the Revolution, explains his mother's death, "as the result of her love for chocolate." His memories exist only on a symbolic level detached from the events.

Derrida asserts that the death drive is an obliteration of memories:

As the death drive is also, according to the most striking words of Freud himself, an aggression and a destruction (*Destruktion*) drive, it not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory, as *mnēmē* or *anamnēsis*, but also commands the radical effacement, in truth the eradication of that which can never be reduced to *mnēmē* or to *anamnēsis*, that is, the archive, consignment, the documentary or monumental apparatus as *hypomnēma*, mnemotechnical supplement or representative, auxiliary or memorandum.¹³⁰

Fassbinder acknowledges the impossibility of talking about history through an engagement with his hero's personal memories that act as documents of Nazi Germany. This is the reason he does not portray Hermann as a victim of the historical situation in Germany at the beginning of the 1930s. He stays detached from the signs of historical madness and appears little affected by the social turmoil around him. Hermann does not comment on the political moment. Is this one of the auteur's ways to pinpoint the

¹²⁹ Jacques Derrida, op. cit., p. 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

bourgeoisie as the social strata which willingly or not participated in the Nazis ascendance to power? Fassbinder explicitly addresses this problematic in the sequence in which Hermann talks with his employee, Müller, about the political situation in which he (Hermann) oscillates between a thorough understanding of the political moment and disinformation coming from a genuine or pretended lack of interest.

At one point Hermann talks about the financial problems caused by the Wall Street crash in which Germany lost 7 billion dollars of investment. “No, the problem is the government which gives a lot of money to greedy foreigners,” responds the factory manager who wears an armband with a swastika. “But reparations must be paid,” answers Hermann. “Who says?” asks Müller. “The Treaty of Versailles,” answers Hermann. Then, Müller gives an explanation by asking the question: “I did not start the war, why should I pay? You should have been at the plebiscite meeting last night.” Hermann answers that he is a foreigner and thus dissociates himself from the political situation. Fassbinder is not sympathetic to Hermann here, and does not portray him as a displaced person carrying the burden of cultural and political ignorance, but as a representative of the bourgeoisie that remained passive during the Nazi terror.

Fassbinder elaborates this position by picturing the other side of the bourgeoisie that aligned itself with National Socialism. He stages Hermann’s trip to the chocolate factory in Düsseldorf in order to negotiate a possible merger. The owner of this factory is a Nazi and the Nazi symbols are visibly displayed. While walking through the factory, Hermann passes by Hitler’s poster photograph on the wall. Yet he seems oblivious to this fact. He is there to make a shrewd business move and appears to be listening to the factory owner who explains that his plant enjoys a great popular success with its

production of little chocolate men. The moment in which Hermann pays close attention to the dark heap of little chocolate men in a plate on the table, is the moment of anticipated horror. This suddenly makes him look at the heap with horror. The close-up of the heap, which darkens the screen, becomes a deeply ominous metaphor since it operates on a subconscious level. This scene enters into the viewer's most hidden fears, which, by the sheer power of associations resurfaces images of concentration camps and the Nazi "production" of heaps of real human bodies. Fassbinder plays here with the history to come. Hermann is a mere channel of the anticipated horror. The auteur uses the metaphor to talk about victims subjugated to violence which has not yet been executed.

He complicates the narrative about violence by introducing the factor of time which underlines its incessant nature. Besides using metaphor to discuss violence as in the scene with the heap of the little chocolate men, there are unmotivated scenes in the film, not part of the narrative, that seem to fall outside the structure of the film. These scenes also talk about anticipated violence but they do not engage metaphorisation as a strategy. Future victims are displayed openly as part of everyday street life. Whereas they appear to perform everyday activities, such as passing along streets or sitting in the street restaurants, the viewer is aware of their function as representatives of those groups which were the most affected by the Nazi extinction program: Jews and Gypsies.

In the sequence in which Hermann wonders along the street, trying to run into Orlovius, he enters a courtyard in which a Roma man plays the violin. The close-up of his face and violin has no repercussions on the narrative and it stands as a little historical vignette. The melancholic Gypsy music tells us something about the man who is probably a Hungarian Gypsy. Hermann appears oblivious to the sound and continues to walk

around the courtyard. Otherwise the music has no obvious meaning since Herman pays no attention to it. The other scene featuring another affected minority group shows two Jewish men playing chess in the street restaurant where Hermann is sitting writing a letter. Both scenes belong to those structures of the film in which Fassbinder deals with the certitude of violence, which is not yet executed, but as an immanent threat that disturbs the viewers' imagination. This is the auteur's specific strategy of discussing violence not through graphic scenes but through visual and narrative intimations.

Displacement as a mode of identity formation is the common denominator uniting Hermann with the Jews and Gypsies in the film. For Fassbinder, existence of those who are displaced is tightly connected with violence and death. Yet, this triad of displacement, violence and death, operates differently in Hermann's case, since his identity crises do not make him act as a passive victim of violence, but as its executor. Thus he becomes an agent of the displaced violence which blurs the clear line of a distinction between those who are subjugated to violence and death and the executors. The viewer finds little sympathy for Hermann's eccentric behavior, which does not offer a model for identification. Though on first glance it appears that the film operates on the principle of dissociation in which the viewer cannot find the point of participation and/or identification, the minority groups, Gypsies and Jews, present the viewer with a possible site of association. This domain of the film fulfills the promise of a classical narrative in which the spectator can find a stable ground for identification.

Nevertheless, there is a scene in the film in which Fassbinder employs Hermann Hermann as a metaphor for Nazi violence. In this sequence, he performs a sexual sado-masochistic game with his wife Lydia in which he wears Nazi paraphernalia: black

leather boots, black leather gloves and cap. While this scene is loaded with many different meanings, the main one is a conflation of exhibitionism and narcissism that is identified with German Fascism, which Thomas Elsaesser analyzes in “Primary Identification and the Historical Subject.” It is also possible to understand this scene as one that belongs to the layer of the film that talks about violence through a system of metaphors. As previously mentioned, the reason for metaphorisation of the scene lies in the fact that Fassbinder talks here about violence to come and for which the Nazi uniform, with its “pleasure of exhibitionism,”¹³¹ is the symbol.

It is difficult for the viewer to recognize that Fassbinder’s agenda in *Despair* is to talk about the Nazis’ coming to power and the systematic violence they used from the very beginning. *Despair* is perceived by many critics as a film about personal drama and the identity crisis of a rich eccentric who thinks that “everything will be repeated” and who decides to resolve the crisis by finding and killing his double, and assuming his identity. Although Fassbinder himself talks about *Despair* as a film about middle-age identity crises, when compared with the book, it is obvious that the auteur is also invested in exploring the social setting of the early 1930s and the Nazi rise to power by inserting pictures of violence erupting in the streets, as well as executors and victims. This filmic strategy makes the viewer realize that the film uses a story of the hero’s identity crisis to discuss history.

These scenes seem to be unrelated to the narrative plot and in many cases the auteur employs the visual language of metaphorisation to talk about the horror of fascism. This is the way in which Fassbinder deals with the memories of death. They are inscribed in Hermann’s existence, and they are around him in his surroundings. Hermann is not a

¹³¹ Thomas Elsaesser, op. cit., p. 49.

victim of the historical situation in Germany at the beginning of the 1930's. His madness coincides with the madness of the time. He stays detached from the signs of the historical madness and the historical death drive. Nonetheless, by responding to his own death/destruction/aggression-drive, his existence reflects the general social condition at the time.

Fassbinder does not make it easy for the viewer to access the story about Nazism. The film's concern with history stays veiled behind various cinematic devices of detachment such as Brechtian alienation effects in acting or distancing techniques which Fassbinder applies to the point of theatricality. The other mode of directing that Fassbinder uses widely throughout the film is the elaborate web of glass surfaces in the form of mirrors and glass walls, which he puts between the actors and the camera. In this way, the visual objects of the film always stay removed from the viewer's direct engagement. The viewer is distracted and it takes an additional effort to get beyond this visual strategy and to detect the auteur's intention to talk about the historical moment of Nazi ascendance to power in Germany and the violence carried in its wake. This visual strategy is part of the film's distancing techniques that the auteur uses to engage the viewer both emotionally and intellectually.

Fassbinder's *Despair* is a film about a middle-aged Russian émigré and his identity crisis. The film is based on Nabokov's novel, which Fassbinder transposes into the film that uses the story of Hermann Hermann to tell the history of Fascism and violence. The auteur employs a linear narrative structure that is told through an elaborate visual language of disruptions. Fassbinder does it by employing the system of reflecting surfaces, like mirrors or glass doors, in order to undermine the classical narrativisation and

create a poignant account of the Nazis coming to power. In other words, Fassbinder engages the filmic visual language to simultaneously support a linear narrative system and to undermine it.

Makavejev's *WR* is conceptualized in a similar way to work through various visual distractions in order to carry out the story about Reich, communism, totalitarianism, McCarthyism, Stalinism, gay culture, women, workers, and love and sex. These visual distractions are put in front of the viewer in the form of filmic techniques that emphasize collage construction and assemblage of different visual and narrative forms. They follow the pattern of a patchwork which does not rest on logical scene succession. Deleuze announces:

What is important is not whether the flows are "One or multiple" – we're past that point: there is a collective assemblage of enunciation, a mechanic assemblage of desire, one inside the other and both plugged into an immense outside that is a multiplicity in any case.¹³²

It is "a collective assemblage of enunciation" through which Dusan Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* unfolds. In the process of discovering, revealing and spreading its meaning as "rhizome" which "has no beginning or end,"¹³³ and which is "always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*,"¹³⁴ the film operates through an interactive assemblage or collage technique of different materials: documentary films, interviews, and the sex film disguised as an educational film, the fiction/narrative film, as well as the mixture of different languages: English, Serbo-Croatian, German and Russian. The film's assemblage of various visual and narrative forms allows for the unstable

¹³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, op. cit., p. 23.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 25.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

meaning of the film. There is no fixed reality in the film, as it operates with multiple realities and questions the representation or interpretation of their overlapping, mirroring, and permeating simultaneity. In this way, the film offers new modalities of the visual and narrative story-telling that is not based on linearity or fixed meanings.

The film follows the life of Wilhelm Reich, the German psychoanalyst, psychotherapist and sexologist and Freud's student, who, after fleeing Hitler's Germany, moved to the U.S.A. in 1939. He spent the rest of his life in the U.S. where he practiced his psychotherapy.¹³⁵ His work was discarded by the authorities and he was incarcerated at the end of the 1950s. He died in a Federal Penitentiary in 1957. Makavejev tells us Reich's story by investigating it from different positions and by employing its reappearance throughout the film in a multiplicity of forms: documentary, interviews, voiceovers, soundtracks, photographs and educational material. Other segments in *WR* include the fiction film about the young, sexually liberated Yugoslav woman Milena, whose interest lies in the politics of Marxism, and who keeps Reich's photograph on the wall of her room; there is also a documentary about two American transvestites that is interlaced with the film about Milena. These sequences are intertwined with the Soviet documentary footage about shock therapy in a psychiatric hospital, and Stalin with his comrades in the Kremlin. There is also a documentary film about the Katyn Forest massacre at the end of WWII.¹³⁶ The fictional part of *WR* is tightly connected with documentary material through the system of clues such as Reich's photograph on the wall in Milena's room.

¹³⁵ The film deliberately leaves out Reich's gradual conversion from Communism to Republicanism.

¹³⁶ This is a mass murder of Polish military officers who were executed by the Soviet secret service NKVD. This event was kept as a secret by the Soviet authorities, and was acknowledged by the Soviet Union in 1990.

The fusion of different media in Makavejev's film opens diverse possibilities for the viewer to see/experience different factors at play – historical and contemporary and thus to create her/his own interpretation. What I want to investigate here is the way in which the film uses different visual strategies to resolve the problematic of becoming yet another site of the encoded knowledge and truth by transgressing borders and deconstructing preconceived modes of understanding.

WR: Mysteries of the Organism is a Yugoslav-West German 1968-1971 coproduction, filmed in the U.S.A. and Yugoslavia. The film won the Louis Buñuel Award for its innovation in film at the 1971 Cannes Film Festival. The *New York Times* “reported a standing ovation lasting 13 minutes, so that press and public interest compelled six additional screenings.”¹³⁷ Domestically, the film encountered a strong rejection from the Yugoslav Communist authorities and was submitted to a wide range of criticism coming from various structures of the Communist establishment. Immediately after the Cannes Film Festival, the film was shown only once at the “special” screening to a limited number of viewers. The film was never officially released in Yugoslavia, nor was it officially banned and its first public screening in this country happened almost fifteen years after its production, in 1986. When asked in an interview “Had Tito seen *WR*?” Makavejev answered:

I have an impression that Tito was very seldom concerned with art. Sometimes, he would throw some artist as a bone to the Russians, while at the same time, he would be doing various political stunts which would, of course, annoy them. I heard that he saw *WR* twice, but he had never commented. He officially even stated that he had not seen the film and that he was not interested in it at all. I knew that he would see the film, and if he had nothing against the film, he would

¹³⁷ Raymond Durnat, *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, London, U.K.: BFI Publishing, 1999, p. 12.

not ask for its censoring. It was like that. He let the other people “beat” me, since I “deserved” it, but without his interference.¹³⁸

WR investigates the libertarian culture of the late 1960s that brought forth profound changes in cultural politics worldwide. Such a radical societal transformation was generated by general cultural shifts in identity, subjectivity and gender politics at the time. This paradigm shift, carried out by youth culture, spread all over Europe and America and culminated in the upheavals of 1968. Makavejev’s *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* belongs to this cultural and generational revolution which questioned existing frameworks of morality and authority and which promoted sexual politics as a domain of political liberation. When Makavejev inquires into the ramifications of the Cold War politics on both sides of the Atlantic, he does it through the investigation of sexuality. The problematic of sexual politics is the common thread that weaves through all the facets of the film and that questions both communism in the USSR and Yugoslavia and capitalism in the West.

Makavejev portrays an oppressive model of 1950s American society and McCarthyism through Wilhelm Reich’s unfortunate experience, who, from the position of libertarian sexual ideas, argued that sexual repression of people leads to a coercive and restrictive social model. In 1935, in the preface to second edition of his *Sexual Revolution*, Reich writes:

The small, miserable, allegedly “unpolitical” sexual life must be studied in connection with the problems of authoritarian society. Politics does not take place at the diplomats’ luncheon but in this everyday life. Social consciousness in everyday living, therefore, is indispensable. If the 1,800 millions inhabitants of the

¹³⁸ An interview with Dusan Makavejev in Milan Nikodijevic, op. cit., trans. mine, p. 44.

world understood the activities of the leading hundred diplomats, everything would be all right. Then, society and human needs would no longer be governed according to armament interests and political exigency. But these 1,800 millions of people will not be able to master their own fate until they become conscious of their own modest lives. What keeps them from doing so are the two inner powers of *sexual moralism* and *religious mysticism*.¹³⁹

WR begins with the caption: “All his life Reich fought against pornography in sex and politics. He believed in work-democracy, in society based on liberated work and love.” Wilhelm Reich was “a psychoanalyst and Marxist social philosopher,”¹⁴⁰ who believed that “to become conscious” requires a fight against “sexual alienation.”¹⁴¹ As Freud’s student and associate, he based his theory – which unites Marxist dialectical materialism and psychoanalysis – on Freud’s theory of sexuality. This also connects him to the Frankfurt School. His discovery of an “orgasmic potency” contributed to Freud’s theory of sexuality by pushing boundaries to include investigation of the orgasm itself. The basic premise of Reich’s theory of sexuality differentiates the quality of orgasm ascertaining that only orgasm with orgasmic potency can bring a complete discharge of tension. However, due to constraints of modern life, orgasm rarely accomplishes its full potency as a completely satisfactory experience. In this case much of the sexual energy generated by the body remains blocked, provoking various health problems. Reich called this sexual life energy “orgon energy” which he described in this way: “Orgon constitutes the ‘field’ that Einstein is searching for. Electricity, magnetism, gravitation, etc., depend

¹³⁹ Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution, Toward a Self-Governing Character Structure (Die Sexualität im Kulturkampf)*, translation by Theodore P. Wolfe, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, Fourth edition, revised, 1969, p. xxvii.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. xiv.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p. xii.

on its functions.”¹⁴² He devised an orgon-accumulator which was in the form of a wooden cube with its inside covered by metal sheets.

In the 1930s, Reich was expelled from the Communist Party and Freudian circles. In 1933 he wrote “The Mass Psychology of Fascism,” which was banned by the Nazis and Communists. He had to flee Germany, went first to Norway and then to the United States in 1939. He lived in Rangeley, Maine, where he opened the Orgon Institute. It was there where he put his theoretical work on orgon energy into practice. He treated his patients by positioning them in the orgon-accumulator which transfers cosmic, orgon energy and thus produces a healing release of blocked energy. Reich spent his career in America trying to get scientific and public confirmation for his therapy and the orgon-accumulator. Among others, he communicated with Einstein on many occasions hoping to get his approval for the orgon-accumulator and its healing possibilities. He never got a wide scientific approval for his theory. Nevertheless, his ideas proved to be visionary. In a letter from 29 November 1942 he writes:

The sex-political possibilities in the U.S.A. are just as gigantic as the contradictions in its love life. The epitome of petty bourgeois postures and clerical hypocrisy go hand in hand with lectures on birth control for seventeen-year-old girls at Columbia. But this sexpol is still in its infancy and is struggling with the basic question of diaphragms and condoms. Legal premarital sex is entirely inconceivable although commonly practiced everywhere. Just as czarist oppression unleashed the “hunger” revolution in Russia, sexual hypocrisy will unleash the sexual revolution in the U.S.A.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Wilhelm Reich, *American Odyssey: Letters and Journals 1940-1947*, ed. Mary Boyd Higgins, translation by Derek and Inge Jordan and Philip Schmitz, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1999, p. 54.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

Makavejev describes his film as “A black comedy, political circus, a fantasy on the fascism and communism of human bodies, the political life of human genitals, a proclamation of the pornographic essence of any system of authority and power over others.”¹⁴⁴ This description presents *WR* as an open structure of different ideas: the story of Reich in the film is in fact the story of communism, capitalism, consumerism, Cold War politics, identity politics, marginalized/gay structures, as well as other issues waiting to be discovered by the audience. The polyvalence of the film’s concerns is told through the polyvalence of media, which is a tool for revealing the multifacetedness of different angles and positions that Makavejev uses in the film.

The auteur treats documentary material in the story of Reich as a possibility to bring the viewer into direct contact with Reich, thus allowing the spectator to create his/her own interpretation. Makavejev here questions the possibilities of the representation to carry out the message. In other words, by utilizing the interplay of different filmic materials and not giving any of it a privileged space, the auteur puts emphasis on the *interplay* among multiple elements and thus announces the “closure of representation.” In his *The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation*, Derrida discusses Antonin Artaud’s theatre of cruelty:

The theatre of cruelty is not a *representation*. It is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable. Life is the nonrepresentable origin of representation. “I have therefore said ‘cruelty’ as I might have said ‘life’” (*TD*, p. 114). This life carries man along with it, but is not primarily the life of man. The latter is only a representation of life, and as such is the limit – the humanist limit – of the metaphysics of classical theatre [...]. The theatre must make itself the equal of life – not individual life, that individual aspect of life in which CHARACTERS

¹⁴⁴ Paul Arthur, “Escape from Freedom,” *Cineaste*, Winter 2001, vol. 27, issue 1, p. 15.

triumph, but the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only reflection.¹⁴⁵

It is the principle of liberated life as the governing principle of Reich's ideas about the sexual liberation which Makavejev takes into account in *WR*. Yet, in order to raise the question of representation, the director had to liberate the viewer himself/herself by making them aware of the fact that life is not representable. This is why he does not employ the classical Hollywood narrative which is embedded in the dominant philosophy of representation. Makavejev subverts the classical narrative and representation by raising the question of the awareness of the nonrepresentability of life. Although the director describes his film as having a classical structure, he does not frame his film in the confines of the linear storytelling:

There is a very strong classical structure [...]. If you draw a graph of the film, you have: Reel One, Two Three: documentary of a man and his ideas. Reels Four, Five: the meeting, Stalin, shock-therapy, bio-energetic therapy – a level of documentary understanding that is higher than the initial level. Then the story, Reels Six and Seven. Reel Eight: Jim Buckley's cock – now we are very high. And I was surprised at how I was able, now, to make the film go up – three jumps. Then the quarrel, the Lenin quotation, Milena's Women's Lib statement to Ilyich. From now on all political ideas are expressed in dramatic form of people's personal lives. It's much more integrated. And Reel Ten is a complete fantasy, with the talking head, and Ilych's prayer to a god who doesn't exist, then the resolution and a kind of forgiveness.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida *Writing and Difference*, translation and introduction by Alan Bass, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978, p. 234.

¹⁴⁶ Makevejev cited in Durgnat, op. cit., 55.

Makavejev is referring to classical structure and its principles of development. Based on a principle of ascending action, we begin with the introduction, then move on to the main body of the work at the centre of the structure, and arrive at the conclusion or climax. Yet the film both mimics and subverts this system. It hinders the structurality of the structure by depriving it of a centre, or a main body. It is not only that all parts of the film carry equal importance, but that they are interconnected:

I made the whole film [...] like a big switchboard. Like a network of ideas [...] [each] scene is connected not only with the proceeding one and the following one, but with the dozen others, [by] all kinds of side ideas.¹⁴⁷

Here Makavejev is close to Montaigne's system of patchwork collage of differences that are put into play: "We are all patchwork, and so shapeless and diverse in composition that each bit, each moment, plays its own game."¹⁴⁸ Montaigne is relevant here because his perception of subjectivity can be seen as a model for *WR*. The film's collage mirrors a fragmented, volatile reality in which the individual searches not for wholeness but the manifestation of its fragmentedness and its potentials: social, sexual, political. The film builds up its visual structure through the "patchwork" system which is not based on juxtaposing mode but that of the permeating and reflective. Makavejev talks about his film as a "switchboard" that is a network of "all kinds of side ideas." Similar to Makavejev's *WR*, Fassbinder's *Despair* also operates with "side ideas," or "side stories" that form the system of parallel narratives or vignettes, which serve the auteur to convey the message of Nazism in the 1930s.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁴⁸ Michel de Montaigne, *The Complete Works: Essays, Travel Journals, Letters/ Michel de Montaigne*, trans. Donald M Frame, introduction by Stuart Hampshire, A. A. Knopf, New York, 2003, p. 296.

Makavejev ties the film's side ideas and stories by using the principle of a dialogue that encompasses both visual and textual language and thus interlinks visual and narrative elements. This dialogic principle spreads like a grid of mirrors facing and reflecting each other and thus continuously creates new meanings by way of a reappearance of certain motifs and actions. These repeated and/or translated elements function as points of stability in the otherwise unstable and shifting structure of the film.

This approach resists preconceived modes of understanding. The auteur invites the viewer to interfere directly in the story and thus prevents the possibility of the film becoming yet another site of encoded knowledge and its underlining effects of manipulation. The underlying concept of an open structure offers the possibility of the viewer's own imaginary montage. In other words, the film's open structure based on the idea of a switchboard, invites the viewer to engage intellectually. It is not only that different spectators discover or imagine different meanings, but that the same viewer also perceives shifts in meaning as time passes. This approach leads to different routes of understanding, or "liberation", as Makavejev puts it. Thus the film appears simultaneously created and recreated, implying a *destructuring* concept as its basic principle. This destructuring concept does not simply encourage different interpretations of reality but also continually incites new interpretations. The film's strategy of employing heterogeneous concepts and attitudes promotes inclusivity as opposed to dogmatism, fixed thought and intolerance. The film raises the gender question and treats the subject of gay culture which was emerging as an important social phenomenon at the beginning of the 1970s.

As based on the concept of assemblage of different filmic forms, the film allows for the unstable meaning to be asserted. In other words, the film acknowledges the system of its production. In this way, Makavejev turns public attention to the media itself, thus openly asserting that what the viewer watches is not the representation of life. Makavejev describes this strategy:

The film is a fiction at one moment, a document at another, and he who watches it has to re-tune himself during this time, or additionally, he will notice that borders fade[...] that reality is full of illusions and documents full of fictitiousness, and to what extent illusions are real and constitute a kind of document.¹⁴⁹

That is why the auteur presents the stories of different people who participated in Reich's life. Thus we see interviews with Reich's follower Dr. Sharaf, a practicing Reichian who explains to the viewer the way in which the orgon-accumulator works. He describes his own experience with the therapy, which enabled him to experience his body more fully. There are also interviews with Reich's son, his second wife Eva, his patients, his butcher, his barber and the local sheriff. All of the people witnessing Reich's life tell their own story and a kaleidoscope of his life.

Yet, how does the auteur tie all the filmic elements together? It is obvious that he uses the strategy of disrupting the 'center/margin' principle, introducing the concept of multiplicity of realities and their interplay. "The center is not the center [...]. The concept of centered structure is in fact the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and a reassuring attitude, which

¹⁴⁹ Makavejev cited in Paul Arthur, "Escape from Freedom," p. 14.

itself is beyond the reach of play.¹⁵⁰ For Derrida, the function of the center is to limit “the play of the structure.”¹⁵¹ Makavejev builds the film’s assemblage on the understanding of a structure which affirms the play of the structure.

Makavejev’s understanding of this principle made him produce a structure which is devoid of a centre, a structure that is ruptured and decentralized in order to allow for “the play of the structure.” He subverts the centrality of the structure by making it fragmented, dispersed, in other words, by making the structure structureless. There is no fixed meaning or reality in the film. The film operates with a dialogic play which brings the heterogeneity of all the components in the picture into an active interplay and dialogue. Makavejev accomplishes this through the montage of the picture, the voiceover and the sound/music. As an inheritor of Eisenstein’s dialectic montage based on the clash of images to produce specific reactions in the spectator, Makavejev goes further by introducing the sound in the montage. The auteur employs this form of the montage as the basic tool in telling the story about Reich.

The film’s uncovering of the totalitarian ways in destroying their “enemies” is explored in a scene showing an incinerator fed by a mechanized claw that relentlessly clutches and smashes piles of garbage. A female voice-over asserts:

In the case the USA vs. Wilhelm Reich, the US District Court ruled that his published work be destroyed. These books were burned in the public incinerator at the corner of Hudson and [...] streets under the supervision of the Federal Food and Drug Administration. This occurred in August 1956 and again in March 1960.

¹⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *op. cit.*, p. 279.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The lack of archival documentation, which was denied by the authorities, made the auteur use different means to enter into the story. The montage of the picture of the incinerator and the voice-over in this scene strike the viewer with their poignancy and straightforwardness. There is no incongruity between the voice-over story and the picture of the incinerator's abyss. Here, Makavejev works directly with the voice and picture junction. The auteur employs the scene to convey an open message. There is no metaphor and no irony. The incinerator denotes the moment at which Reich's books have been burned. It is a sign of the annihilation of books and a documentation of this event. The incinerator is obliteration of memory.

The film begins with a reference to Reich's two deaths. Makavejev employs the prison wall of the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, (Figure 2.) as a sign denoting his death as a human being, and the incinerator in New York city as a sign of his second death, that of his books. The film presents Reich's life by way of his two deaths. And yet, the film's narrative is not about death but a question of life itself in the sense of Reich's teaching. It concerns the possibility of life's fulfillment through reaching its hidden or poorly understood facets, such as the primordial energy of sex. Makavejev investigates the story of Reich and his rejected teaching not only to offer a new evaluation of it, but also to disclose new ideas of political and sexual liberation, which endorse inclusivity and difference. *WR* is the product of the Sixties' liberation movement. The film asks questions many of which are still pertinent for the world of today. The problematic of political and sexual inclusivity, gender identity, the subject-nation nexus continues to receive scholarly and artistic attention. The auteur himself best describes it:

I see the cinema as a guerrilla operation. Guerrilla against everything that is fixed, defined, established, dogmatic and eternal. It is not irrelevant that the cinema should be at war, because eventually everything is connected. Hollywood is Wall Street and the Pentagon [...]. But that doesn't mean that the cinema must serve the revolution: the revolution has no need of servants. Everyone must create his own revolution.¹⁵²

This segment analyzed the ways in which Makavejev's *WR* and Fassbinder's *Despair* treat history and the problems of the individual dislocation. By fusing documentary material with humor and comedy, Makavejev discusses the interconnectedness of social responsibility and social action. This message makes *WR* a perpetual zone of liberation, equally pertinent for the contemporary public as it was in the early 1970's.

Similarly, Fassbinder's film operates on the premise of the politically engaged message. It is this zone of liberation that allows for the comparison of these films. In the next section, I will examine the ways in which both auteurs create their pictures on the same approach that deconstructs the system of representation, while simultaneously preserving the films' readability. They deconstruct the traditional, Hollywood visual and narrative representational system by filmic means which stay grounded in realism. Such a filmic strategy is aimed at inviting the spectator to participate in the film on an intellectual, critical, and above all, emotional level, as an active participant in the creation of new cultural horizons.

¹⁵² Makavejev cited in Paul Arthur, op. cit., p. 11.

The Narrative and “The Closure of Representation”¹⁵³

Both Fassbinder and Makavejev in their films *Despair* and *WR* employ strategies of visual/narrative relationships as destructuring tools of historical representation aimed at provoking the viewer’s cognitive response. In this way, the auteurs put into play continuous reenvisioning of filmic instruments for telling the story about history and politics. Yet, their images are grounded in reality on which they build the films. In other words, they always stay within the framework of reality as opposed, for example, to Hans Jürgen Syberberg who, in *Hitler, a Film from Germany*, deconstructs the codes of historical representation by exploiting the dream-like absorption into fantasies of the medium. This approach imposes on the viewer a clear thought that the conventions of representation are undermined, but also bears potential to provoke confusion about the possible meanings. This approach to historical representation runs contrary to those methods akin to Brecht. George Lellis in *Bertolt Brecht: Cahiers du Cinema and Contemporary Film Theory*,¹⁵⁴ writes:

An historical film is praiseworthy to the extent that it articulates the material and cultural realities by which history is structured. The model frequently invoked here is that of Brecht, who sees as a repression of this articulation the traditional elements of narrative, thoughtless identification and fascination, and naturalism. The *Cahiers* critics praise those films that also acknowledge how they are dealing with their historical materials – not as rigid, archeological reconstruction of the past but as thoughtful discourses about it. They argue that the contradictions which make up society can best be dramatized by the use of social gestures, which render representation of them concrete, material, readable, and surprising.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Jacques Derrida, op. cit., p. 232.

¹⁵⁴ George Lellis, *Bertolt Brecht: Cahiers du Cinema and Contemporary Film Theory*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: Umi Research Press, 1982, p. 124.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

It is this “readability” of history in *Despair* and *WR* that aligns these films with Lellis’ statement, demonstrating the filmmakers’ distrust of the traditional narrative. They talk about history through a system of signs emptied of resemblances or pretensions to reality. Fassbinder’s history is embedded into the perplexity of the visual, which, with its method of reflections and overlapping images makes the spectators aware of the history’s unrepresentability. Elsaesser asserts that “Fassbinder, by his own admission, was not interested in historical films, but in films about history from the perspective of the present: ‘we make a particular film about a particular time, but from our point of view.’” This meant that in his films, the past is seen across the traces which it has left in the present [...]¹⁵⁶ In order to accomplish this goal, Fassbinder combines traditional narrative with skewed visuality, such as the case with *Despair*, or, again, traditional narrative with the actors acting in a highly detached mode as in *The Marriage of Maria Braun*.

Makavejev, on the other hand, attacks the impossibility of representation by playing with montage. *WR* uses this filmic strategy as a language of communication with the viewer who is witnessing a parade of montage approaches such as: classical Eisenstein clashing shots; shots of the incongruity of the picture and voice-over; and tracking shots of the prison walls followed by romantic folk ballad music. In this way, the film creates moments of imperceptible pauses during which the montage creates the mental images calling for the audience to engage in the process of filmmaking. By playing with the sound-image disparity, Makavejev goes beyond Eisenstein’s intellectual montage. With this concept he does not simply encourage different interpretations of

¹⁵⁶ Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder’s Germany: History, Identity, Subject*, p. 105.

reality and historical presentation but also continually incites the possibility of new understandings. The auteur thus articulates new ways to engage with history.

For young German directors in the early 1960s, the question of historical representation was a *sine qua non* for the birth of new film culture in this country. Kluge, an “Attentive, (but critical) student of Marx and Adorno,”¹⁵⁷ directs his cinematic project towards a specific artistic practice that would play the role of a viable weapon against the bourgeoisie and its culture industry. Adorno, who believed that film, with its flashy, spectacle pictures “reproduces reality and affirms the existence of things as they are,”¹⁵⁸ found in Eisenstein’s theory of montage a force that could fight the culture industry images. For Kluge this was a step in his struggle to find “new possibilities for cinematic construction.”¹⁵⁹ By following this line of thought, Kluge develops further the possibilities of montage in his effort to block instrumentalisation of images and to talk about history. He writes: “Film stands before a challenge, its material will always remain perceptions; montage allows us, however, to construct concepts [...] film can also produce in the tense spaces between speech and image still another movement in the spectator’s brain (not materialized in the film) [...].”¹⁶⁰

What Kluge is talking about here are mental images bearing the meaning of Deleuze’s time-image and its “critical even didactic”¹⁶¹ message. For him, the effectiveness of these pictures lie in their conceptual potentials to undermine traditional narrative by disrupting its “natural” flow that follows empirical succession of time which he applies in his first feature *Yesterday Girl* (1960).

¹⁵⁷ Stuart Liebman, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Alexander Kluge cited in Stuart Liebman, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 10.

Both *WR* and *Despair*, albeit via different filmic strategies, work to deconstruct homogeneous narrative modes by creating in the audience the possibility of forming opinions not guided by images *per se*, but by their relationships. The first impression leads the spectator to believe that these strategies do not invite the viewer to immerse in the visual complexities of the films, but to stay afloat and to view them as a disinterested observer. Many of features, common to both auteurs, are based on Brecht and his *Verfremdung* effect, which they follow or apply in a similar way.

This is most obvious in the way they use acting as a tool of alienation effect. Brecht explains: “The aim of this technique, known as the alienation effect, was to make the spectator adopt an attitude of inquiry and criticism [...]”¹⁶² Perhaps the most important aspect in the application of the A-effect for both filmmakers is the usage of acting. They equally apply Brecht’s philosophy of acting based on the belief that the “auditorium should be purged of everything ‘magical’ and that no ‘hypnotic tensions’ should be set up.”¹⁶³ This distancing technique understands theatre as based on imagination, which is not mimetic but critical. In the Brechtian theatre there is no fourth wall that will make the public believe what they are looking at is not theatre, but life. Brecht says: “It is of course necessary to drop the assumption that there is a fourth wall cutting the audience off from the stage and the consequent illusion that the stage action is taking place in reality and without an audience.”¹⁶⁴ In *Despair*, Dirk Bogarde plays Hermann Hermann precisely in this way, without giving the viewer the impression that this is life. A comparison with *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, can shed more light on this

¹⁶² John Willett, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetics*, New York: A Dramabook, Hill and Wang, 1964, p. 136.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

problematic. There is a scene in this film in which Hermann's sudden appearance interrupts Maria and Bill in their playing of a sexual game. This play is told visually through the sequence of very slow shots which provoke in the viewer the clear knowledge that the scene is about acting, not about the imitation of life. Similarly, Makavejev's employment of the acting techniques is consistently done in the Brechtian mode. When Milena talks about Marx's love life, or addresses her Russian lover with a tirade of feminist's thoughts, she does it with such an amount of exaggerated seriousness and exasperation that this provokes in the viewer a mixed reaction wavering from agreeing to thinking to laughing.

Yet, although Fassbinder and Makavejev never operate with the ambiguous messages, they create reality that often appears to be more real than the real since they do not aim exclusively at the viewer's cognitive response. Both filmmakers involve their spectators both intellectually and emotionally. They apply the *Verfremdung* effect or alienation effect in an innovative way by introducing emotions as constructive element in the film which does not undermine the *Verfremdung* effect but deepens it. Their approach calls for the viewer's emotions to work in synergy with her or his thoughts, thus producing a mixture of emotional and intellectual engagement. Both filmmakers treat history by employing the combination of the *Verfremdung* effect and emotions.

In this way, the *Verfremdung* effect works for the spectator as a multifaceted experience calling for different forms of involvement. The viewer is not just a mere receiver of stimuli coming from the screen. Rather, the spectator is a co-creator whose perceptive abilities are stirred to enter into a multidirected dialogue with the film narrative or lack of it, with the film's visuals, as well as with its ways of acting. The

auteur appears here as a creator of the filmic experience, which is offered to the observer for further intellectual or emotional fulfillment.

That is why Fassbinder elicits emotions in the viewer and Makavejev expects the spectator to be his accomplice. Thus Fassbinder announces: “I think I go farther than he [Brecht] did in that I let the audience *feel and think*,”¹⁶⁵ and Makavejev reveals: “I deliberately inserted some moments, which, if the spectator remains in the cinema to see, he agrees to let the film make him its accomplice.”¹⁶⁶ It is this interplay play of emotions and cognitive responses which the viewer experiences in Fassbinder’s and Makavejev’s films that offers, in Makavejev’s words, the spectator an opportunity to choose to become an accomplice of the film. It is the viewer’s decision to remain in the cinema and participate in the films’ emotional and intellectual engagement and their liberating insights.

Both Makavejev’s *WR* and Fassbinder’s *Despair* operate and develop their arguments within frameworks of social engagements. These directors engage with politics in different ways. *WR* does it through an open play with the political icons such as Stalin, and *Despair* deals with metaphors and visual hints such as little chocolate men on the factory’s conveyer belt or Hitler’s poster on the wall, yet both films comment on the historical and political social settings they examine. This argument corroborates the fact that New Yugoslav and New German film movements are cinemas of political and social awareness. This is probably the most important characteristic, which puts these two national films into a close comparative proximity.

¹⁶⁵ Norbert Sparrow, “I Let Audience Feel and Think,” Interview with Rainer Werner Fassbinder, *Cineaste*, vol. VIII, no. 2, Fall 1977, p. 20.

¹⁶⁶ Raymond Durnat, op. cit., p. 55.

This chapter has been devoted to understanding the importance shared by both German and Yugoslav New Film creators of challenging historical myths and falsehoods upon which a state's credibility and political legitimacy are ultimately hinged. In summary, both Fassbinder's *Despair* and Makavejev's *WR* examine socio-historical subjects in their films. *Despair* is concerned with the Russian émigré, Hermann Hermann, a middle-aged man, who suffers identity crisis. He lives in the 1930s Berlin surrounded by violent signs of the emerging Nazism.

WR examines oppressive models of 1950s American society and McCarthyism through Wilhelm Reich's life in America, as well as Stalinism through the different documentary footages. Whereas Fassbinder builds his story by employing the linear narrative structure, Makavejev's film is a conglomerate of different filmic forms, such as documentary, interviews, feature film and photographs.

Although differences in the films' narrative and visual constructions can appear as unbridgeable, nevertheless, both films follow the same concept of undermining fixed filmic rules. Both auteurs use the new filmic language, in Pasolini's words, the cinema of poetry, to deconstruct social and historical fallacies in their films. Another point of convergence between *Despair* and *WR* is the usage of the alienation effect in the combination with emotions aimed at the viewer's intellectual and emotional engagement.

Both *Despair* and *WR* received widespread international recognition. As previously noted, *WR* won the Louis Buñuel Award for innovations in film at the Cannes Film Festival in 1972, and the FIPRESCI Award at the Berlin Film Festival the same year. In his analysis of *Despair*, Wallace Steadman Watson emphasizes that "Although the film had a disappointing opening at Cannes in the spring of 1978, Fassbinder has

ranked it among his best work. It won German Film Prizes in 1978 [...]. And it has come under substantial and sympathetic scrutiny from film critics.”¹⁶⁷ Such an international reception of *WR* and *Despair* points to the fact that these films were part of the transnational filmic circulation.

This transnational circulation of ideas is best recognized in the fact that both cinemas had to reinvent the ways of portraying social reality and the circumstances requiring radical response and an intellectual intervention that would change social attitudes. This argument will be elaborated in the next chapter. It discusses the ways in which history intervenes in the everyday lives of ordinary people and the individual caught in the entanglements of state terrorism that von Trotta’s *Marianne and Juliane* and Pavlovic’s *Ambush* portray.

¹⁶⁷ Wallace Steadman Watson, *Understanding Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Film as Private and Public Art*, Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1996, p. 189.

Chapter Three

Destination History

New film auteurs, both in Germany and Yugoslavia, encountered history as an ultimate question to tackle. For German directors, this was the challenge of their national cinema's survival and it resulted in the creation of New German Cinema that participated in the process of the cinematographic development and the transnational exchange of ideas from 1960s onwards.

Alexander Kluge's 1966 debut film *Yesterday Girl*, which deals with the consequences of Nazism in Germany, ushered German national cinema into a new era. This is "the first feature-length film of the New German Cinema to win an international prize."¹⁶⁸ Kaes emphasizes that Kluge's picture asserts, from the opening title, that "[...] there can be no escape from the past: 'No abyss separates us from yesterday, only the changed situation.' Like many later films of the New German Cinema, this film stresses continuities in German history where it seems most disjointed."¹⁶⁹ Margarethe von Trotta's 1981 *Marianne and Julianne*, which deals with the Baader-Meinhof terrorist group's actions and the state's violent response to it, talks about such a point in German history which is "disjointed." The 1970s are the period in German history when an armed youth movement emerged and executed spectacular killings. This provoked a brutal state

¹⁶⁸ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 9.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

reaction resulting in the deployment of serious police protection measures.¹⁷⁰ Von Trotta examines in her film the upsurge of violence and the origins of youth terrorism in the 1970s as belonging to a long line of historical ruptures originating in the state itself and its suppressive mechanisms.

In the second part of the 1960s, directors of New Yugoslav Film engaged with the struggle against the Communists' simplified and in many aspects "constructed" representation of history. From the end of WWII, the Communist story of WWII history was imposed on Yugoslav society through literature and history books as the main source for school curricula, and cinema with its potentials for propaganda. The film genre known as "Partisan films" served Communists as a mass-portal for the promotion of their grand historical narrative. The genre highlighted the theme of the National War of Liberation, led by Communist authorities and their leader Tito.

Partisan films lived a cocooned and parallel life in the Yugoslav cultural arena. As discussed in Chapter Two, Yugoslav Communists, after the break with the Soviets in 1948, embraced modernism as their representational system in all domains of culture, including architecture, literature and the visual arts. Such a dichotomy in cultural politics exposed two conflicting features of Communist politics: on the one hand, they needed to be an open political structure in international politics in order to balance successfully in the bipolar Cold War world between USSR and the West; and on the other hand, within the domestic political sphere, they had to support a historical representation which would give them not only the central, but the exclusive role as a defender of the country during WWII. The life of the genre of Partisan films overlaps with Tito's life. His life-long career as President and Supreme Commander of the Army extends from the end of the

¹⁷⁰ See: Editorial: "Germany's Danse Macabre," *New German Critique*, no. 12 Autumn, 1977, pp. 5-6.

war in 1945 to the end of his life in 1980. The last Partisan film, shot in 1979, *Battle of Eagles*, is about a Partisan air force, made by Hajrudin Krvavac and was produced only one year before Tito's death. It is not an exaggeration to say that the politics of Partisan films stayed calcified in the Stalinist way of thinking. In other words, they repeated the same schemata for decades. This point will be explored to a greater length later. The fact that these films continued to exist in a vacuum-like surrounding, not affected by changes in a society, seems even more incredible if seen in the light that

[...] domestic viewing of foreign films was tied to the dramatic opening and growth of film imports from the United States and Western Europe. In the years immediately following the war, the USSR clearly dominated the market with only a small trickle of films from the United States, Great Britain, and Italy and a somewhat larger share from France. Beginning in 1950, however, this picture was reversed, with the United States emerging as the dominant exporter of films to Yugoslavia, followed by France and Italy.¹⁷¹

Yet in the domain of history, Partisan films served to perpetuate the representation of the past which was exclusive, one sided and which Communists guarded as the taboo theme not to be questioned.

Pavlovic's 1969 *Ambush*, deconstructs the Communist representation of history. The auteur portrays events in a small Serbian town in the eastern part of Yugoslavia as they occur after the Partisans enter the town at the end of the war in 1945. Pavlovic employs conventional narrative structure to depict these events. The film examines the ways in which Communists establish and maintain their power in the small town. During the process they execute purges of the local population, both the peasantry and

¹⁷¹ Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 37.

bourgeoisie. Part of their strategy was also the manipulation of youth, who were required to obey new rules in order to participate in music and dancing festivals. In the background, the scattered but fierce civil war battles between the Partisans and the remnants of the Royal Yugoslav forces known as Chetniks continue. I will come to the Chetniks a bit latter in this chapter.

Although communist historians propagated that Yugoslav communists were engaged in the National Liberation War during WWII against its enemies, in their view both Germans and Chetniks, Tito himself, at one occasion, unintentionally acknowledged that Partisans had come to power thanks to the civil war against the Chetniks:

Instead of leading a revolution in the way Lenin and Trotsky had done, Tito was to present himself as a Yugoslav patriot, standing above the feuds of religion and history [...] in one of his television reminiscences, Tito let slip that of course he and the Communists had come to power because of the civil war.¹⁷²

It is this history of the struggle for power that Communists exerted on the population, which Pavlovic discusses in *Ambush*.

A discursive comparison between Pavlovic's and von Trotta's films, shows that the historical problems that they examine have a strong unifying line embodied in the theme of terrorism and particularly, state terrorism. Although there is a considerable time lapse between these two pictures, as well as discrepancies in their subject matter, these films represent the struggle for recognizing and revealing the respective histories of terrorism in Germany and Yugoslavia. Their national auteurs investigate the mechanisms of state oppression which are carried out under the premises of protection for that very state. Both films are examples of an exceptional audacity to talk about controversial

¹⁷² Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*, London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994, p. 118.

themes that are swept aside by governments, both in capitalist Germany and socialist Yugoslavia.

Furthermore, both *Marianne and Juliane* and *Ambush* are narrative films. Von Trotta and Pavlovic treat the subject of terrorism by deploying the classical filmic device of “realistic narrative” to convey the message of their social criticism. *Marianne and Juliane* examines the life of terrorist Gudrun Ensslin and her family background, and *Ambush* uses the love affair between Ivo, a Partisan, and Milica, the petit- bourgeois daughter of the local store owner, to talk about historical events.

An analysis of the strategies that these two films use to negotiate the classical means of story building to transfer criticism, is one of the elements which I utilize to develop a critical comparison. There is a widespread distrust among some film theorists and film auteurs in terms of the possibility for traditional narrative forms to convey historical truth. It is based on the belief that narrative film does not focus the viewer’s attention on the message the auteur wants to convey, but it redirects the viewer’s thoughts towards storytelling and its mechanisms. In the Second Chapter we saw that Makavejev and Fassbinder use different filmic strategies to discuss history. Whereas Makavejev’s *WR* assembles different filmic forms to tell the story of Reich, Fassbinder’s *Despair* is a linear narrative film. Yet the auteur undermines the classic narrative by employing an elaborate system of reflecting surfaces. This filmic device simultaneously employs the classic narrative while undermining its certainty. In addition, both auteurs use the alienation effect in the combination with emotions aimed at the viewer’s intellectual and emotional engagement.

In contrast to Makavejev's and Fassbinder's strategies of subverting the linear narrative system, Von Trotta and Pavlovic use narrative film in the mode displaying that various distancing effects are embedded in this system *per se*. The present cannot be seen independently from the past. One of the classical Hollywood techniques which addresses this is the flash-back that Von Trotta uses in her film. Yet the auteur blends flash-backs with the scenes of self-reflexivity. Such a filmic strategy at the same time supports and undermines the concept of narrative film.

Though Pavlovic does not deploy the flash-back model of narrativisation, he uses the narrative filmic structure to talk about the fallacies of the communists' construction of history and to reveal the Stalinists methods which they used to establish power. While the film's sub-plot follows the bureaucratic methods of persuasion and verbal pressures used by the newly established communist regional government, there are also the scenes of executions without trials, which disclose that these deaths are actually pre-meditated and part of a state strategy. This is evident in the sequence at the beginning of the film which depicts the execution of a man who pleads for his life crying: "Don't kill me please, two of my brothers are already killed." In order to understand *Ambush* and the complexities of the period which the film treats, it is necessary to revisit WWII history which is replete with complex relationships and events.¹⁷³

This history is not only underrepresented in Partisan films, but more often than not, it is also misrepresented. Goulding asserts that "Pavlovic's film was not kindly

¹⁷³ Literature dealing with different aspects of WWII in Yugoslavia is vast. Particularly helpful sources are: John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice there was a country*; Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic and the Allies, 1941-1945*; Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941-1945: Occupation and Collaboration*; Jozo Tomasevic: *The Chetniks*; Vladimir Dedijer, *Tito*; Fitzroy Maclean, *Tito*; Stevan K. Pavlowich, *Tito – Yugoslavia's Great Dictator: reassessment*; Richard West, *Tito and the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia*; Jelavich and Jelavich, *The Balkans in Transition*; Mark C. Wheeler, *Britain and the War for Yugoslavia, 1940-1943*.

received. After a brief run in Belgrade, it was banned for domestic circulation and was screened only at the 1969 Pula film festival.”¹⁷⁴ Such an historical analysis is important to put into perspective in terms of Pavlovic’s film vis à vis Partisan films.

Partisan Films or Codified Memory, and History

Taking into consideration that “The National War of Liberation waged by the Communist-commanded partisans in Yugoslavia was the central founding myth upon which the new Tito-led postwar government was built,”¹⁷⁵ it is not surprising that the genre of Partisan films served as an arena for the communists’ continual self-promotion. These films illustrate the Communist brigades’ battles against the Nazi forces or “Germans,” as the Nazi soldiers are usually referred to in these pictures. The stories range from those based on crude, black and white, clear-cut solutions and events involving simplistic depictions to those which are complex in their structure. Goulding discusses the development of this genre through the course of time from naiveté in the approach of the first period to the refinement in portraying strategies: “The abstract and idealized epics of the first period were replaced by intimate psychological portraiture and realistic, sometimes brutally naturalistic, depictions of the war and its aftermath.”¹⁷⁶ Goulding divides the first 15 years of post-1945 Yugoslav national film production in two phases: “Administrative Period –1945-1950” and “Decentralization and Breaking the Mold – 1951-1960.”¹⁷⁷ It is worth noticing that even in the first, Administrative Period, when only a small number of films were produced, the genre of Partisan films was not the only

¹⁷⁴ Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 102.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. xi.

filmic expression. Besides documentaries and short films treating socialist reconstruction, there were several feature films made that mostly dealt with a question of revolutionary past and the process of postwar renewal. Two films with novel themes that stand out are, Aleksandar Vuco's 1948 *Sofka*, a film adaptation of the 19th century novel, and Vladimir Pogacic's 1949 *Story of a Factory*, which talks about the everyday problems of workers building a new society. Yet, what is common for most of the films produced during these two phases of the fifties and early sixties, with an exception of literature film adaptations, is that all these films broadcast a concept of a progressive socialist society carrying out the promise of a bright future.

National film production is divided into two phases and Goulding bases his argument on the fact the legislative act was passed on June 27 1950 which was known as the law for workers self-management. This law was the first sign of the politics of openness, which Titoist communism expressed. The Yugoslav socialist experience in all its specificity was based on different models of "[...] structural changes including the introduction of workers' self-management, Party reform, and political and economic decentralization."¹⁷⁸ This law also meant that "the Yugoslav film industry begun to undergo deep and fundamental changes."¹⁷⁹ These changes created a national cinema that moved from the first five-year period of a highly centralized production system and distribution toward a decentralization of

[...] the three main areas of film activity: film production, film trade and film distribution and theatrical showing [...] with film production falling under the category of economic activity with special cultural significance; film trade under

¹⁷⁸ Gerson S. Sher, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁷⁹ Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 35.

the category of domestic and international commerce; and networks of film distribution and theatrical showing.¹⁸⁰

Here Goulding discusses the policy of production and distribution that Communist authorities considered as part of economy and as such an important segment of Party reform and, in Sher's words, "structural changes" and "economic decentralization."¹⁸¹ The first Partisan film, which was also the first feature film in postwar Yugoslavia, was 1947 *Slavica* by Vjekoslav Afric, who chose to set his film on an island off the Adriatic coast. Taking into account that the majority of battles between Partisans and Germans occurred during WWII, in the mountainous part of Bosnia, it is curious that the setting for the first Partisan film was the Adriatic coast, which, in the minds of many viewers, would have been connected more with the beautiful scenery than with the hardships of rugged mountain battles.¹⁸²

The film follows Partisans, among whom are a young couple in love, Marin and Slavica, as they develop and implement various strategies of resistance which culminate in sea battles against a German destroyer. After the battle in which Slavica dies, Partisans sink the German boat and succeed in liberating a major city on the coast, Split. The film's simplistic narrative structure follows all the rules of Socialist Realism as a tool for propaganda. Although the genre of Partisan films, as Goulding points out, underwent stylistic changes throughout the fifties and sixties which resulted in a more profound

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Gerson S. Sher, Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 16. Goulding asserts that Vjekoslav Antic, who was trained as a theater director, "had picked up what skills in film direction he could as an assistant director to the well known Soviet director Abram Room, in shooting the film *In the Mountains of Yugoslavia* in 1946."

psychological character development implying a variety of different types, this film is important since it set a structural frame for many other subsequent Partisan films:

Finally, the film *Slavica* is built on a structural model which was to be emulated by most of the other early Partisan films of this period. It is a pattern which begins by affirming Partisan-led local initiatives in specific locales, involving the distinctive nationalities of the region, and builds organically to an affirmation of the epic all-Yugoslav character of its leadership and heroes – with Tito presented as the preeminent heroic unifying symbol [...].¹⁸³

Though the author here emphasizes that the film *Slavica* served as a model for early Partisan films, I would argue that Goulding's analysis of the ways in which Partisan films were conceptualized in the early period, is applicable to all other Partisan films throughout the fifties, sixties and seventies. Central to this genre, as Goulding points out, is the concept which acknowledges "specific locales, involving the distinctive nationalities," and thus serves as the overarching model for all nations of Yugoslavia, united by the mutual idea of Communism embodied in the supreme figure of Tito.

This conceptual structure adhered to all the subsequent Partisan films, no matter how far they were from *Slavica* in terms of perfected visuals or more developed psychological character structure or deepened narrative. They are produced to convey the truth about the war imposing their historical account as exclusive. The Partisan master-narrative informs the viewer that there were only Partisans who fought the enemy in WWII. In this sense, during the period of communist Yugoslavia, these films played the role of educational tools for young generations as well as the wider public. The Partisan films I am referring to here are those which followed all of the rules of the genre such as

¹⁸³ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

those made by directors Veljko Bulajic, and his 1962 *Kozara*, and 1969 *Battle of Neretva*, or Stipe Delic' 1973 *Sutjeska*.

In the second half of the 1960s, a new cluster of films, dealing with themes of war in innovative ways, emerged. Goulding investigates these films in the chapter entitled, "Confrontation with the Revolutionary Past."¹⁸⁴ These pictures are done by directors from Belgrade, Aleksandar Petrovic, Purisa Djordjevic, Mica Popovic, and a filmmaker from Zagreb, Vatroslav Mimica.

Petrovic's 1965 *Three* is probably one of the most successful war films of the era gaining wide international acclaim. Petrovic's film conceptually undermines the codes of the Partisan films genre by deploying devices such as delving into "a concrete intimate psychological portrait of an ordinary Partisan warrior caught in the matrix of confused and morally ambiguous events."¹⁸⁵ It is this understanding of confusion and ambiguity that an individual experiences in front of danger the unknown which the film *Three* is exploring. This film can be interpreted as a filmic example of the different ways in which the topic of WWII can be treated, as opposed to the one-sided approach of Partisan films. Goulding analyzes this film as confronting "the Revolutionary Past," in other words, confronting the legacies of the Partisan film genre which provide a formulaic interpretation of war's reality. The model that is the basis for all Partisan films is the concept of an individual who, although paying a high price, controls the events she or he is plunged into.

It is safe to say that Partisan films were conceptually envisioned as a collection of films aimed to depict all the major battles that Tito's partisans fought during the war. The

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 85.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 90.

official history of the National War of Liberation describes it as consisting of seven enemy's offensives. Goulding succinctly encapsulates the common denominator for all of the offensives "in which superior enemy forces attempted to encircle and annihilate Tito's main forces. Each time the ring was broken, and, after suffering terrible losses, the Partisans regrouped, grew in strength, and fought again."¹⁸⁶ Petrovic's *Three* exposes the standardized representation of the war depicted in Partisan films.

Veljko Bulajic is considered to be the most important filmmaker of the Partisan films, which were "expensively produced, well-crafted and enormously popular film epics of the War of Liberation."¹⁸⁷ He was trained in the Centro Sperimentale in Rome, and made two important films at the beginning of his career in a Neorealist fashion which treated everyday rural themes in the postwar process of renovation and industrialization. His 1958 *Train without a Time Schedule* deals with the government organized migration of population from the rocky and poor south of the country to the prosperous north and its fertile farmland. His second neorealist feature is 1961 *City in Ferment* which depicts workers' lives in an industrial city in Bosnia. These two Neorealist pictures made Bulajic one of the most important directors of the 1960s. Yet he did not use Neorealism as a springboard to embark on a quest for new filmic modalities. Bulajic did not participate in the New Film movement of the 1960s. Instead, he started by directing Partisan films which soon became synonymous with his name.

Bulajic's 1962 Partisan film *Kozara* portrays the Third Enemy Offensive which took place in the forests of the Kozara mountain in Bosnia. His 1969 *Battle of Neretva* depicts the Fourth Enemy Offensive in the winter of 1943, which is also known as the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

“Battle for the Wounded.” It occurred near the Neretva River in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During this offensive the Partisans were encircled by Germans but succeeded in breaking the ring and carrying away their wounded comrades to a safe zone. *Battle of Neretva* was a major state film production which involved many international stars such as: Sergei Bondarchuk, Yul Brynner, Orson Welles, Curt Jürgens, Hardy Krüger, Sylva Koscina as well as other top-ranking international actors, many of whom participated in many of Bulajic’s Partisan films.

The film, which portrays the Fifth Enemy Offensive or “Operation Schwarz”¹⁸⁸ that occurred near the Sutjeska River in the period of May-June of 1943, is Stipe Delic’s 1973 *Sutjeska*. It is interesting that Bulajic was offered the role of director for the film, but he refused. This film is one of the most expensive productions in the history of Yugoslav cinema. Similar to Bulajic’s *Battle of Neretva*, *Sutjeska* is also an international project with actor Richard Burton portraying Tito and Sergei Bondarchuk, with Wolf Mankovitsch writing the screenplay. *Sutjeska* represents a hyper-glorification of Tito’s persona, and depicts Partisan sacrifices and their struggles against a much stronger adversary. The battle is depicted as the victory of the Partisan forces which, after having sustained tremendous losses, succeed in breaking the enemy circle and carrying away their wounded. Such a cinematic representation of the Fifth Enemy Offensive is questionable, since most historical sources are cautious about proclaiming it as a decisive victory. The Partisans fought their way out but they “[...] had lost about 7,000 fighters, more than a third of their army [...]”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as history: twice there was a country*, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 220.

¹⁸⁹ Richard West, op. cit., p. 158.

In May of 1943, the joint Axis forces of more than 127,000 soldiers attacked approximately “20,000 Partisans who, while sustaining heavy losses, were inflicting equal if not heavier casualties on the Germans and their allies.”¹⁹⁰ The Germans wrongly anticipated an Allied invasion of the Balkan Peninsula and engaged an enormous number of troops to reclaim the terrain from the Partisans. Roberts explains that “[...] the German commander of the operation, General Rudolf Lüters, announced that ‘the last phase of the battle, the hour of the final liquidation of the Tito Army, has come.’”¹⁹¹ On May 28, 1943, the British and Canadian military emissaries, Captain F.W. Deakin and Captain W.F. Stuart, who had spent several years living in the Balkans and learning languages, parachuted into the zone where the Partisan headquarter was located. Their task was to synchronize “Partisan efforts with the Allied offensive in the Mediterranean.”¹⁹² The British had executed many missions that were supposed to detect and estimate the results of local resistance.

Before the war, Yugoslavia was divided along national lines and different ethnicities in the parliament were represented by their respective national political parties which resented Serbian political hegemony. The only “Yugoslav Party” was the Communist Party, which was outlawed and unable to participate in political life. Disagreements among Yugoslav nations resulted in an easy dismemberment of the country by the Axis. As a consequence, during the war “there were only two groups who could be expected to have a stake in resistance: the Serbs and the Communists.”¹⁹³ In the period from 1941-1942, the British government supported the Chetniks. A British

¹⁹⁰ Walter R. Roberts, *Tito, Mihailovic and the Allies, 1941-1945*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1987, First Edition 1973, p. 118.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 118.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 47.

mission undertaken in 1943 changed this situation. After their emissaries realized that the Partisans were better organized and more effective in their fight against the Nazi forces, the Foreign Office redirected its help towards the Communists. This decision had decisive consequences on the civil war between the Chetniks and the Partisans. Mihailovic became a scapegoat for Tito.

Several days after their arrival, Stuart was killed by a German bomb and Deakin and Tito were wounded. In post-war history this event became a legend, an indispensable part of a school curriculum claiming that Tito's German shepherd dog, Rex, sacrificed his life to save Tito by jumping onto him before the bomb hit. West mentions this event, stressing that "Nobody at the time believed the story, later a legend, that Tito's dog had died in an effort to shield his master."¹⁹⁴ Djilas, in his 1977 book *Wartime*, comments on Tito's characteristics as a military commander:

Tito exhibited nervousness, even rashness, in issuing commands. While he was confident in determining strategy that was more political than military in character, as a commander he reacted too quickly to the changes so inevitable in war, and as a result frequently changed his orders. Temperamental by nature, with an exceptional sense of danger and a keen, quick intelligence, in battle he didn't have the necessary detachment, and often moved large units to protect himself and the staff.¹⁹⁵

At this point it is important to elucidate the role of Djilas, a Montenegrin who studied philosophy at the University of Belgrade before WWII, and was one of Tito's closest associates from the very beginning. As previously mentioned, he was also the

¹⁹⁴ Richard West, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁹⁵ Milovan Djilas, *Wartime*, trans. Michael B. Petrovich, New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977, p. 222.

most famous Communist dissident from the 1950s. During the war, he held a high ranking position in the Communist Party and in the Partisan army. After the war he was among people around Tito who governed the Party and country, having close insights into the Party organization. In the early 1950s, he became bitterly disappointed in Communism, recognizing that the Party itself had become a social class, which had unrestrained and uncontrolled access to national resources and products.

After getting in contact with the British Labour Party member Bevan at the time, he wrote a book *The New Class* in which he stated that the Communist Party, both in Yugoslavia and the USSR, was the first historical example of a social class which had not come into being as a consequence of the production relations in the Marxist sense of the word, but as the product of the political relations and politics. Tito offered him the chance to recant his opinion and to re-embrace Communism. Djilas refused, was imprisoned for several years and after his release in the 1960s, he continued living in Belgrade and writing.

During the war, Djilas participated in battles and performed crucially important tasks for Partisans. In June of 1943, the Supreme Staff and the central Partisan formations succeeded in breaking out across the Sutjeska River after splitting the army into two groups.¹⁹⁶ They left the central hospital and around 6,500 wounded soldiers undefended.¹⁹⁷ Djilas headed one of these groups that tried to save wounded comrades. He talks about the moral dilemmas concerning the wounded:

It was certainly not easy for Tito; he was faced with a most terrible decision, unacceptable to himself or the army [...]. I was no less concerned over the opinion and the mood of the officers and even the common soldiers, around me,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 260.

¹⁹⁷ See: John R. Lampe, op. cit., 220.

who were aware of the hopelessness of our situation, and by the same token, of the senselessness of our struggle over the wounded [...]. Finally Tito sent us his approval to leave the wounded in the canyons and retreat with the Supreme Staff units.¹⁹⁸

Following Hitler's instructions, German commander-in-chief General Alexander Löhr ordered and carried out their killing.

Delic's *Sutjeska* brushes off these historical facts and eventually became a success during the 1973 Pula Film Festival, winning the Golden Arena award.¹⁹⁹ Yet the spectacle surrounding the film began much earlier, actually during its shooting, when Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, along with Tito and his wife Jovanka Broz, showed up together at the Pula Film Festival in 1971.²⁰⁰ The film *Sutjeska*, while paying homage to Partisan fighters and their extraordinary heroism and sacrifice, is also an example of an historical representation translated into a spectacle in the service of propaganda. The film does not tell the whole truth about the event, and glosses over, probably the most tragic episode of Partisan history during WWII. Djilas discusses in his book *Wartime*, the Partisans' "failure to save the wounded."²⁰¹ *Sutjeska* received accolades in the official film critique. However, a more critical reaction to the Partisan films and their propagandistic role, or, what Goulding would call, "confrontation with the revolutionary past," came with the New Yugoslav Film during the second half of the sixties.

¹⁹⁸ Milovan Djilas, op. cit., pp. 264-5.

¹⁹⁹ See: website pulafilmfestival.hr. The version of the website in Croatian lists each year of the Pula Film Festival since its beginning in 1954.

²⁰¹ Richard West, op. cit., p. 158.

Pavlovic's 1969 *Ambush* is a severe critique of the Communist representation of history. Whereas Petrovic's 1965 *Three*, explores the war from the standpoint of its protagonist, *Ambush* is a direct intervention into Communist historical representation and its credibility. By portraying the representatives of all the groups that participated in the historical drama of the National Liberation War, which ran parallel with the civil war, *Ambush* talks about often concealed facts in official Yugoslav historiography. What is the Communist version of history that Pavlovic deconstructs in his film? The answer requires delving briefly into the history of the civil war between Partisans and Chetniks during WWII.

As discussed, the history of WWII is represented in the genre or the group of films known as Partisan films, in an easily readable, clear-cut manner. The war is divided into seven enemy offensives with the battles taking place between Partisans and Germans but also against Chetniks. Partisan films always show the Partisans fighting both Germans and Chetniks so that the viewer thinks that Germans and Chetniks were fighting together against Partisans. This view was almost simultaneously established in official historiography, literature and the Partisan films. Yet, the historical picture shows that not only were a host of different agencies at play during the war, but also that Partisans were not the exclusive defenders of the country. Chetniks, as representatives of the Royal Yugoslav forces, were fighting against Germans, but Partisans and Chetniks were also fighting among themselves. The civil war in Yugoslavia raged from the beginning of WWII until its end.

On March 27, 1941, Serbian officers of the Yugoslav Royal Army executed a coup d'état against Prince Paul, the Regent who governed the country in the name of

King Aleksandar's 11 year old son Petar, after the King was assassinated in Marseilles in 1934. The Prince Regent Paul, "[...] to both Serbians and Croats, [...] was a 'foreigner.' English in his tastes and with many personal and ideological ties with Russian tsarism, he readily succumbed – like a few members of the English aristocracy – to the antidemocratic appeals of Nazism."²⁰² The coup elevated the son of assassinated King Aleksandar to the throne as King Petar II. He was 17 years old at the time.

The military coup was a reaction in general to Prince Paul's policy of "Yugoslavia's economic servitude to Germany,"²⁰³ but the immediate cause was the Tripartite Pact with Germany, which Prince Paul and the Yugoslav Government signed on March 25, having Hitler's assurances that "the best way to keep peace in the Balkans was for the Yugoslavs to join the Tripartite Pact."²⁰⁴ Two days later, on the early morning of March 27, massive demonstrations in support of the military coup took to the streets of Belgrade chanting, "better war than pact" and "better grave than slave."²⁰⁵ Sometime in the early afternoon, groups of people carrying Communist flags and placards joined the demonstrators, singing the popular song, the "International." Lampe in his analysis mentions that the Communists "[...] did not join these otherwise spontaneous crowds until late morning. Only then were their slogans demanding alliance with the Soviet Union seen alongside the early banners calling for 'better war than pact' and 'better grave than slave.'"²⁰⁶ Lampe's assertion is corroborated by Vera Petkovic, then a student at the University of Belgrade, who participated in the demonstrations that day, and who was there from the early morning. Her account is that the Communists appeared only late that

²⁰² Jelavich and Jelavich ed., *The Balkans in Transition*, The University of California Press, 1963, p. 341.

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 342.

²⁰⁴ Walter R. Roberts, op. cit., p. 12.

²⁰⁵ See: John R. Lampe, op. cit., pp. 202-3.

²⁰⁶ John R. Lampe, op. cit. p. 202.

day. This information is from a series of interviews with her about these events, conducted at several occasions in her apartment in Vancouver during the fall of 2008.

The Belgrade demonstrations provoked “Winston Churchill’s famous reaction to the coup that ‘now Yugoslavia has found its soul.’”²⁰⁷ It is interesting to note that the Communists, in their post-war history, claimed that the mass demonstrations of March 27 were organized by the Communist Party, and presented Churchill’s statement as an indirect tribute to their policy.

Though the coup was in preparation for several months, with the Tripartite Pact as its initial spark, it seems that the British Special Operations Executive had a role in it, because “the British SOE in Belgrade has claimed some small credit for persuading the initiators to act fast.”²⁰⁸ Lampe asserts, however, that

[...] neither General Dusan Simovic, [who] had commanded the large Yugoslav air force, and was one of a number of Serbian officers being courted by the British Embassy [...] nor his deputy [...] who orchestrated the participation of military units in the coup [...] received enough support or instructions from contacts with British intelligence operatives in the air attaché’s office to justify any claim that London had directed the coup.²⁰⁹

Wheeler’s analysis of the documents in his 1980 book *Britain and the War for Yugoslavia, 1940-1943*, concludes that “[...] analysis of Britain’s role in the coup d’ état of 27 March makes it plain that however active SOE’s agents may have been in arousing and coordinating Serb hostility to the Tripartite Pact, their contacts and influence played

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Walter R. Roberts, op. cit., p. 14.

²⁰⁹ John R. Lampe, op. cit., p. 202.

an insignificant part in the actual preparation and execution of the putsch.”²¹⁰ Yet, some modern Serbian historians’ position is that the coup was a direct result of British intelligence service involvement. The coup served the interests of the British to hinder Hitler’s advent to the Middle East. For Yugoslavia, and especially Belgrade, its consequences were disastrous, because Hitler’s air forces attacked the city soon after.

The Yugoslav Communist Party claimed that the demonstrations of March 27 were the product of the Communist Party organization. It was represented in post-war history as one of the most important dates of the National Liberation War. As such, it figured in the school curricula throughout the existence of Titoist Yugoslavia. Lampe gives an explanation about the methods Communists used to forge the documents:

After the war, Communists would claim that their supporters took the lead and dominated the Belgrade demonstrations. Propaganda photographs had clocks cut out of them to obscure the fact that that the KPJ did not join these otherwise spontaneous crowds until late morning. Only then were their slogans demanding alliance with the Soviet Union seen alongside the early banners calling for “better war than pact” and “better grave than slave.”²¹¹

To understand the dubious nature of the Communist claim, it is enough to follow their indecisive politics at the time. The pact between Hitler and Stalin, signed in August of 1939, was still in effect. This ended when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Lampe asserts that during the demonstrations in Belgrade, “Tito was in Zagreb and needed to approve a decision that would openly flaunt the Hitler – Stalin

²¹⁰ Mark C. Wheeler, *Britain and the War for Yugoslavia, 1940-1943*, New York: East European Monographs, No. LXIV, Columbia University Press, 1980, p. 49.

²¹¹ John R. Lampe, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-3.

pact.”²¹² Lampe continues that Tito “[...] had received Comintern instructions earlier, in 1940 [...] to begin preparing a ‘united front from below’ to oppose Nazi expansions, but this was to be the first act of open Opposition.”²¹³ Tito came to Belgrade in May of 1941 in order to organize resistance against Nazi occupation and to instigate the revolution that would unite all the nations of Yugoslavia. He lived in a fancy, park-like suburb, in the house of a newspaper magnate, organizing resistance to the Nazi occupiers. Yet it is unclear what the level of these resistance preparations was. Roberts offers this assessment of Communist engagement early in the war:

The role of the Communist Party in Yugoslavia between March 25, the day Yugoslavia joined the Tripartite Pact, and the German attack on the Soviet Union on June 22 has been the subject of many contentions from those who say that the Communists sat on their hands, continuing to subscribe to the Communist theory that this was the struggle between the British “imperialists” and the Axis, to those who declare that the Communists rose against the occupiers long before June 22, 1941. The truth lies somewhere in between.²¹⁴

The post-war Communists’ appropriation of the spontaneous March demonstrations is one of the examples of their manipulative representation of history, which operated as a systemic, constitutive element in the dynamics of their seizure of power during WWII. The most important element in this dynamic situation was certainly the Communist interpretation of the country’s civil war. The Communists did not characterize it as such, but rather as their fight against the enemy and their collaborators.

²¹² Ibid., p. 203.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Walter R. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Hitler's response to the coup d'état in Belgrade was that Yugoslavia should be "destroyed as quickly as possible."²¹⁵ On April 6, 1941, he launched a ferocious air attack on undefended Belgrade.²¹⁶ German bombers pounded the city from early Sunday morning to the afternoon, inflicting "far more physical damage and psychological shock on the capital of Belgrade than on any other part of the country."²¹⁷ Yugoslavia declared war on Germany and Italy on April 7. Axis aggression followed soon in a form of the ten-day blitzkrieg, which the Yugoslav army could not match. The Yugoslav Royal Army was in disarray and it could offer only minor opposition in Serbia and even less in Slovenia. The blitzkrieg "found more collaborators in Croatia than elsewhere."²¹⁸ What followed the event was the partition of Yugoslavia.

The German occupation representatives created the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna drzava Hrvatska*, NDH) on April 10, proclaiming Ante Pavelic as its leader. Dalmatia, Kosovo, and parts of Montenegro and Slovenia were occupied by Italians. Young King Petar II and the Simovic government fled the country for London via Jerusalem. In Belgrade, two representatives of the absent royal government capitulated on April 17. Germans entering Serbia established a puppet government under the leadership of Milan Nedic.

The Nazi occupiers captured and deported nearly 200,000 officers and soldiers from the Yugoslav army, primarily ethnic Serbians. One of the officers who was not captured was Draza Mihailovic, who fled to the mountainous region of Serbia and vowed to continue fighting for liberation. Many officers and soldiers of the defeated Yugoslav

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

²¹⁶ Emir Kusturica begins his film *Underground* with the scenes depicting the bombing of the Belgrade Zoo during the air attack on April 6, 1941.

²¹⁷ John R. Lampe, op. cit., p. 204.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 203.

army shared this allegiance. Mihailovic became the leader of the “non-Communist Serbian Resistance to the occupation [...] Mihailovic was a man in whom defeated Serbia and a defiant Churchill government soon placed exaggerated hopes.”²¹⁹ Mihailovic chose the name Chetniks, which was the term that referred to the Serbian mountain guerilla formations that existed during the 400 years of Ottoman rule. This term reappeared in WWI to designate Bosnian Serb guerrillas who were organized to fight against the Austro-Hungarian army. Mihailovic obviously wanted to tie his resistance movement with “the long and esteemed tradition of the Serbian fighting guerillas.”²²⁰ Mihailovic, who had a long army career and many contacts in the field, such as his friendship with De Gaulle from the Saint Cyr military academy, did not consider himself as a guerilla fighter but as a professional soldier performing his duty.

However, Mihailovic’s Chetniks were not the only military formation which bore the Chetnik label. During the initial months of the war some groups emerged, which used the same name and which collaborated with the occupiers. These groups performed atrocities, not only against other nationalities, but also against the Serbian people. They were outside of Mihailovic’s control. Fred Singleton cites a German intelligence report:

The *Četnik* units are divided into three groups, those of Kosta Pecanac which supported the Nedic government, those of General Novakovic which lean towards the Communists, and the anti-Communist units of Staff-Colonel Mihailovic. Mihailovic is against Pecanac and Novakovic. His supporters are mainly officers. His organization is purely military. He rejects the Communists because he is of the opinion that the time has not yet come for a general uprising. He would like to organize the entire country and then to attack.²²¹

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

²²⁰ Jozo Tomasevic, *The Chetniks*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975, p. 125.

²²¹ Fred Singleton, *Twentieth-Century Yugoslavia*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, p. 90.

Mihailovic's goal was to establish contact with the royal government in exile in order to ask for "[...] recognition as an army readying itself to fight the German occupiers in Serbia and, more immediately, to render assistance to the Serb villages in Bosnia and Croatia being massacred or cleansed by Ustaša units of the NDH."²²² The genocide that was committed in Croatia during WWII was planned and conducted by the "[...] *Ustaša – hrvatska revolucionarna organizacija* (Uprising – Croatian Revolutionary Organization) [...]"²²³ The Ustaša was a Croatian anti-Yugoslav separatist movement that was formed before WWII as a terrorist organization. King Alexander was their main target. After failed assassination attempt in Zagreb, together with the Macedonian separatist movement VMRO, they succeeded in killing the king during his visit to Marseilles in 1934.²²⁴

Lampe asserts that the NDH government and the Ustaša regime had a clear strategic plan to execute genocide over Serbian population in Croatia. He emphasizes that "Pavelic's education minister, Mile Budak, openly announced that one-third of the new state's 1.9 million Serbs would be deported to Serbia, another third converted to the Catholic faith [...]. The other third [...] would simply be killed."²²⁵ In devising and conducting genocide in Croatia, the Ustaša regime acted independently. Lampe explains the relationship between German authorities and the NDH:

The powerful Axis presence [in Croatia] may have put the Pavelic regime in power, but it did not control it or set its agenda. From this regime sprung the most savage intolerance seen anywhere in Europe during the Second World War,

²²² John R. Lampe, op. cit., p. 206.

²²³ Ibid., p. 175. Lampe uses throughout his book the original term in Serbian or Croatian, the "Ustaša," which is a singular. The plural of the word in Serbian/Croatian is "Ustaše." The term has been anglicized as *Ustashe*, *Ustashes* or *Ustashi*. I follow Lampe's designation.

²²⁴ John R. Lampe, op. cit., p. 176.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

outside of the Nazi regime itself. Its overriding purpose was to create an ethnically pure Croatian state from Serbs, Jews and gypsies would be permanently cleansed.²²⁶

Singleton emphasizes that “Even the Germans and Italians intervened on occasions to restrain the Ustaša from their more extreme brutalities [...]”²²⁷ What kind of savagery was carried out by the Ustaša describes Nora Levin:

When unleashed after April 1941, the Ustashi murdered and tortured Jews and Serbs in indescribably bestial fashion. One of the most notorious camps in Hitler’s Europe, Jasenovac, was in Croatia. Here the Ustashi used primitive implements in putting their victims to Death – knives, axes, hammers, and other iron tools. A characteristic method was binding pairs of prisoners, back to back, and then throwing them into Sava River. One source estimates that 770.000 Serbs, 40.000 Gypsies and 20.000 Jews were done to death in the Jasenovac camp.²²⁸

Mihailovic’s request for the recognition of his army by the government in exile was supported by the appearance of thousands of corpses floating down the Danube and Sava rivers, which gave evidence of Ustaša’s crimes. Mihailovic’s declaration of goals focused on the narrow concerns of the Chetnik resistance movement, which was aimed at solely protecting the Serbs without explicitly mentioning the Jews and Gypsies, who were also killed by the Ustaša. In 1941, the Yugoslav government in exile in London first appointed Mihailovic a general and then its Minister of Defense.

The Communists were also preparing to resist the occupiers. After the Stalin-Hitler pact collapsed on June 22, 1941, when Hitler’s forces attacked Russia, Tito felt free to proceed with organizing the resistance. The Communists envisioned it as a

²²⁶ Ibid., pp. 208-9.

²²⁷ Fred Singleton, op. cit., p. 89.

²²⁸ Nora Levin, *The Holocaust – The Destruction of European Jewry 1933-1945*, New York: Schocken Books, 1973, pp. 514-5.

republic-wide uprising. The first uprising occurred in a town in Serbia when a Serbian Partisan killed a local gendarme, also a Serb, on July 7. In the ensuing months, the Communists succeeded in accomplishing their goal spreading dissent all over Yugoslavia. They shrewdly chose dates for uprisings that coincided with either important religious or state holidays that saw large groups of people at communal gatherings. At this point a fight started between Partisans and Chetniks. Stevan K. Pavlowitch evaluates the situation:

So different were the conditions in partitioned Yugoslavia that in one year there had been three different mass risings, in three different regions, for three different reasons, against three different enemies. In the NDH, the Serbs had risen in self-defense against extermination by Croatian pro-Axis extremists. In Serbia, they had risen against the Germans in an upsurge of patriotic, Pro-Allied optimism. In Montenegro, they had risen against an Italian formal attempt to put the clock back. Soon divided in Communists and anti-Communists, the insurgents were thereafter to fight a civil war between themselves which, more often than not, took first place over the original aims of their respective risings.²²⁹

Lampe discusses the relationship between the Communists and the Chetniks during the early phases of WWII: “[...] according to Milovan Djilas, the top leadership saw as its enemy not only the Croatian Ustaša but also the ‘groups of (Serbian) officers hiding in the mountains of western Serbia,’ who would be rivals for postwar power.”²³⁰

Nonetheless, during the autumn of 1941, Tito and Mihailovic met three times to discuss a possible collaboration in order to fight the occupiers. Yet, the insurmountable differences in their political positions and goals prevented any of the agreements from being kept.

²²⁹ Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Yugoslavia's great dictator: a reassessment*, London: C. Hirst and Co., 1992, p. 122.

²³⁰ John R. Lampe, op. cit., p. 207.

These were two different concepts of resistance: “Mihailovic wanted to save the Serbs, while Tito wanted to use the war to establish a Communist state, with himself as its President.”²³¹ Mihailovic’s goal was to set up an organization which would prepare the country for the favorable circumstances of a future landing by the Allies in Yugoslavia, along with using these forces to rise against the occupiers. However, entering into serious clashes with the enemy or creating diversions to slow the Axis forces, was not the strategy of Mihailovic’s Chetniks. After horrifying reprisals took place in the Serbian towns of Kraljevo and Kragujevac on October 21, when 7000 people were executed, among them many high-school boys, as well as one German soldier who refused to shoot, Mihailovic became more determined to continue the policy of waiting.

Lampe explains: “The slaughter of so many Serbs reinforced Mihailovic’s resistance to the Communist strategy of consciously provoking German reprisals in order to drive survivors into the hills and into their ranks.”²³² Although the Wehrmacht’s High Command announced that “100 civilians were to be executed for every German soldier killed in the future and 50 for each one wounded... Partisan attacks and attendant killings continued into October despite advertised reprisals.”²³³ General Franz Böhme, the German Army commander for Serbia, “[...] decided to set a still harsher example [...]”²³⁴ that resulted in massive executions in Kraljevo and Kragujevac. Discrepancy in their political goals cannot fully explain the different strategies Partisans and Chetniks pursued in their fighting. Partisans appeared more adamant, since they followed their

²³¹ Richard West, op. cit., p. 112.

²³² John R. Lampe, op. cit., p. 217.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

revolutionary goals to change the social order. Differences were much more substantial, comprising many different points including organizational skills as well:

The Partisans were revolutionaries, the Chetniks were for the restoration of the *status quo ante*. The Partisans appealed to the broad masses of all Yugoslavia, but the Chetniks restricted their appeal, with minor exceptions, to the Serbs [...]. The Partisan movement was an organization of young people [...]. The Partisans were clean shaven – Tito never missed a day shaving even during the most difficult battles. While the Chetniks were an older group, they looked much more so because they – and Mihailovic – let their beards grow in the old Serbian tradition [...]. Women played an important role in the Partisan movement, none among the Chetniks. The Partisans were a highly disciplined, centrally directed organization, the Chetniks were much less coordinated and Mihailovic's influence over Chetnik units beyond his immediate control was tenuous [...]. While the Partisans were led by a political leader and the Chetniks by an expertly trained officer of the General Staff, it is significant that many Partisan leaders other than Tito had had fighting experience in the Spanish Civil War, while the Chetnik leaders as, Yugoslav Army officers, had practically no battle experience at all.²³⁵

At the beginning of the war, it was Mihailovic who was supported by the British. In Roberts' words, Mihailovic was an "Allied Hero" through 1942.²³⁶ His fame spread beyond Yugoslavia's borders: "In the United States, *Time* magazine selected Mihailovic as the most popular Allied general in 1942, together with MacArthur, Timoshenko and Chiang Kai-shek."²³⁷ British military help, in the form of ammunition and medical aid, was Mihailovic's bargaining chip in his talks with Tito. However, not long after their last talk in November, they started to fight each other. This was a civil war, in which both

²³⁵ Walter R. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 48-50.

²³⁶ Walter R. Roberts, op. cit., pp. 26-80.

²³⁷ Richard West, op. cit., 115.

sides prioritized the fight against the other side over resistance to the enemy. For Tito, the outcome of this struggle would determine the success of the Revolution, whose aim was to overthrow the old royalist system; for Mihailovic, it was a matter of protecting the pre-war monarchy, in other words, the status quo.

Although Tito and Mihailovic were engaged in civil war, the Germans “regarded the Partisans and Chetniks as practically equal foes [...]. A price of 100,000 gold marks was placed equally on the heads of Tito and Mihailovic.”²³⁸ This offer was published and broadcast all over Yugoslavia on July 21, 1943, and was used by Mihailovic’s supporters during his trial as the evidence that he fought against the Axis forces. It is not surprising that this fact goes unmentioned in official Communist historiography. The other important historical fact that Communist historiography does not mention is that the Communists, similar to the Chetniks, also negotiated with the Germans during the war. Roberts discusses the German-Partisan negotiations at length and describes the position of the Partisans in the autumn of 1942:

Clearly, the Soviets were not sending them help. At the same time, the Partisans had proof that the British were supporting Mihailovic. The Italians were not in an aggressive mood, and there were hints from German sources that some kind of accommodation might be possible. Should this not be probed further so that the Partisan could be free to pursue the civil war and finish off the Chetniks?²³⁹

During the negotiations about prisoner exchanges near Sarajevo in March of 1943, a German memorandum states that “the Partisans saw no reason for fighting the German Army – they added that they fight against German troops only in self-defense – but wish

²³⁸ Walter R. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-8.

solely to fight the Chetniks.”²⁴⁰ Roberts asserts that this German memorandum of conversation is confirmed by a document which was signed by the three Partisan emissaries, among whom the principal negotiator was Djilas, who “[...] proposed not only further prisoner exchange [...] but, what was more important, the cessation of hostilities between German forces and the Partisans [...]. The three delegates confirmed in writing that the Partisans ‘regard the Chetniks as their main enemy.’”²⁴¹ Roberts continues that eleven days earlier, Mihailovic had made essentially the same statement that “his internal foes, the Partisans, were his main enemy.” During these discussions with the Germans, the Partisan emissaries also promised that they would fight the British if they landed in Yugoslavia. Djilas makes a comment on this particular point of negotiations, stating, “We didn’t shrink from declaration that we would fight the British if they landed. Such a declaration didn’t commit us, since the British hadn’t yet landed [...]”²⁴² Seen in the light of the post-war official historiography accusing Mihailovic’s forces for the collaboration with the enemy, the story of the Partisan emissaries’ negotiations with the Germans, shows how constructed their history was.

Throughout the entire war, Mihailovic’s Chetniks tried to find ways to survive as military representatives of the Yugoslav royal government in exile. During the period of 1941-1942, when the British supported Mihailovic, they expected him to commit acts of sabotage against rail lines, which would significantly impede the flow of supplies to German troops occupying Greece and Africa. Mihailovic’s forces had executed some acts of sabotage in Serbia, but primarily remained inactive because of the fear of reprisals. It was very difficult to maintain this state of affairs. Mihailovic barely escaped being

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 108.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

captured by the Germans, and in 1942, the Chetniks moved to Montenegro, in Djilas' words, "in hiding from the Germans, Draza [Mihailovic] moved where he felt the safest [...]." ²⁴³ Mihailovic's Chetniks did have special relationships with the Italians in Montenegro, with whom they negotiated a *modus vivendi* that implied the agreement of a cease-fire. After the Fifth Enemy Offensive, or Battle of Sutjeska in the spring of 1943, British emissaries were sent to gather information on the Partisans to estimate the level of their resistance, and this event "signaled the end of British support of Mihailovic." ²⁴⁴ In 1946, during a trial which was "anything but a model of justice," ²⁴⁵ the Communists accused Mihailovic of collaboration with the enemy and executed him. Roberts gives an example of the dynamics of the Partisan-Chetnik civil war:

In the spring of 1944, the Partisans were on the move in an effort to return to Serbia. The Chetniks resisted them; so did the Germans [...]. Once again the Chetniks found themselves fighting the same enemy as the Germans and once again charges of collaboration were in the air. ²⁴⁶

Yet one should bear in mind that the Partisans, who "labeled Mihailovic and the Chetniks traitors, for their accommodation with the enemy," ²⁴⁷ also conducted negotiations with the Germans for a cease-fire, "after having declared in writing that their main enemies were the Chetniks and not the occupying Axis forces." ²⁴⁸ In the fall of 1944, after the agreement between Tito and Stalin, the Soviets provided arms and ended

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 251.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 253.

²⁴⁵ Walter R. Roberts, op. cit., p. 307.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 111-2.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

the Partisan forces' dependence on British and American aid. Such a development gave the Partisans a strategic advantage.

In October of 1944, the Partisans together with the Red Army liberated Belgrade. Yet by "contrast to the rest of Eastern Europe, neither the Red Army nor Soviet political supervision would be decisive in the consolidation of Communist power that founded the second Yugoslavia."²⁴⁹ In consolidating their power, the Communists used Stalinist methods. Their first priority in 1945 was to defeat the remnants of domestic forces which lingered and fought against them. The Chetnik movement was widely spread in Serbia and parts of Bosnia and Montenegro during the war. Mihailovic had control only over his own troops. Many other Chetnik leaders were accused of perpetrating various crimes. The Communists equated them with Mihailovic's Chetniks. During Mihailovic's "show trial,"²⁵⁰ the regime's prosecutor was also free to add to the list of those accused of treason members of the government in exile.²⁵¹ The Communists constituted the Secret Service, whose task was to pursue the enemies of the regime. It was estimated that perhaps 100,000 people perished during these purges. The head of this organization was told by Tito that its wider purpose was, as Lampe quotes, "to strike terror into the hearts of those who did not like this sort of Yugoslavia."²⁵² In the official Communist historiography, not only is there no mention of these intricacies in developing events during the war, but more importantly, the events of terror that followed were not mentioned either.

²⁴⁹ John R. Lampe, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

²⁵⁰ Walter R. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

²⁵¹ John R. Lampe, *op. cit.* p. 227.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

It is this terror which Pavlović's *Ambush* investigates. The film portrays Communist state terrorist acts, which authorities committed against their own people. The filmmaker uses naturalistic images of violence, which situate viewers in the minds of victims. This film put Pavlović on a direct collision course with the Communist authorities. Seen in the light of history, which the Communists in many instances forged, it is not surprising that the Communist establishment prevented the film's screening for the wider public allowing only its special showing for the limited number of people.

To develop a comparative analysis of Pavlovic's *Ambush* and von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*, it is critical to reveal the ways in which the films portray violence. Both auteurs represent state violence as being concealed from the eye of the public and beyond their control. Both filmmakers use linear narrative system to discuss state terrorism. As opposed to *Ambush*, von Trotta's film does not openly represent violence. Nonetheless, her film, similar to *Ambush*, depicts state brutality as a many-sided phenomenon.

In my reading, both films treat violence as embedded in a wide spectrum of society. In other words, it is not only that state violence requires apparatus that would conduct and execute it, but it also needs the support from the population that is put in the service of the state. Von Trotta shows this in the prison scenes depicting harsh treatment of the prisoner, Marianne, done by the woman guard who seems extremely vindictive. Pavlovic's film ends with the scene of Milica on the cart, participating in the Communist celebration of the WWII victory. Von Trotta's film responds to the historical and tumultuous period of the 1970s in West Germany when many facets of the hidden and suppressed truth about the national past erupted in the form of youth terrorism.

Although these filmmakers do not inform each other directly, they nevertheless share certain features that situate their films in the context of New Film movements and transnational cinema.

The next segment discusses the ways in which Pavlovic employs his film to portray terror induced by the Communists.

Terrorism and the State: Pavlovic's *Ambush*

Pavlovic investigates in *Ambush* the question of the Communist state terrorism. This film, which won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1969, was seen by Communist authorities in Yugoslavia as a direct threat to their power. The film was not officially banned, but it was not screened either. It was “bunkered.”²⁵³ The film's subject matter was disturbing to authorities because it investigated the most secret of events which occurred during the course of the Communist regime coming to power. To begin my discussion, I will bring the news about the WWII mass grave, unearthed in Slovenia, that was announced by the Belgrade news agency, *B 92* on March 5, 2009:

Some 750 bodies had been discovered [...] buried under concrete. The Slovenian Labour and Family Ministry announced yesterday that there had been much talks of this grave after the war, and that, based on stories, in the absence of any documentation, around 12,000 people had been murdered at the mine between May and June 1945, just after the end of the war [...] it was known exactly which Partisan unit had killed these people – the 1st Slovenian National Defense Division, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade – and that the victims were prisoners of war including Slovenes, Croats, and maybe Serbs and Montenegrins.²⁵⁴

²⁵³ This was the term colloquially used to denote films which were not shown but put aside by the authorities if they were deemed potentially damaging to Communist power.

²⁵⁴ See: www.b92.net/eng/news/region-article

Although the mass grave still needs to be thoroughly examined, it is worthwhile mentioning it as an introduction to my analysis. As previously discussed in this chapter, Tito and his Partisans successfully fought occupiers and after 1943 started receiving support from the British instead of Mihailovic and his Chetnik forces. At the same time, the civil war between Partisans and Chetniks was raging from the beginning of the war. At the end of the war in the spring of 1945, massive Chetnik forces tried to flee to London to reunite with the royal government. Their journey led them through Slovenia, to the west of Yugoslavia, where they were stopped by Partisan forces and many of them were executed. While this historical fact is widely accepted,²⁵⁵ the actual sites have never been properly detected. The news from *B 92* is possibly about one of these sites.

The Communist authorities and Partisan forces after the end of WWII were engaged primarily in establishing their power across Yugoslavia. The fundamental tenets of their power were laid down during the National War of Liberation, in which the Communists established certain dates to be observed as constitutive acts. They were brought forth by the highest ranks of the Party and were supported by the people who were involved with the Partisan movement on territories where these acts were recognized. Yet this constituted only part of the population, with a considerable number of people in Serbia, primarily peasants, who did not support Communism because they were siding with the King and the royal government-in-exile, in London.²⁵⁶ However, the Titoist forces' goal immediately after the war was to defeat any remnants of the Chetniks

²⁵⁵ See: John R. Lampe, op. cit. pp. 227-8.

²⁵⁶ Richard West, op. cit., p. 111.

and to inaugurate the new Communist system.²⁵⁷ *Ambush* investigates this process as it unfolds in one small town in Serbia.

The withdrawal of the film from the 1969 Pula Film Festival, under the pressure of authorities, prompted fierce ideological debates during which the notion of “the black wave film” was conceived.²⁵⁸ In an interview, Pavlovic recalls these debates:

An ideological committee of the Party had a meeting which coins the notion of the “black wave film” and pronounces *Ambush* as an extremely anticommunist film. The producer was afraid to release the film and to bring it to movie theatres. It was screened in Knjazevac where it was filmed and had very good record there and it was only shown in Slovenia.²⁵⁹

Ambush is a film about the terror which Communists exerted on the population of Knjazevac a little town in southeastern Serbia, during the process of their establishing of power in 1945. The film portrays these difficult times through the love relationship of Ivo, a young student and idealistic Partisan from Dalmatia, and Milica, a high-school girl and daughter of the local lawyer.

Pavlovic begins the film with documentary footage of the Soviet Red Army’s parade during the celebration of WWII victory. The footage is replete with close-ups of Stalin shown iconically in front of the Kremlin’s walls. He watches the parade of Red Army marching soldiers followed by a procession of powerful weaponry including tanks, artillery and rockets. The Soviet songs praising victory make the viewers feel they are part of the celebration. These images of the parade are interwoven with shots of heavy

²⁵⁷ The process of establishing the communist rule in other republics of the former Yugoslavia after WWII is beyond the scope of this work.

²⁵⁸ See: Daniel Goulding, op. cit., p. 79.

²⁵⁹ Milan Nikodijevic, trans. mine, op. cit., p. 21.

industry facilities, bridges, fields of crops being worked by tractors, and a swarm of military planes.

The close-up of the young man's proud face, followed by the medium close-up of the people in the workers' clothing and uniforms sitting around him, makes the viewer aware that this is a screening of a documentary film and that the young man is spellbound by the triumphant pictures of the Soviet Union. Behind the public, the screening facility and its operators are visible. This sequence cuts to a medium close-up of a Communist political functionary surrounded by people standing in an open train carriage, who says: "Comrades, the war is finished, but the Revolution still goes on. The elections are approaching and we must make peasants join us."²⁶⁰ The next shot shows a town square full of people – peasants, and young people in Partisan uniforms, as well as Party functionaries, who dance the folk dance known as *kolo*²⁶¹ accompanied by music played on an accordion. The atmosphere is relaxed, the peasants are in familiar surroundings. The film cuts to a scene in which two Partisans with guns accuse two men in railway uniforms of stealing boots. The folk music in the background goes on and the viewer realizes that this event is developing somewhere in the back alley behind the square. The audience can also infer that the two railway men are probably from the town or some village around it. One of them begs for his life, saying: "Please don't kill me, two of my brothers have already been killed." The Partisans execute them anyway, on the spot. The sequence finishes with a far shot of their dead bodies lying on the ground.

²⁶⁰ After the war, the Communist Party held referendum elections in which people were choosing between the King and the Communist Party.

²⁶¹ This type of a dance, when people make a circle and dance is widespread in many folk traditions and extremely popular in the Serbian folk tradition.

The next sequence shows the procession of people and the farm carts pulled by oxen on the road. The carts are full of boxes and there is also an accordion on top. The procession is led by the Communist political functionary from the beginning of the film who overhears the conversation of the peasants, commenting on the killing of the two railway men. One of them asks: "How will his wife survive now with the children?" The functionary answers: "But they had to be punished because they stole the boots you [peasants] gave us." The viewer infers that the cart is full of goods which the peasants gave to the Communists. Their discussion is interrupted by the Chetniks' ambush that results in the death of the Communist functionary, and possession of the cart and oxen by the Chetniks. The scene has been watched, secretly from the bush, by Ivo, a young man whom we saw at the screening of the Soviet documentary from the beginning of the film.

In the following scene, in which Ivo and Milica meet, the viewer learns that Ivo is from Dalmatia, that his father has been killed by Italians, and that he came to this town to live with his aunt. Milica is worried since her father's trial is tomorrow, and she laments, saying to Ivo: "My father is an honest man." Ivo replies that in this case she has nothing to worry about. Milica asks: "Are you sure?" Ivo answers: "This is the Revolution. We take care of every man." The trial sequence portrays the audience in a *mise en scène* that mirrors the scene of the Red Army parade and Stalin on an elevated pedestal. The wide shot shows that the trial room is crowded by people standing and carrying placards with signs that read: "Tito-Party," and "Long Live Comrade Stalin." The development of events in the room does not suggest a fair trial.

In front of the crowd stands the accused lawyer who addresses the judge with "sir." The judge and jury sit together on a raised platform. A woman, one of the jurors,

stands up and starts shouting: “The judge is not ‘sir,’ he is a ‘comrade.’ We are all comrades now.” Milica’s father says: “I was just doing my job.” The woman jury answers: “And we were doing our job as well while you were taking the money from the peasants, we were bleeding for the liberation.” The crowds behind the lawyer’s back start chanting: “Tito-Stalin, Tito-Stalin.” The judge pronounces the lawyer a war manipulator and orders that the accused be stripped of all citizens’ rights for a period of five years; his belongings confiscated; and his house given to the hospital for the wounded. The next sequence shows the crowd of people entering the house, carrying out the furniture, throwing out the lawyer’s documentation and chairs on the street and setting it on fire. Ivo watches the scene, and when one of these people invites him to join in pillaging the lawyer’s house, he rejects the invitation.

In the meantime the town experiences a celebratory mood, everywhere Partisans are intermingled with the peasants and town citizens. The placards listing Communist slogans adorn walls, together with images of Tito and Stalin. In the town square, the band is playing jazz music, and the school youth are dancing. To prove his allegiance to the Party, Ivo is forced by his Communist comrades. He climbs on to the pedestal where the band is playing, and announces that that this is the Communist party, and that only youth who are Party members can participate. Many young people leave the party disappointed. At the same time, a young Party organizer, orders the band to play Partisan songs instead of jazz, and the Communist youth start dancing the Partisan *kolo*.

Partisans impose their rules on the town by organizing different forms of indoctrination through the schooling system or through different celebratory activities. Ivo, enthusiastically gives Marxist lectures. Ivo is also asked to help catch the Chetniks

who ambushed the peasants' procession and killed the Partisan functionary at the beginning of the film. Because he was a witness to the event, he is asked to identify participants. He is unhappy with the idea of pursuing the Chetniks, but he does his duty and tries to recognize some of the participants.

Ivo returns to organize the town celebration on the occasion of the Partisan victory in WWII. All over the town Soviet music can be heard, and young people carry a huge portrait of Stalin cut in two pieces, preparing the photo to be displayed. In the city square the peasants get into a quarrel with the Partisans who want to confiscate crops, causing the woman to plead: "I don't have enough for my children." Milica and Ivo witness the event and Milica says to him: "And you are talking about honesty." In the next sequence they go to the cemetery where they lie down and kiss each other. A deep focus shot captures them in the lower foreground, with a scene of the killing of several men by the Partisans in the upper background, which they witness. (Figure 3.) The scene is silent except for the sound of the gunshots. The following sequence shows the town's preparations for the WWII celebration in full sway. Milica meets with the school celebration organizer in an empty building, while Ivo watches them through the window. Milica and Ivo quarrel and she gives him an explanation that "we live free now." Ivo decides to accept the Partisan captain's offer to go after Chetniks. Ivo, the Partisan captain and Zeko, the Partisan intelligence officer, go together into the hills to find Chetniks. They catch their leader, but Ivo realizes that the Partisan captain killed Zeko during the operation. He cannot understand this and Ivo decides to go back to town. He runs into a group of Partisans who mistakenly identify him as a Chetnik and ambush him.

Ivo has no documents and cannot prove that he is a Partisan so they execute him. He is fatally wounded and his dying words are: “Damn it, some Revolution this is!”

The film finishes with a tracking shot of the town, which for the first time is shown from an angle that pictures its main street on the bank of a river. The view next shows a medium close-up of Stalin’s huge portrait that is now put back together. Next to Stalin, there is a portrait of Tito. These two portraits exactly the same size, dominate the celebration. The procession cart, full of people carrying slogans on boards goes by. Milica’s smiling face can be seen among these people. The daylight is bright, the town’s buildings are freshly painted and the celebratory mood can be felt in the air.

The questions that Pavlovic explores in the film reveal the concept of Communist rule and their treatment of people during the process of constituting that power. Similar to von Trotta, who undermines the patriarchal system by using the words of Marianne’s and Juliane’s father, the representative of patriarchy, Pavlovic uses Ivo, a young Partisan and idealist, to portray and condemn the Communists’ lethal politics. On the one hand, von Trotta uses the sisters’ father to criticize the patriarchy from within the system. The father is a representative of the system and as a result he suffers. On the other hand Pavlovic uses Ivo an idealist Partisan, who is at first committed to the Partisan cause, and who finally becomes bitterly disillusioned and dies. In both cases the directors are critically deconstructing the systems – bourgeois and communist – in their countries.

The film tells us that not only Communist enemies – such as Chetniks and pre-war bourgeoisie – were their targets, but members from their own ranks as well. When the search leads Ivo, the Partisan captain and Zeko, the Partisan intelligence officer to the next village, they engage in a fight with the Chetniks. The Partisan captain finds the

Chetnik leader lying dead on a bed, but he nevertheless shoots him many times. Ivo watches it. When Zeko gets wounded they move to the next village where the rich peasants prepare a lavish garden feast for them and put the wounded Zeko in a room upstairs. The Partisan captain is on friendly terms with the owner of the house, they drink and make jokes. Ivo goes at one moment to check Zeko, only to discover that Zeko is slaughtered in his bed.

The devious murder of Zeko, one of the two high ranking Partisan officers with whom Ivo goes into the hills to search for the Chetniks, by his colleague and comrade, the Partisan captain, is the final blow that forces Ivo to voice openly, in his last sentence, a bitter disappointment with the revolution. Ivo's disappointment builds slowly during the course of the film through witnessing injustices and wrong decisions made by the Partisans in a town. The example for the Partisans' misjudgment is their expropriation of the peasants' crops when the peasants' children are hungry. In one of these actions, Ivo himself takes part when he climbs on the stage where the musicians were playing jazz during the youth party in the town-square, and asks those youth who are not Party members to leave. At this moment Ivo does not see any wrongdoing in this act, since this was simply a strategy to attract young people to the Communist ranks.

When he meets his girlfriend Milica, at the beginning of the film, who is a lawyer's daughter, and a representative of the pre-war bourgeoisie, Ivo displays highly idealistic concepts of the revolution. Ivo truly believes in the Communist slogan, "we think of every man," and he uses it to comfort Milica before her father's trial. After the sham trial of Milica's father, Ivo watches in disbelief as the lawyer's house is ransacked

by the crowd. When one of the young comrades invites Ivo to join them in the violence, he makes a gesture of desperation and leaves.

Still, Ivo wants to participate in building a new, Communist society, and he engages in different public activities such as attending Marxist classes or teaching the children. When Ivo is called by Zeko to find the people who took part in the ambushing and killing of a Partisan functionary that he witnessed, he has an opportunity to see the Partisans in their operational mode. What he sees he does not like. Zeko is drunk most of the time, humiliating those around him and engaging in an open sexual act in the house they entered in search of Chetniks. There is also a girlfriend of Zeko's lover, who is visibly pregnant and who tries to seduce Ivo. However, the Chetniks' ambush force Ivo and Zeko to abandon their search and Ivo goes back to the town.

Milica and Ivo meet at the cemetery, which is at the outskirts of the town in the fields. They find a hidden place with a good position so that they are able to see a hill across from them. They start kissing and hear some noise from that side. They see a group of Partisans with guns pushing a small group of people in front of them across the landscape. The Partisans stop, place these people in front of them and kill them. The sound of the shots is the only sound that breaks the idyllic picture.

Pavlovic uses a deep focus shot to depict this scene. A deep focus shot is a single take of a static camera that captures a close foreground and a distant background in an equally sharp focus. With the whole range of different elements which are involved in a deep focus shot, such as setting, *mise en scène* and the characters, this type of shot has its own narrative structure. The structure is part of the film construction as a whole. Andre Bazin asserts that "[...] depth of field is not a camerawork like the use of light diffusing

screen or a particular style of lighting, but a major acquisition for *mise en scène*, a dialectical advance in the history of cinematic language.”²⁶² Orson Welles’ usage of deep focus in *Citizen Kane* endows the film with an emblematic quality regarding this cinematic technique. Welles employs a deep-focus shot throughout the film to show the grandeur of Kane’s possessions and personality.

The visual analysis of a deep focus shot reveals that its visual space is constructed in the Renaissance pictorial tradition. Comolli describes it:

The representation of space produced on the surface of the screen by the deep focus lens is, like that constructed by the Quattrocento *perspectiva artificialis*, two-dimensional; the *illusion* of a third dimension (depth) is produced by the gradation in size of the objects represented diminishing as they are presumed to be further away. In addition, lighting effects are exaggerated to bring, out the different surfaces of this gradation as so many “reliefs.” Because of the single, centralizing eye of the camera, the deep focus image is organized around a perpendicular axis on the surface of the screen, corresponding to Alberti’s “central ray” which, as we know, assigned to the spectator *one* strictly determined viewpoint, the real centre of the picture.²⁶³

Pavlovic builds the space of a deep-focus shot of the Partisans killing a small group of people, by applying all rules of Renaissance spatial organization. The space is divided into four horizontal planes. Each of the planes carries out a different story, which in combination with the other planes, creates the meaning of the scene. In the foreground, taking approximately one third of the horizontal space, the young lovers are initially lying down. As the scene progresses they take sitting positions and watch the scene developing in front of their eyes. The scene they are watching, in which the Partisans execute several

²⁶² Jean-Louis Comolli, “Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field,” p. 243.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 229.

people, takes approximately two-thirds of the upper portion of the screen space. The horizontal tomb stones are situated in between the lovers and the scene of the execution. In the far background are rolling hills. The plane of the grey, old tomb-stones serves as a hinge between the space of lovers, and the space of killing that carry out different meanings depending on the position of the participants.

For the lovers, the old tomb-stones are a romantic place of love and protection where they can indulge in kissing without being disturbed. The scene of killing witnessed by the lovers, endows the tomb-stones with the ominous meaning bluntly connecting the scene of killing with the tombs as signs of death. The combination of these meanings creates a poignant picture of crimes done by the new Communist state in which the plane of lovers appears in sharp contrast to the plane of killing. The plane of the rolling hills in the far background serves the same purpose. The space of killing is flanked by planes of serenity serving as triple filter of killing.

It is worthwhile mentioning that Hungarian filmmaker Miklós Jancsó in his 1967 *The Red and the White* uses the visual language of a deep focus shot. The film was made in the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution. It portrays the Russian Revolution and Civil War occurring between the Communist “Reds” supported by Hungarians and the Tsarists “Whites.” By deploying long lens and a deep focus shot, Jancsó captures the scenes depicting different actions, such as fighting or mass executions. This formalist visual strategy of the stylized visual composition turns the viewer attention to the visual language itself at the expense of the content. As a consequence, the usage of a deep focus that shows the scenes of killings, do not allow the audience to identify emotionally with characters. It can be said that Jancsó’s film, with its

formalist filmic approach, does not hail Bolsheviks' victory, but accuses violence in general terms.

Similar to Jancsó's *The Red and the White*, Pavlovic's *Ambush* also uses the stylized filmic technique, such as deep focus shots in depicting the scenes of killings. However, in contrast to *The Red and the White*, Pavlovic employs the system of identification between the characters and the audience. The two main characters, Milica and Ivo are the entries into the film's narrative. By using these characters as models of identification for the viewer, Pavlovic portrays the methods that the Communists used in their ascending to power.

The filmmaker chooses a small town as the site for the exploration of state terrorism because of its closeness to the surrounding peasant population which experienced different forms of violence ranging from the widespread killings to the forced expropriation of their goods. Although the modes of state terrorism in von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane* and Pavlovic's *Ambush* differ in terms of their historical times and social places of executions, as well as levels of visibility, there are some unifying elements between these two films. In both films the directors represent state terrorism as being executed under the banner of protecting the very state that executes the violence. Although Pavlovic treats the problem of violence in an open way by tangibly depicting it, the state system which supports this violence is not seen. Both *Ambush* and *Marianne and Juliane* talk about state terrorism as being done by a blind and unreachable force which is difficult, if not impossible, to bring to justice. Marianne and Juliane's father helplessly suspects in the official explanation that his daughter committed suicide, and

Ivo, the Communist idealist, utters the dying sentence which questions the very communist state and the Revolution he supported.

History and its narrative structure in both films, although stemming from opposite ideological concepts – capitalist and socialist – are grounded on the same principle of power relations. The West German authorities suppressed the truth about fascism; the Yugoslav Communists presented their fight against fascism as a black and white picture, in which they played exclusive and exaggerated roles as fighters against the Nazi occupier, and which at the same time concealed their own fascist or Stalinist methods in securing power. In both instances, young generations of filmmakers who matured in the sixties and seventies, were eager to unravel the truth previously denied them.

The contemporary critic Žižek will help to understand the problem of the historical truth, in which he discusses historical narratives. He analyzes Benjamin's position, for whom the suspension of the historical continuum is a way to reach the truth:

[...] "truth" lies on the side of the anhistorical stasis, whereas History is always "false," a narrative of the victor who legitimizes his victory by presenting the previous development as the linear continuum leading to his own final triumph.²⁶⁴

Žižek uses the concept of "anhistorical stasis" to develop the thesis that "[...] 'historicism' i.e., the Masters' gaze which, viewing history from a safe, metalanguage distance, constructs the linear narrative of 'historical evolution.'"²⁶⁵ It is historicism, relying on the continuity of historical narrative, which is the construct of the official, authoritarian mind that stands on the opposite side of historicity and its "decentered" historical tradition. In other words, the tradition which does not rely on the linearity of

²⁶⁴ Slavoj Žižek, op. cit., pp. 92-3.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 93.

historical narrative, but takes into account forces such as, in Žižek's words an "unhistorical kernel":

The key to this enigma consists in the basic paradox of historicity as opposed to historicism: what distinguishes it is precisely the presence of an *unhistorical kernel*. That is to say, the only way to save historicity from the fall into historicism, into the notion of the linear succession of 'historical epochs,' is to conceive these epochs as a series of ultimately failed attempts to deal with the same 'unhistorical' traumatic kernel (in Marxism, this kernel is of course the class struggle, class antagonism) [...].²⁶⁶

Pavlovic's *Ambush* examines the "unhistorical kernel" during the Communists' establishment of power and violence that they executed after WWII. The subject of Pavlovic's film is this hidden history of the Communists' ruling strategies in a small town that was exposed to violence and killing, and which was not recorded in the Communists' historiography. Pavlovic employs the traditional, linear narrative structure and the visual language that is constructed to convey the auteur message about state terrorism.

In summary, this segment has been devoted to revealing the ways in which history was hidden from youth in Yugoslavia and West Germany. The West German authorities suppressed the truth about fascism. By allotting to themselves an exclusive and exaggerated role as fighters against Nazi occupator, the Yugoslav Communists presented their fight against fascism as unique, while at same time concealing their own fascist methods in securing power. Pavlovic's film deconstructs these mechanisms of power.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

The next segment discusses the modalities in which von Trotta engages the visual and narrative texts in her film to portray traumatic events of terrorism in the 1970s Germany.

**Multiple Faces of Terrorism:
von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane***

A great majority of historians see the era of the 1970s in West Germany as youth's response to the unanswered and unresolved questions of the Nazi past.²⁶⁷ They felt that remnants of that past were still present in their lives, concealed from the public, but still there. During the 1960s and 1970s, it became clear that the recurrent question of German identity after 1945 could not have been answered without delving into the past. Fulbrook calls this condition a "fractured character of German identity since 1945."²⁶⁸ As she points out, this fractured identity of Germany was a consequence of the disjuncture between "public myths and private memories, between official values and personal prejudices, between thought ideology and everyday experience."²⁶⁹ Throughout the Cold War a divided Germany sought to define "new partial identities – West and East German identities – in differing reinterpretations of selected aspects of a common past."²⁷⁰ While each of the new states tried to build a new national identity, East and West Germany positioned themselves differently in relation to the Nazi past.

When in 1949, the Allies and the Soviets from the four occupation zones divided Germany in two states, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German

²⁶⁷ See, for example, Mary Fulbrook, *German Identity after the Holocaust*, Oxford, UK: Polity Press, 1999.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

Democratic Republic (GDR), they started with programs of denazification and reeducation. The Allies and the Soviets had different strategies in developing and applying these programs.²⁷¹ This greatly affected the ways in which new identities were created. The Soviet authorities had more of an educational approach. Some of the German Communist authorities, who took governing positions, “returned from Russian exile and were quickly installed in key positions.”²⁷² Wolfgang Staudte’s, 1946 *The Murderers are Among Us*, shot in the DEFA studios in Soviet-occupied Germany, depicts the position that the burden of the war is shared by the nation, but that the perpetrators responsible are certain individuals. This shows that early attempts to “overcome” the past in the two German states differed in their designation of victims. The past was an inescapable, highly sensitive issue in the West, which was not the case in the East.

Fulbrook scrutinizes this:

In the GDR, far from forgetting the past, the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany) had a direct political interest in simply relocating it: the perpetrators had gone west, the victims were redesignated or disappeared (as a category if not in reality), the resistance fighters lived in and enjoyed the new antifascist state.²⁷³

In the Federal Republic, the prominence of former Nazis was not obvious, but these men played important roles in establishing the country’s economic system. West German industry and economic associations from the 1950s and 1960s were governed by the same industrialists, such as Flick and Krupp, whose industrial concerns were directly connected with the exploitation of slave labor during the war. Hermann Abs, during the war, was a member of the Supervisory Board of I.G. Farben. After the war, his banking

²⁷¹ See: William Carr, op. cit. pp. 366-78 passim.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 368.

²⁷³ Mary Fulbrook, op. cit., p. 78.

expertise and international contacts were enough to save him from charges. “The profits made by I.G. Farben and similar concerns through the abuse of prisoners fed into the rapid economic growth of the 1950s and 1960s.”²⁷⁴ Kaes emphasizes that

During the 1950s repressed political and psychological energies were rechanneled into the physical reconstruction of Germany [...]. The cinema of the Adenauer and Erhard era functioned as a dream world fulfilling the desires for a healthy Germany, for beautiful German landscapes and naïve but noble German people [...]. More than 300 of these so-called *Heimatfilme* (“homeland films”) were made in the 1950s.²⁷⁵

The people who held prominent positions in FRG in the 1950s had a vested interest in not bringing the past to open consideration. Yet Adenauer eventually adopted the policy of accepting responsibility by seeking to make amends in terms of both moral and financial restitutions.

Growing differences between East and West Germany were deepened by the erection of the Wall in 1961. West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s experienced cultural identification with American and Western values. This political agenda also meant adopting a stance of anti-Communism. In 1968, student groups and intellectuals, sharing the same values with similar groups in other countries, “saw the emergence of a specific cultural formation, which, amongst the repertoire of international topics, addressed the issue of failed *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.”²⁷⁶ As Scharf explains, this term, which is used to denote “coming to terms with one’s past,”²⁷⁷ was the primary demand of the post-

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 64.

²⁷⁵ Anton Kaes, op. cit., pp. 14-5.

²⁷⁶ Ingra Scharf, *Nation and Identity in the New German Cinema: Homeless at Home*, New York, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 18.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 206.

war generation directed to their parents. This need to “come to terms” with the past was going to change the course of how the Germans perceive their history. It produced a re-visiting of Germany’s national past and a new focus on its Nazi past.²⁷⁸ The New German Cinema challenged the prevailing public climate of amnesia by intervening in the nations’ memory with the films, which investigated history in an open way. New German Cinema played a crucial role in this historical shift.

The history of West German political violence during the 1970s is connected with the student movements in the 1960s, which were inspired by the resurrection of neo-Marxist theories worldwide. West Germany in the 1970s witnessed “the return of the repressed”²⁷⁹ which took the form of “the fascism debate,”²⁸⁰ but also the form of youth violence that tragically culminated in deaths of both perpetrators and victims in October 1977. The autumn of 1977 is known as the “German Autumn.”²⁸¹

The members of the Red Army Faction (RAF) had kidnapped Hans Martin Schleyer, a President of German Employers’ Association at the beginning of September. On October 13, the RAF hijacked a Lufthansa plane to force the release of captured RAF members. The plane landed in Mogadishu, Somalia. On October 18, the West German antiterrorist police liberated hostages. On the same day, Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe, members of the Baader-Meinhof group of terrorists, were found dead in a maximum security prison. The official explanation was that they committed suicide. The mysterious circumstances of their alleged suicide lead to the investigation of an

²⁷⁸ See: Anton Kaes, op. cit., pp. 18-21.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁸⁰ See: Thomas Elsaesser, *Fassbinder’s Germany: History, Identity, Subject*, p. 130. Elsaesser discusses the form this debate took. Jürgen Habermas detected among German academic historians, such as Ernst Nolte, a revisionist project aimed at historicizing the Nazi period in order to “normalize” it.

²⁸¹ Anton Kaes, op. cit., 23.

international commission. The atmosphere of fear provoked intensified security measures. The government policy of repression created a climate of surveillance in which the expression of one's opinion became highly undesirable. Even intellectuals such as Heinrich Böll were under suspicion. Kaes quotes Norbert Elias' opinion about the "German Autumn:"

The violent acts of small, hermetic groups of terrorists in the Federal Republic and the reaction of declaring open season on sympathizers have only the function of a trigger: they suddenly brought to light the latent fissures that exist in West German society and made them visible to the whole world. The reasons for these fissures go further back.²⁸²

Kaes stresses that terrorism "ultimately stems from the collective trauma of learning the truth about the horrifying German past... It was only a matter of time before this repressed trauma would coalesce with the frustration about the 'petrified conditions' in the Federal Republic."²⁸³ It is this combination of a "repressed trauma" and "petrified conditions" in West Germany that incited the New German Cinema to investigate the social preconditions that would provoke such radical terrorist actions. The New German Cinema reacted promptly to the events of the autumn of 1977. German filmmakers decided to make a collective film about these occurrences.

Kluge and eight other filmmakers, Fassbinder and Reitz among them, shot the film entitled *Germany in Autumn*. Each of these directors participated in the film with his own segment, so that the film is a blend aimed at documenting reactions and bringing images and perspectives not to be found in the official media. The film is also a mixture

²⁸² Ibid., p. 24.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 25.

of different filmic forms, documentary material, fictional scenes and interviews. The film was a cooperative project, which is the first film of the New German Cinema not to be supported by state subsidies. In his explanation of *Germany in Autumn*, Alexander Kluge writes:

The fatal catastrophe succeeded in cutting through the amnesia of many. The events did not have much to do with war directly, but “1945” and “war” were associated with them. It is no coincidence that we have an emotional movement that is *posing questions about Germany and about the history that takes the form it has*. The repressed shock breaks out in terrorism, a point that is actually not suited to genuinely coming to terms with the previously repressed material [...].²⁸⁴

It is this historical and cultural atmosphere in which von Trotta made her *Marianne and Juliane*, the film devoted to the events of the German Autumn. As opposed to *Germany in Autumn* and its narrative form based on the principle of assemblage, von Trotta's picture follows the classical, linear narrativisation. The film won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 1981. Von Trotta was also one of the leading female directors of the period. Together with other women filmmakers, such as Helke Sanders and Helma Sanders-Brahms to name two with whom she made “Felix,” von Trotta greatly contributed not only to New German Cinema but also to the history of cinema in general. Feminist film theory and criticism acknowledges this contribution. In her *Women and the New German Cinema*, Julia Knight asserts:

However, the work of these women arguably has significance beyond that of a merely national cinema ‘movement’. Although their work contributed to a new German cinema, it also gave rise to a whole feminist film culture and produced

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

a critically acclaimed woman's cinema. Furthermore, despite the persistent marginalization of women as directors in international cinema, during the New German Cinema era West Germany came to possess "proportionally more women filmmakers than any other film-producing country."²⁸⁵

After co-directing *The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum* with Volker Schlöndorff in 1975, von Trotta began making films independently, among which is her 1981 masterpiece, *Marianne and Juliane*. This picture epitomizes all the features of von Trotta's cinema work. With this film, the auteur became "[...] engaged in the immense task of creating a major woman's/feminist cinema where so little that is helpful existed before by way of model."²⁸⁶ Barbara Koenig Quart emphasizes that von Trotta's films are "[...] a woman-centered and woman-affirming cinema,"²⁸⁷ but also that her films are "a woman's cinema, *and* a feminist cinema, and more than these."²⁸⁸ What is it in von Trotta's film that is more than "a woman's cinema *and* a feminist cinema?"

In my reading, it is a woman's cinema that treats the question of the women's position and/or feminism as being embedded in the problems of history, such as the contentious issues of terrorism that Germany faced at the time, and the questions of personal attitude and engagement. It is this question of personal involvement which the film raises. Yet the film produced fierce reactions in feminist film criticism which rebuked the film because of its narrative form.

Grievances coming from the feminist arena are theoretically based on a belief that "the codes of conventional narrative cinema undo any feminist or emancipatory message

²⁸⁵ Julia Knight. *Women and the New German Cinema*. London, New York: Verso, 1992, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ Barbara Koenig Quart, *Women Directors: The Emergence of a New Cinema*, New York, Westport, Connecticut and London: Praeger, 1988, p. 93.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

the filmmaking might want to convey, since those codes themselves are the mainstay of a (patriarchal) 'culture' industry."²⁸⁹ This position holds that an analysis of politics and history, by using a conventional narrative system, only leads to the conventionalization and cooption of the subject by the patriarchal system in order to preserve the status quo. Laura Mulvey and other feminist theorists posit that this system and its mechanism of the Oedipal narrative only perpetuates itself by reducing women to a fetish status which does not discuss real women and their problems. On the contrary, narrative film serves to promote cinema as the site of visual pleasure and not as a venue for social criticism.²⁹⁰

Thus Barton Byg reproaches *Marianne and Juliane* for using "highly effective and pleasurable cinematic means to remove the threat posed by both the 'terrorist sister' as an image of woman and the metaphorical threat she poses to the stability of this state."²⁹¹ Byg continues that this filmic strategy promotes an "image of woman that harmonizes the two sides of a violent, yet stable State."²⁹² Byg's complaints here relate to the fact that:

The fascination with the cinema this film achieves thus works against any intervention in the history and politics of feminism or terrorism, raising and removing them to the level of legend. This combination of cinephilia and mystification, common to the international commercial cinema, promotes the stability and harmony required by commerce and, by means of compelling

²⁸⁹ Barton Byg, "German History and Cinematic Convention Harmonized in Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*," in *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions*, eds. Sandra Frieden, Richard W. McCormick, Vibeke R. Peterson and Laurie Melissa Vogelsang, Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers, Inc., 1993, p. 259.

²⁹⁰ See: Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen*, vol. 6 no. 3 Autumn 1975, pp. 6-18.

²⁹¹ Barton Byg, op. cit., p. 260.

²⁹² Ibid., p. 261.

metaphor, the West German state as well.²⁹³

Here Byg relates *Marianne and Juliane* to the classic Hollywood narrative, whose unproblematic system is based on the concept of stability and the narrative closure.

Charlotte Delorme's critique, which perceives the film as an "illustration of various kinds of subjugation and dependency,"²⁹⁴ is one of the early examples of film criticism which discards *Marianne and Juliane* for being anti-feminist. The first sign of this is the sisters' relationship, which Delorme denotes as "the theory of healthy and pathological opposition."²⁹⁵ Juliane personifies healthy, pragmatic resistance with her strenuous, everyday work, which is "the wise and modest continuation of youthful rebellion: lacking in perspective perhaps, but 'truly' human."²⁹⁶ On the other hand, Marianne's opposition is pathological. Delorme does not confine her feminist critique to the film's narrative form only, or to the fact that some of the most important scenes in the film, as she points out, are constructed in the manner of commercial films, but she also raises the question of the film's historical accuracy. Delorme warns the reader to be aware of the film's "intentional distortion of reality."²⁹⁷ She asserts that the film's flashbacks, a narrative device for revealing a character's motivations that are conditioned by the past, give the same explanation of motives that is comparable with the explanations offered by the German tabloids in the 1970s.²⁹⁸

Thomas Elsaesser in his article "Mother Courage and Divided Daughter," reads von Trotta's film as sympathizing with terrorists. Elsaesser argues that the director

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Charlotte Delorme, "On the Film *Marianne and Juliane* by Margarethe von Trotta," trans. Ellen Seiter, *Journal for Film and Video* 37 Spring 1985, p. 51.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 48.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 47-8.

primarily tries to understand psychological motivation standing behind Marianne's terrorist activity, by using her sister Juliane as an entry point to the analysis. The author points out that von Trotta's film operates on the premise of identification. He explains that to place "[...] oneself in the position of the other [...] remains contradictory and problematic [...]." ²⁹⁹ Yet Elsaesser also asserts that von Trotta's film has a political dimension that mirrors the German political situation.

Ellen Seiter talks about the film's subject matter as seen from the position of the nuclear family within specific historical circumstances told through flashbacks. She sees the film as "an effective dramatization of the feminist slogan 'the personal is political.'" ³⁰⁰ E. Ann Kaplan grounds her psychoanalytic interpretation on the analysis of the historical circumstance of terrorism in the 1970s in Germany. ³⁰¹ Kaplan gives an account of the difference in the film's reception in America and Germany. She emphasizes that American feminists' reception was more positive since they recognized the issues in the film they were fighting for, such as the articulation of the women's rights, free abortion being one of them, and which Juliane with her colleagues in the journal fought to make known to the wider social milieu through publications and public demonstrations. As opposed to the Americans, the reception of the film in the feminist circles in Germany was not affirmative. German feminists rebuked the film from the position of the ongoing public debates.

²⁹⁹ Thomas Elsaesser, "Mother Courage and Divided Daughter," *Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1983, 178.

³⁰⁰ Ellen Seiter, "The Political is Personal: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*," *Journal of Film and Video* 37 Spring 1985, p. 44.

³⁰¹ See: E. Ann Kaplan, "Discourses on Terrorism, Feminism, and the Family in von Trotta's *Marianne and Julian*," *Persistence of Vision* 2, November, Fall 1985, pp. 61-68.

Susan E. Linville argues that von Trotta's cinema, while exploring historical circumstances through the lens of gender, engages a woman's or feminist cinema to enter into the realm of politico-historical analysis. Linville in her analysis of von Trotta's film sees it as a feminist intervention:

Von Trotta views feminism, with its insistence that the personal is the political, as more than just another item on the liberal agenda; it is itself the lens through which history is examined – deconstructed and re-visioned. Her feminism is nonessentialist (i.e., historical).³⁰²

In Linville's opinion, "von Trotta creates a film that is formally and thematically feminist and deconstructive."³⁰³ Here Linville takes a position that substantially differs from others coming from the feminist critical perspective.

Whereas I agree with Linville's understanding of von Trotta's film as being both feminist and deconstructive, what I would like to discuss here is the way in which von Trotta succeeds in juggling mutually opposing elements that she uses to create her film: feminism, deconstruction and the Hollywood narrative form. In addition, my contention is that the auteur, by employing a realist narrative structure in *Marianne and Juliane*, similar to Fassbinder, undermines classical narrative/representation by applying distancing techniques both in visuality and story-telling. This strategy transforms the conventional narrative to a viable tool for the representation of politics and history in film.

In Kaes' words, *Marianne and Juliane*, is "the only thinly disguised life history"³⁰⁴ of the terrorist Gudrun Ensslin. With an opening caption that reads, "for

³⁰² Susan E. Linville, "Retrieving History: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*," PMLA, Vol. 106, no. 3, May 1991, p. 446.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 449.

Christine,” (Ensslin) the film openly acknowledges its intention to talk about history. It does this from the position of Christine, Gudrun’s sister. Yet, the ways in which the film tells the story, became a highly contentious issue in film criticism and a focus of passionate debate among feminists. Von Trotta uses the Hollywood filmic paraphernalia that feminist film criticism discards: realistic narrative structure; historicized narrative constructed through dramatic build-ups and interruptions; protagonists which are representatives of historical people, which is the case in the film when Marianne stands for Gudrun and Juliane for Christine; a system of flash-backs.

It is useful at this point to compare von Trotta’s film with *Germany in Autumn*. As previously mentioned, the auteurs treat the same subject in their films by using different methods of filmic representation. Von Trotta’s film is a fiction about terrorism, which Kluge represents through different filmic forms. Whereas von Trotta employs a linear narrative form that centers on two sisters, a terrorist, Marianne and her sister Juliane, Kluge’s film consists of multiple narratives. Kluge’s loose narrative system produces an engagement with the viewer that is not reliant on an identification with the protagonists. The film violates all Hollywood codes. Viewers are, in the Brechtian mode, invited to reflect critically on filmic images which are constructed in a way to interrupt the viewers’ identification with the characters. *Germany in Autumn* discusses history by using the filmic form that undermines the codes of conventional narrative cinema. This strategy complies with the feminist critics’ requirement about historical representation, and it is opposite to von Trotta’s film.

Von Trotta’s narrative introduces the sisters from the beginning. The long establishing shot out the window rests on the façade of the building across the way. The

³⁰⁴ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 24.

sound of walking across the room is heard and the camera shows Juliane (Jutta Lampe) who paces, takes one of the files, looks for something in it and starts writing on a piece of paper. The panning shot wanders along the bookcase full of files with the dates on them ranging from 1973 to 1980.³⁰⁵ The viewer has an impression that the woman is researching something. A close-up shows the photograph of a young woman. Kaes explains von Trotta's understanding of the origins of terrorism:

In von Trotta's view, Ensslin, a minister's daughter, was radicalized by her awareness of the monstrous guilt passed on to her by her parents. The filmmaker shows the Ensslin character as a child watching documentary footage of the concentration camps in Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog*.³⁰⁶

Von Trotta does not represent terrorism directly through specific actions or events, but rather through the consequences of terrorism which affect both sisters. The usage of documentary material in the film serves to talk openly about Nazism while at the same time talking about terrorism. The character of Juliane is the auteur's distancing device, which is the viewer's trajectory to terrorism. Although von Trotta employs a linear narrative structure, she plays with the classic narrative. In other words, the film does not "represent" terrorism and violence through the stories retelling the events. Von Trotta tells her story about these troubling times for German society through a woman's memories and emotions, the terrorist sister, and through the legal punishment of terrorism. The viewer sees two different prisons where Juliane visits her imprisoned sister

³⁰⁵ This detail is important, since Kaplan and Linville have different explanations regarding the time of the opening scene. Linville asserts that the film does not identify the time. While Kaplan thinks that the opening scene precedes Jan's being burned, Linville posits that the scene occurs in 1980, the latest date on one of the files. I agree with Linville. The establishing shot of a building's façade seen through the window of a room, in which Juliane writes, is the same facade Jan sees through the window of his room, after Juliane brought him to live with her. See: Susan E. Linville, op. cit., p. 457.

³⁰⁶ Anton Kaes, op. cit., p. 24.

Marianne (Barbara Sukova). Von Trotta shows the prison from both perspectives, inside and outside. The auteur positions the film's narrative inside the system and its mechanisms of punishment, the prison walls and the guardians. The viewer becomes aware that the story of terrorism and violence is intertwined with instruments of authority.

The analysis of authority in von Trotta's film allows for the comparison with Makavejev who extensively uses distancing narrative techniques in his 1971 *WR*. Both directors employ a tracking shot of prison walls. In Makavejev's case, this sequence is pseudo-documentary film. For him, the wall in Rangeley (Maine) which runs along the street is a denominator in the narrative. The shot of the prison wall in *WR* stands for the absent story about Reich's actual imprisonment and the fact that the penitentiary authorities did not allow Makavejev to shoot inside. Von Trotta uses the prison wall as a symbol that denotes punishment, and shows how Marianne and Juliane's everyday life has been changed. By using a Brechtian distancing technique, both von Trotta and Makavejev question the possibilities of representation. As previously discussed in the analysis of Fassbinder's *Despair* and Makavejev's *WR* in the Second Chapter, both auteurs develop visual and narrative texts by employing various distancing mechanisms, such as the way of acting or the usage of camera. Von Trotta's narrative system in *Marianne and Juliane* that is seemingly based on a linear narration in itself is a distancing device. In other words, the auteur plays with the narrative's linearity by punctuating it with the repetitive sequences, such as prison walls.

Yet both Makavejev and von Trotta go beyond Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* and his theatre of alienation. Von Trotta, analogous to Fassbinder, does it by the inclusion of

emotions, and Makavejev by using humor that ranges from satire to the scenes which carry out references to burlesque genre. In his essay, “The Theater of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,” Derrida emphasizes that life is “non-representable.”³⁰⁷ It is this nonrepresentability of life that von Trotta acknowledges in her picture. In the context of the film, terrorism is that which is not representable. As previously noted, von Trotta does not represent terrorism and violence by visually describing it. She uses detours to overcome this fact. These alternative narrative routes in *Marianne and Juliane* come in the form of signs standing for terrorism, such as prisons with their guards, or Marianne’s and her comrades’ disturbing night visit.

Kaplan argues that “[...] even within her realist strategies, von Trotta uses devices that raise questions about the construction of the feminine, the family and terrorism.”³⁰⁸ Yet Kaplan also emphasizes that von Trotta’s film “does not raise questions about female representation as such, nor are her cinematic strategies self-reflexive.”³⁰⁹ Whereas it is obvious that *Marianne and Juliane* does not raise questions about female representation as Kaplan points out here, I would argue that von Trotta’s cinema is self-reflexive. Von Trotta plays with filmic tradition that reveals her non-dogmatic feminism.

Von Trotta’s strategies of self-reflexivity are built into seemingly transparent visual representation. This very representation is wedded with a firmly structured narrative system that is punctuated by seven memory flash-backs which are there to reveal childhood events. Such a filmic representation appears to be locked into

³⁰⁷ Jacques Derrida. “The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation,” in *Writing and Difference*, p. 234.

³⁰⁸ E. Ann Kaplan, p. 62.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

conventions of the Hollywood flash-back system of narration. In this regard, von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane* is close to Fassbinder's cinema since these auteurs simultaneously employ and challenge traditional strategies of narration through various forms of visual strategies.

Both Fassbinder and von Trotta clearly show that the presentation of the past does not rely on the choice between traditional narrative structure as a representational frame on the one side, and its avoidance on the other side. Rather, it is the question of the way in which these two opposing strategies are used. The idea behind the application of a diversity of filmic formations lies in distrust in the traditional narrative forms to convey historical truth. Yet there are different visual strategies which at the same time use classic narrative and undermine its certainty. This is the case with *Marianne and Juliane*.

The scene at the beginning of the film, in which Juliane meets Marianne in a museum setting, is an example of self-reflexivity. By showing the long row of statues/busts which are works of art, the film enunciates itself as an art product. The viewer is aware that the statues are representations of culturally and politically important individuals from the German past. Here the film transverses historical boundaries in various way. The most obvious is that the picture positions itself as an art object that always already belongs to the cultural past. The fact that the film in this scene directs the viewer's attention to the German past entails a wide variety of questions. Why does Juliane go through the row of statues? By taking the statues as the *mise en scène*, does the film connect the past with the present? Does the film situate itself among the statues as one of the representations of Germany? My contention is, as previously mentioned, that the film situates itself among the statues. Although this can be also seen as self-

monumentalizing, nevertheless, the picture suggests that understanding history can bring the solution to the problem of terrorism and violence. The film, as part of German cultural history, contributes to it.

With this scene, Margarethe von Trotta raises critical questions about the possibility of representation as such. This sequence conjures up both the self-reflexivity and the subversive qualities of the film. It is also an introduction to von Trotta's multifaceted approach, which complicates the picture of time that she explores in the film. This picture, as Ann Kaplan points out, reflects on the discourses of politics, violence, history, family and female bonding.

By analyzing Marianne and Juliane's family and its bonding principles, such as the relationships between the father and the mother and between the father and his daughters, the film deconstructs the processes through which female subjugation is constituted and sustained in patriarchal society. The fact that the auteur carries out her film as a discourse investigation and not only as a "realist" representation, is a product of the film's breach with the representational mode of classic realist narration. Von Trotta's cinematic narrative is based not on a linear understanding of time, but on one which sees time as "sliced" and ruptured.

For example, Juliane's sporadic eruptions of memories do not function as Hollywood flash-backs. Seven memory units in the film, one from 1945, two from 1947, three from 1955, and one from 1968, are intermingled. They rather denote cracks in time. It is the non-representability of life that is at the core of von Trotta's understanding of narrative cinema. It is this strategy which allows the auteur to focus on the investigation of history through the story-telling process. Such a process offers the intermingling of

various domains of a woman's life in order to engage the viewers both with public and private concerns, and with politics and everydayness.

Kaplan emphasizes that such a politically meaningful employment of narrative cinema is what makes von Trotta's film feminist in its approach. Yet as previously discussed, the majority of feminist criticism does not see von Trotta's film as feminist cinema treating political problems. The core of this argument lies in the belief that an investigation into politics precludes the exploration of family problems. Byg asserts that the film avoids political engagement by "stating that the 'personal is political' to the point of denying that the political is political... it refuses to provide a political analysis of developments from fascism to the present in West Germany..."³¹⁰ In my reading, the film takes a personal position to develop a political analysis of terrorism by employing narrative cinematic form.

The film achieves this by discussing the two pivotal issues of West German post-war history: the politics of memory and the politics of the repression of the past which was supported by the educational system and its curricula. Juliane's flashback of the documentary film about Nazi crimes shows direct involvement with politics. This flash of memory introduces the viewer in a dark room to the screen, where the teenaged sisters, surrounded by other youth, are watching a documentary clip from Resnais's *Night and Fog*. The medium close-up portrays their father, who is screening the film but not providing any explanation of the pictures. The documentary shows a countless number of dead bodies in the concentration camp. It also shows the camp's brigades of female and male guardians who are forced by the Allied authorities to carry the dead, skeletal corpses who were exhausted by the hunger and work. The voiceover explains:

³¹⁰ Barton Byg, op, cit., p. 266.

Heavy industry turned to these bottomless reservoirs of labor. Factories had their private camps, off-limits to the S.S. Steyer, Krupp, Henkel, I.G. Farben, Siemens, Goering, all shopped in these markets. As I speak, cold water from the marshlands and ruins is filling the gaps in the lime-pits, water as cold and dark as our poor memory.³¹¹

The close-up shows Marianne who becomes sick and sisters are urged to leave the screening room. In the washroom, against the background of the wall's white tiles, their faces are full of pain, while the voiceover coming from the screening room continues with a recitation of the Nazi crimes. That the screening of the documentary was not part of a concerted social effort to teach younger generations about the past becomes obvious in the next sequence, which shows Marianne and Juliane attending class in a high school. The dialogue between Juliane and her teacher summarizes the history of the post-war repression of the past in West Germany. After Marianne finishes her nicely performed recitation of a poem by Rilke, the teacher asks Juliane to interpret the verses. Julianne answers: "I prefer 'Ballad of the Jews' Where Marie Sanders' or the 'Fugue of Death.'" The teacher attempts to control the situation by saying: "You are trying to hide your lack of ideas about Rilke." Juliane then asks rebelliously: "What are you trying to hide?" The teacher orders her to leave the class. Juliane, while leaving, stubbornly continues to challenge the teacher's authority by uttering the sentence: "If the Nazis planned something it would be tonight."

Juliane leaves the classroom and lights a cigarette in the hall. This exchange succinctly captures the fear of confronting the past. The editors of the 1977 article "Germany's Danse Macabre," assert:

³¹¹ The voiceover in Allan Resnais's film *Night and Fog*.

This state of mind, the fear of the political, has also included a fear of confronting the past. The past, the Nazi experience, has become identified with politics to the extent that throughout the postwar epoch the repression of the past, which in Germany was the leitmotif of the post 1945 generation, led to the creation of a depoliticized atmosphere unique in Western Europe. By repressing the past, a kind of collective illusion has emerged among the ruling generation: a conscious belief that fascism was the failure of order and not its triumph. The association of the social criticism with violence must be understood not simply as a response to real disorder but return of the repressed.³¹²

Von Trotta's film does precisely this: by deconstructing the belief that "fascism was the failure of the order,"³¹³ the film enters into repressed memories. The school sequence discusses the repressed. The school scene in which Juliane leaves the classroom is an obvious sign of her defiant teenage nature. Some of the critics, such as Dolorme and Byg, tried to explain Juliane and Marianne's different experiences during their youth and the type of father-child bonding as being the main reasons for Marianne's adherence to terrorism. Marianne's faith in terrorism is due to her not going through a phase of teenage rebelliousness as Juliane did, on all possible levels, with regard to school and the relationship with their authoritarian, estranged father.³¹⁴

This criticism discusses the flash-backs in terms of Freudian analysis and the Oedipal narrative in the film. As previously mentioned, these scholars tried to decipher the consequences of the sisters' childhood for their adult personalities, as well as the meaning of the relationship between the sisters. A particularly significant fact for this critique is the detail that the father is a strict Protestant minister, a typical representative

³¹² Editorial, "Germany's Danse Macabre," *New German Critique* 12 Fall 1977, p. 4.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ See: Charlotte Delorme, pp. 47-51.

of the patriarchal order. Thus we see that Marianne, who was in childhood a compliant daughter who played cello and recited Rilke, becomes a cynical, irresponsible terrorist, while the rebellious teenager Juliane, who smokes after being kicked out from class, becomes a responsible journalist fighting for women's rights through the legal system, demonstrations and writing articles.

Such a psychological explanation is not only insufficient, it also misses the film's message. It overlooks the film's engagement with history and politics as its main focus. Juliane's character is an agent of history in the film, which serves the auteur to expose the mishandling of history in the post-war period. By portraying Juliane's character as a rebellious teenager, von Trotta created an opening to engage with history without resorting to classic, descriptive historical representation. Moreover, the auteur uses the dialogue with the teacher as a device to disclose the truth about repressed memories, which could have only been incited by such a young and disobedient personality.

All attempts to psychologically explain the mystery of the sisters' personality reversals in their adult years are superfluous. Marianne's becoming a terrorist represents an ultimate solution to the problems that Juliane questions in their teenage years, since these questions remain unanswered. In this sense, Juliane's and Marianne's adult personality reversals can be seen as the manifestation of their social engagements, although in different stages of their lives and in different manners. The questions which Juliane asks in adolescence become the impetus for Marianne's terrorism in adulthood. Von Trotta uses this narrative device to comment on Marianne's choice of terrorism to deal with the problems of history and politics. In other words, what the director offers to the viewer as her attitude to terrorism is the character of Juliane who transforms her

radical attitudes from her youth into an intellectual engagement with the feminist issues, such as the question of abortion.

Feminist critiques reproach the picture for using a binary structure that underlines the patriarchy and its hierarchal system as a mode of telling the story. By pointing out that von Trotta only repeats this structure in the film, this understanding serves as one of the foundations around which the feminist criticism has developed. However, the obvious dualism in the film becomes subverted by the usage of the filmic apparatus, including the self-reflexive strategies noted above. Moreover, this binary structure of opposites – which is spread throughout of the film, is only a framework through which the film operates as narrative cinema. The film does not rely on this system for carrying out its message. By using the filmic language of self-reflexivity or distancing techniques, the film proposes a new reading of the narrative film.

The usage of a binary system as the theoretical basis for the film's analysis has been used recently as well. In James M. Skidmore's words, the "intellectual" position of von Trotta's film makes it possible to "see through the veils that mask reality."³¹⁵ Skidmore, in his analysis, applies the same system of duality, however this time, it is Juliane's intellectualism vs. Marianne's emotionalism. His critique of the film provides an explanation of Marianne's motif to become a terrorist which is not based on a psychoanalytic approach but on an understanding of Marianne's "lack of intellectual equipment and the fact that it leaves [her] open to manipulation by a more domineering figure."³¹⁶ Skidmore corroborates his observation by quoting Juliane's reproach that "had Marianne been from an earlier generation, she would have been a member of the

³¹⁵ James M. Skidmore, "Intellectualism and Emotionalism in Margarethe von Trotta's *Die Bleierne Zeit*," *German Studies Review*, vol. 25, no. 3, Oct. 2002, p. 560.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

Hitler's youth."³¹⁷ While Skidmore's analysis presents a new understanding of Marianne's motivations and the film around which so many debates have been instigated, his critique is nevertheless based on a binary system which has already been discarded by feminism as a patriarchal model.

A misreading of *Marianne and Juliane's* narrative and its filmic language which simultaneously supports and undermines the narrative system, as previously discussed, prevents these critics from seeing the film as von Trotta's political statement. The film examines terrorism from multiple view-points, which permeate the story in many different forms. One of them is obvious. It occurs at the end of the film and brings the viewer toward an understanding of the film's beginning in which Juliane walks around the room as the camera pans the files on the shelf that trace the history of her sister's terrorist activities. This *mise-en-scène* has a particular meaning indicating that the director's primary interest is in investigating terrorism and its historical roots. Linville asserts:

Like most other German films dealing with terrorism, this one deconstructs the difference between state-sponsored and antistate terrorist activities, not insisting on their identity, but, rather, exposing the slippery ground of boundaries. Instead of attempting an airtight definition of terrorism, this film interrogates positions on violence, whether emotional or physical, state sanctioned or otherwise.³¹⁸

By engaging Juliane from the beginning of the film in a quest for the truth about Marianne's death in the prison, von Trotta makes it clear that what Juliane investigates in her files is state terrorism. Linville quotes von Trotta:

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Susan E. Linville, op. cit., p. 454.

[...] after the death of Ulrike Meinhof and the death of the three Stammheim prisoners it was quickly asserted, despite contradictory evidence in the findings of the investigation, that it was a case of suicide. Questions were not even admitted.³¹⁹

This may be why the film openly questions the official explanation. The question becomes obvious in the scenes in which Juliane tests the ways in which Marianne allegedly committed suicide. Juliane goes so far as to make a life-sized doll of her sister, to hang it and wait to see it fall down. The shot of a hanging white doll, which fills the screen with its ominous presence, plays out Juliane's trauma that in this moment becomes materialized by assuming its physical shape. In Kaplan's words this is the moment of a "suppressed cultural trauma,"³²⁰ in which the overthrow of authorities coalesces with personal trauma. Kaplan explains that in *Moses and Monotheism*,

Freud theorizes that the trauma of the Jews in the killing of Moses repeated an earlier crime of the primal horde's murder of the powerful father-leader. Traces of the crime continue throughout history.³²¹

Similarly, Juliane's enacted trauma repeats her sister's trauma that is in itself a repeat of, in Kaplan's words a "suppressed cultural trauma."

Whereas Juliane's re-enactment of the suicide does not disprove the official account, this sequence in the film is enough for the viewer to infer what von Trotta's position is regarding the authorities' representation of the event and the state terrorism supporting it. The auteur uses other filmic methods to this end, such as the inclusion of

³¹⁹ Ibid., p. 451.

³²⁰ E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature*, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2005, p. 73.

³²¹ Ibid.

Vietnam war documentary footage, which serves to underline the fact that state terrorism is a widespread phenomenon.

The film shows the sisters watching this footage, during which Marianne makes a comment: “I cannot believe that nothing can be done about this.” The Vietnam footage and Marianne’s comment can be understood that her concern for universal justice was present early in her life, thus adding to her psychological portrait. On the other hand it also represents the auteur’s comment on state terrorism. Skidmore points out that the terrorist Ulrike Meinhof (1934-1976), “[...] one of the leading intellectual voices in the campaign to change German society... argued that America’s actions in Vietnam were largely fascist in nature.”³²² It is this blunt parallel with the German authorities that the Vietnam documentary footage draws on.

Marianne and Juliane is a political film which explores terrorism as multifaceted phenomena. By using a traditional narrative system that the film simultaneously supports and subverts, it investigates all the contentious questions that plagued German social life in the seventies. The film analyzes various historical matters such as the question of truth and guilt that burdened German society in the late 1940s and 1950s, at the time of the sisters’ development. Juliane’s flashbacks reveal to the viewer that these were not easy times. Family life was firmly in the grip of the patriarchal system which governed the relationships, in which the father was someone who had the ultimate right to judge. At the end of the film, even the mother – who, with her sheer presence and obedience to the father was supporting such a patriarchal order throughout the sisters’ youth – told Juliane that she started calling the father “the egoist.” Family as a patriarchal construction was a mirror of the larger social picture of the state and its institutions. The auteur openly

³²² James M. Skidmore, op. cit., p. 553.

acknowledges this in the prison scene in which Juliane visits Marianne after she (Marianne) was transferred to the high security prison. The sisters talk to each other through the glass between them. The reflection of her own face, which Juliane sees in the glass, prevents her from seeing her sister clearly. This shot, showing the sisters' overlapping facial images, recalls Bergman's *Persona*. Von Trotta does this not only by simply referring to the visual device of the overlapping images, but also to the film's thematic concerns with family relationships.

By portraying Juliane as rebellious, whose questions remain unanswered both in her family and school, von Trotta draws obvious parallels between these two basic institutional elements of society. The film's German title, *Die bleierne Zeit*, (Lead Times) conveys this bleak reality of the post-war period and the 1970s in Germany in a direct way, as opposed to the English title *Marianne and Juliane*, which only recalls the names of the two participants without hinting at the film's message.

Von Trotta explores two of the most important issues of 1970s West Germany: the social causes and ramifications of the youth terrorist group, the Red Army Faction, and the subsequent reactionary efforts of state terrorism, operating under the guise of civil rights protection. Juliane, who is the agent of history in the film, investigates state terrorism. Juliane's statement, directed to her mother, "Daddy does not believe it is a suicide," is a very direct pronouncement of the auteur's position.

Von Trotta questions the viability of the system by allotting the sentence of accusation to be spelled out by the representative of the patriarchal system. The father himself suspects that his daughter and her friends were killed in prison by the state. This suspicion of state terrorism is an ultimate message of the film, which, however, does not

bring any clear conclusion. The film concludes with Marianne's son, Jan ordering: "*Fang an!*" (Begin!) This was addressed to his aunt Juliane, who promised to tell all about his mother. Thus the film ends with the story of terrorism being retold once again. This time the tale is told for a new generation, which would have a chance to hear the whole story.

Von Trotta's film explores the problem of terrorism as a multifaceted phenomenon which affects society as a whole, but it is the individual who feels it on a personal level most directly. What the auteur investigates in *Marianne and Juliane* is not only the cause of youth terrorism, but also the clandestine and lethal methods which the state apparatus employs in fighting terrorism, without trying to address its causes. This obscurity of means and procedures, which the state exploits, always leaves the greatest portion of the story of terrorism untold.

To summarize the issues that have been discussed by now: in the Introduction and Chapter One and Two, I have been exploring transnational circulation of images, New Film movements in Germany and Yugoslavia and the ways in which French New Wave influenced these cinemas. This influence is obvious in the new developments in picture making as a major prerequisite for New Film movements. In Chapter Two, I have examined New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film as cinemas of political awareness and analyzed Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* and Fassbinder's *Despair* as examples of the filmmakers' engagement with history and politics. Chapter Three has explored history as a *sine qua non* for the emergence of New German Cinema. New Yugoslav Film also dealt with history in a substantial manner by exposing the Communists hidden crimes at the end and after WWII. The films I have analyzed here, Pavlovic's *Ambush* and von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane* explored and

deconstructed the mechanisms of power and state terrorism in their respective countries. It is appropriate here to recall Žižek's "unhistorical kernel," or the histories hidden by the state authorities, which is the subject of von Trotta's and Pavlovic's films. The auteurs discuss the subject of state terrorism through the conventional narrative process as a linear succession of events. The filmmakers employ various filmic devices to break the pattern of this linearity, such as the specific visual language that forms an image as a play of overlapping planes in *Ambush*, or the play with self-reflexive strategies, which simultaneously supports and undermines the narrative system in *Marianne and Juliane*. Such an unusual combination of filmic strategies makes these two films always actual and especially pertinent in today's world of exaggerated violence affecting individuals at all levels of society.

Chapter Four continues the exploration of the ways in which an individual positions herself or himself towards power structures. I will examine the relationship between city spaces and an individual to reveal the influences of capitalist and socialist/communist cities on their dwellers. I compare Fassbinder's 1974 *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* with the fictional part of Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, and Wim Wenders' 1974 *Alice in the Cities* with Makavejev's 1967 *Switchboard Operator* to reveal the specific modes, in which the individual participates in the production of city spaces.

Chapter Four

Cinemas of Desire and Critique

To the ordinary man. To a common hero, an ubiquitous character, walking in countless thousands on the streets. In invoking here at the outset of my narratives the absent figure who provides both their beginning and their necessity, I inquire into the desire whose impossible object he represents [...]. This anonymous hero is very ancient. He is the murmuring voice of societies. In all ages he comes before texts. He does not expect representations.³²³

The connection between film and the city was always already there from the early days of cinema. New Film movements, with their transnational lines of circulation, developed further the ways in which the city was portrayed. During the 1960s and 1970s, New Film auteurs put the specific emphasis on exploring everyday interaction between cities and their inhabitants. Michel De Certeau in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, talks about this relation in terms of everyday practice of navigating through the city streets, but also through literary and legal texts. In other words, De Certeau understands the city as the place that produces different forms of maneuvering, one of which is institutional, but also that of the city walkers. It is this “common hero” of the everyday, a champion of the cities, “walking in countless thousands on the streets,” who is the hero of the films which I will discuss in this chapter. This “rhetoric of walking”³²⁴ announces the relationship between the city and its inhabitants. By comparing Fassbinder’s *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*

³²³ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984, p. v.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

with the fictional part of Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, and Wenders' 1974 *Alice in the Cities* with Makavejev's 1967 *Switchboard Operator*, I will discuss cultural and socio-historical processes at the specific localities during the Cold War on both sides of the imaginary dividing line between the two blocks which these films portray. I use the notion of localities "as primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial,"³²⁵ to investigate the position of the individual in both socialist and capitalist systems, and the cultural and economic interaction and exchange which unfolds between them.

It is important to notice that I am returning in this chapter to Makavejev's *WR* in order to examine its fictional – melodrama element, after the film's documentary segment devoted to Reich was explored in the First Chapter. This is necessary due to the film's structural mix of different filmic materials, such as documentary and fiction. I examine different parts of the film in the First and Fourth Chapters, mirroring in this way the film's structure. To elucidate the film's strategy, it is critical to understand that the documentary and fictional parts are closely tied together, since the auteur uses melodrama to embody Reich's teachings. Makavejev simultaneously employs the city as a backdrop for the melodrama segment, as well as a site for the disclosure of interactions and relationships between different people and cultures.

The relationship between the city and the individual in different historical and social contexts is one of the foremost concerns that Makavejev, Fassbinder and Wenders explore in their films. These directors portray the city as a site that supplies not only the

³²⁵ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 178.

mise en scène playground for the “clash” between politics and the individual but also as its shaping force.

The City in Theory

The ways in which the concept of the city *per se* is theorized needs to be addressed before proceeding with the film’s analysis. I am referring here to Elizabeth Grosz article, “Bodies-Cities,” in which she examines the city discourse from the position of interactions between cities and bodies:

By *city* I understand a complex and interactive network which links together, often in an unintegrated and de facto way, a number of disparate social activities, processes, and relations, with a number of imaginary and real, projected or actual-architectural, geographic, civic and public relations. The city brings together economic and informational flows, power networks, forms of displacement, management, and political organization, interpersonal, familial, and extra-familial social relations, and an aesthetic/economic organization of space and place to create a semipermanent but ever-changing built environment or milieu.³²⁶

Here Grosz discards “the implicitly phallogentric coding of the body-politics,”³²⁷ and promotes a view of the city which stresses that “the city is an active force in constituting bodies, and always leaves its traces on the subject corporeality.”³²⁸ The author examines the city from the standpoint of the body, subjectivity, and new technologies of telecommunications which affect the subject, without raising the question of how

³²⁶ Elizabeth Grosz, “Bodies-Cities,” in *Sexuality and Space*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton Architectural Press, 1992, p. 244.

³²⁷ Ibid., 247.

³²⁸ Ibid., 251.

discourses of the body and space are related to the variability of the socio-historical circumstances.

Henri Lefebvre, in his book *The Production of Space* discusses precisely this relationship of the body/space nexus and history. This interaction engenders “the production of space,” that he theorizes in *The Production of Space*. Lefebvre emphasizes:

In the history of space as such, [...] the historical and diachronic realms and the generative past are forever leaving their inscriptions upon the writing table-tablet, so to speak, of space. The uncertain traces left by events are not the only marks on (or in) space: society in its actuality also deposits its script, the result and product of social activities.³²⁹

For Lefebvre, “a spatial body [...] as product and as the production of space, is immediately subject to the determinants of that space,”³³⁰ and “(social) space is a (social) product,”³³¹ which “like all social practice, spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized.”³³² Lefebvre posits that space is a social product and that the city spatial practices are related to a social production of urban space. The production of space as a social edifice also means the production of domination and power, which has the tendency to exert control over social subjects and their relations.

Lefebvre emphasizes that those structures of domination never master social relations completely. The lived space that appears homogeneous, what Lefebvre would call an “illusion of transparency,”³³³ is actually heterogeneous and consists of different social strata that form a multitude of intersections with the potential to provide alternative

³²⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1996, p. 110.

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 195.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 26.

³³² Ibid., p. 34.

³³³ Ibid., p. 27.

models of social spaces. These are spaces appropriated by the community or a group, and they stand in contrast to spaces of domination such as spaces of authority and/or technology.

Guy Debord theorizes the modern city from the position that understands capitalist society as a society of spectacle. This is society is governed by the empty imagery that is put in the service of the mass media, and profit orientated culture. He argues that “In the domain of culture the bourgeoisie strives to divert the taste for innovation [...]”³³⁴ In order to counteract capitalist commercial mechanisms, Debord proposes the concept of “unitary urbanism”³³⁵ as the “detournement” of previous forms of architecture, art and urbanism.”³³⁶ Unitary urbanism is aimed at creating conditions in which avant-garde strategies can flourish and find ways to engage city inhabitants in everyday meaningful cultural activities, which “will ensure the future reign of freedom and play.” In other words, Debord’s unitary urbanism equates art and everyday life.

As previously noted, De Certeau also understands the city as a conglomeration of everyday practices. I bring up De Certeau, because his theorization of the city and the everydayness elucidates certain aspects of Fassbinder’s, Makavejev’s and Wenders’ films discussed in this chapter. I think primarily on those questions that the films examine, which are related to different forms of the interactions between cities and their inhabitants and their social meaning. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau examines the practices of everyday life as the site of procedures within the system of

³³⁴ Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, *Art in Theory 1900 – 1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996, p. 694.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Ibid.

institutions and power structures and their strategies of “force-relationships.”³³⁷ He explains the ways in which he employs the terms “strategy” and “tactic”:

I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power [...] can be isolated from an “environment.” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as *proper* (*propre*) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clientèles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model [...]. I call a “tactic,” on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization) nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other.³³⁸

Here the author explains his understanding of the notions, “strategy” and “tactic.” and the distinction between them. A strategy, for de Certeau, is an operation of the institutionalized life comprising “political, economic and scientific rationality” that extends to the other which is externalized, whereas a tactic is the operation whose space cannot be localized that belongs to externalized other, in other words, to everyday practices. He specifies that everyday practices such as talking, cooking, moving around, shopping or reading are tactical in nature. The author explains that a tactic, because it has no place, depends on time for its operations, and “it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing’ [...]. It must constantly manipulate events to turn them into ‘opportunities’ [...]. This is achieved in the propitious moment when they are able to

³³⁷ Michel de Certeau, p. xix.

³³⁸ Ibid.

combine heterogeneous elements.”³³⁹ De Certeau offers as an example the dilemma facing a consumer in the supermarket who is confronted with a diverse range of variables, such as her/ his needs and taste, and the assortment of goods in the store that is not always compatible with what the customer desires. In order to make a decision, such a situation requires the “intellectual synthesis of these given elements” by an individual. The author denotes this process as a “way[s] of operating,” or “knowing how to get away with things.”³⁴⁰ He emphasizes that “the Greeks called these ‘ways of operating’ *mētis*.”³⁴¹ De Certeau examines the city, as a site in which a tactic of everyday living, or ways of operating, function on multiple levels.

De Certeau states that “The kind of difference that defines every place is not on the order of a juxta-position but rather take the form of imbricated strata.”³⁴² These are places that harbor spaces of escape. The author suggests that an everyday practice, such as walking, can be a space for escaping authoritarian control. “The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how panoptic they may be [...]. It creates shadows and ambiguities within them.”³⁴³ The places of ambiguities give the possibility for more inclusion in terms of opening up alternative spaces within the everyday. The films I discuss in this chapter, examine urban places as the spaces harboring ambiguities that are incentives for the filmmakers to reveal their social and cultural implications.

It is the domain of the everyday that is the subject of this chapter. The cities of Berlin, Belgrade and New York, with their inherent historical and social practices, are what Fassbinder, Makavejev and Wenders, respectively, portray in their films.

³³⁹ Ibid

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Ibid., p. 200.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 101.

The public sphere as the space of heterotopia is simultaneously the space of plurality, crisis, confrontation, exclusion, but also the space offering a possibility for a practitioner of everyday life to voice her/his argument through the rites of everyday operations.³⁴⁴ It is these rites that Wenders,' Makavejev's and Fassbinder's films discuss. Although, the cities in the Cold War era belonged to different cultural and political systems, the goal of such an analysis is to identify the points of convergence between them, which would serve as a bridge between their social and political settings. This approach entails an investigation into the social constraints that affect an individual operating in these two socio-political systems, capitalist and socialist, and the difference between these social structures as they unfold in the city environment. In other words, how do the Greeks' *metis*, or ways of operating, function in capitalist and socialist city settings?

Transnational Cinema: New Film and Hollywood

In recent years Transnational Cinema has become the site for an exploration of two or more cultural systems of knowledge. Transnationalism in film denotes a diminishing of national identity, which is obvious in the increasingly weak national connections in terms of film production and distribution, as well as filmmakers and performers. Whereas Transnational Cinema is a postcolonial phenomenon, comprised of directors from colonial and Third World countries reacting to Hollywood's domination, its inceptions can be found in the New Film movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the circulation of ideas at international film festivals which shaped this movement's

³⁴⁴ It is worth mentioning here that certain Eastern Bloc cities were left deliberately unrepaired to remind its populace of its fascist past.

transnationalism. As analyzed in the Second Chapter, Yugoslav Communists and their leader Tito exploited an unstable equilibrium produced by tensions between the two Cold War blocs to promote their country as a zone of socialism with open borders, strong international connections and relationships of economic and cultural exchange. Part of this communist strategy was an international engagement of Yugoslav film.

The notion of the *auteur* has been central to the internationalization of the New Film movement. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen assert that François Truffaut's

[...] '*politique des auteurs*' defended the Hollywood studio film by maintaining that, although unappreciated or even unnoticed, the work of an author, an auteur could be seen in many Hollywood films. This auteur was not the film's scriptwriter, however, but the film's director whose 'signature' could be discerned by the sensitive critic [...]. Truffaut's emphasis on the director as the prime film artist became a critical mainstay of the pioneering French film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, which quickly expanded his focus on the French tradition to encompass the Soviet, German and especially the American.³⁴⁵

The new cinema became a transnational phenomenon reaching backward and forward in time. Its discursive filmic imagination captures and examines different forms of social activities, such as history, politics or the relationship between the city, with its architectural space, and the individual in different social formations, such as capitalism and communism/socialism in different geographical locations during the Cold War. Recent scholarship on post-colonial and transnational cinema has focused its attention on, in Deleuze's words, the "any-spaces-whatever"³⁴⁶ after WWII. The city's spaces of

³⁴⁵ Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen eds. *Film Theory and Criticism*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 446.

³⁴⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Time-Image*, p. 208.

ruins, demolition and reconstruction and rebuilding as well, migration, hybridity, anxiety and conflicts, have become the privileged site of cinema.

It is this lived space of contradictions, inhabited by fragmented and fractured linkages that is the space of Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, which examines the problem of the social position of guest workers in German society, or the dismantling of various social prejudices. The fictional part of Makavejev's *WR* portrays the position of workers in Yugoslavia, which is often deplorable due to the failed promise of Marxist ideology. It also questions women's roles in society which are only acknowledged verbally. This segment of *WR*, as a fragment of the film's collage form, talks about the fragmented and unstable condition of personal relationships under Yugoslav socialism.

Whereas Wenders' film engages American and German cities and towns in order to examine the impact of capitalist societies on individuals, Makavejev, in *Switchboard Operator* situates his love story in the city of Belgrade, the capital of a socialist country. I am particularly interested in revealing the specific influences of capitalist and socialist/communist cities on the individual's position. What are the ways in which an individual positions herself or himself towards power structures in various historical moments? How does this relationship affect identity politics, which is closely related to the question of gender?

In the First Chapter we saw that Pasolini in his "The Cinema of Poetry" invited filmmakers to employ new filmic language in portraying society. The propensity for adopting different languages is a common feature shared by New Cinema filmmakers. Yet, in order to grasp the circulation of ideas taking place in a wider cinematic setting, it is important to emphasize that New Film movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia

were part of the process of cinematographic development in which the French New Wave exerted an important influence. As already mentioned, New Cinema filmmakers' in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, beginning with the French New Wave in the fifties and early sixties, reevaluated the American genre film, such as the Western, melodrama or thriller. The French auteurs recognized that "American cinema was not, fundamentally an *auteur* cinema, that *auteurs* in the American cinema were to be found despite the system, as exceptions to it."³⁴⁷ American auteurs, Howard Hawks, John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock became the focus of investigation into the problematic of authorship. Andrew Sarris assert that

The three premises of the auteur theory may be visualized as three concentric circles: the outer circle as technique; the middle circle, personal style; and the inner circle, interior meaning. The corresponding roles of the director may be designated as those of a technician, a stylist, and an auteur.³⁴⁸

Peter Wollen argues that an auteur can only be recognized "[...] by viewing his work as a whole, because the true marks of an auteur will appear in all of them, despite in differences in writers, cinematographers or stars."³⁴⁹

As discussed, New German Cinema filmmakers perceived themselves as auteurs. Kluge explains that the *Autorenfilm* and the *Politik der Autoren*, meant that the financial and the artistic responsibility were combined.³⁵⁰ New Yugoslav Film directors also considered themselves as auteurs.

³⁴⁷ Jim Hillier, "Introduction: Rethinking American Cinema," in *Cahiers du Cinema: The 1960s*, ed. Jim Hillier, London: Routledge, 1986, p. 167.

³⁴⁸ Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," in Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, eds., *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 453.

³⁴⁹ Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, op. cit. p. 446.

³⁵⁰ See: Stuart Liebman, op. cit., p. 24.

The new look, which the French New Wave auteurs cast upon Hollywood film during the late fifties and sixties, was recast in the seventies when Fassbinder discovered Douglas Sirk's melodrama as the cinematic form that provides a framework for carrying out social comment. Although the German New Cinema did not share such an enthusiastic love affair with the individual American film auteurs as their French counterparts, Fassbinder deployed the American melodrama in a strategic way to analyze social circumstances and convey a message. The ways in which melodrama was used as a shaping force by the new film auteurs, from capitalist West Germany and socialist Yugoslavia, such as Fassbinder and Makavejev, to promote their ideas, is important to identify, since Sirk's films, though in different ways, served both auteurs to portray specific problematics in their films. Whereas Fassbinder, in the midst of the 1970s, used melodrama in an obvious way to change the course of his filmic engagement, in the case of Makavejev these influences are more subdued, but similarly carry out a specific program of social criticism.

What are the differences between Hollywood and its representational system and the position which the New Cinemas promote? New Film movements build their anti-representational system by undermining the classic Hollywood narrative and its mimetic representation of reality. The question of the narrative and "the closure of representation" was analyzed in the Second Chapter as related to historical representation, which Makavejev, von Trotta and Fassbinder undermine by applying the Brechtian method of the alienation effect. Further study requires an analysis of representation from the position of mimesis, which is a fundamental model of the Hollywood representational

system. The new film auteurs eschewed mimesis, by devising a different model to reach insights into social and historical developments.

Concepts of narrative and visual texts are based on the awareness of the tensions existing between old and new forms. To examine the ways in which these filmmakers develop visual and narrative strategies, I explore their understanding of the American Hollywood auteurs which they rediscover and pay homage to, in order to produce new forms of filmic historical and political insights and engagements. I follow this process by developing a comparative analysis of Douglas Sirk's 1955 *All That Heaven Allows*, Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and the fictional portion of Makavejev's *WR*. While making a clear-cut break with old narrative and visual forms, the new auteurs are aware of the Sirkian "distanciation" techniques.³⁵¹ Sirk uses an elaborate system of visual and narrative codes such as the intensification of stylization, color schemes or symbols to produce distanciation effects.

The auteur employs this strategy to comply with the requirements of the Hollywood studio system, while simultaneously undermining it. Willeman describes Sirk as a "European left-wing intellectual... [who] wholeheartedly embraced the rules of American genres, especially those of melodrama."³⁵² By discussing the role of stylization as a major sign of distanciation that works toward undermining the Hollywood visual system, Willeman engages the Russian formalist writer and critic, Yuri Tynyanov, who, in his analysis of Dostoyevsky and Gogol, asserts that "when stylization is strongly marked, it becomes parody."³⁵³ Following this track, Willeman asserts that Sirk's

³⁵¹ See: Paul Willeman, "Distanciation and Douglas Sirk," in *Imitation of Life: Douglas Sirk, Director*, ed. Lucy Fisher, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1991, pp. 271-2.

³⁵² Ibid., 271.

³⁵³ Ibid.

stylization becomes parody, which the auteur uses as a distancing effect in his film and in this way subverts the Hollywood representational system.

It is this feature of Sirks' films which Fassbinder embraces as his filmic message in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. Similarly, Makavejev, in the fictional part of *WR*, uses melodrama as filmic expression. Whereas Fassbinder in the midst of the 1970s used melodrama in an obvious way to change the course of his filmic engagement, these influences in the case of Makavejev are more subdued, but also carry out a specific program of social criticism.

The next segment examines the methods that these auteurs use in their films to appropriate melodrama and its visual and narrative languages in order to convey social critique, and which they situate in the city settings of Berlin and Belgrade, respectively.

The City and Melodrama: Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*

Both Makavejev's fictional part of *WR* and Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, employ strategies of melodrama as a tool for detecting and dismantling the system's fallacies such as entrenched traditions and mores. They use melodrama, in Benjamin's words, as "an instrument of ballistics,"³⁵⁴ against both bourgeois and authoritarian systems. These filmmakers further develop the potentials of melodrama as a site not only for discovering and pinpointing the system's flaws, but also for the opportunity of transformation. What are the ways in which Fassbinder and Makavejev employ melodrama as a tool for social engagement?

³⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, p. 238.

The auteurs examine in their films mechanisms of authoritarian coercion which support and promote hypocritical values of both systems, bourgeois – capitalist or proletarian – socialist and their “fields of cultural production.”³⁵⁵ They also pursue their agendas of social critique with rigorous radicality. Thus Fassbinder with his *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* transgresses all social barriers: racial, generational and sexual. Makavejev similarly explores in his film reactions to women’s sexual liberation, which are embodied in the heroine’s brutal murder.

They use Sirkian melodramas by transposing its concepts to different times and social environments. In doing so, they radicalize melodrama as a genre by using it as a platform to talk about contentious matters of everyday life. They also use emotions to heighten their messages. Furthermore, both Makavejev and Fassbinder create a system of viewers’ engagement that works towards tying emotional and intellectual responses in an interlocking situation. In an interview with Norbert Sparrow, which was mentioned in the Second Chapter, Fassbinder emphasizes the importance of emotions:

Intellectual thought is a process of references and categories but it shouldn’t be practiced in such a quick and facile manner. With Brecht you see the emotions and you reflect upon them as you witnessed them but you never feel them [...]. I think I go farther than he did in that I let the audience *feel and think*.³⁵⁶

Fassbinder’s assertion encapsulates one of the basic premises, not only of his films but also of Makavejev’s. Both auteurs operate in their films with an open space of imagination allowing for a wide scope of possible engagement and interpretation. By letting his audience simultaneously “feel and think,” Fassbinder

³⁵⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, ed. Randal Johnson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 78.

³⁵⁶ Norbert Sparrow, op. cit., p. 20.

expands the possibility for a critical response.

Whereas the possibility of different interpretations is also encumbered with various contingencies, Makavejev and Fassbinder offer to the viewer an emotional experience which serves as a tool both to enhance the message and to alleviate its acceptance. This is the case with Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. The film features a love story about an older woman, Emmi (Brigitte Mira) and a younger man, Ali (El Hedi Ben Salem). Fassbinder cushions the viewer's possible shock in witnessing a relationship that is transgressive not only in terms of age difference, but also in terms of racial "incompatibility," by portraying the first meeting of his characters as a romantic encounter. The fact that Fassbinder's characters meet in the immigrant workers' pub, the Asphalt Bar, is in itself disturbing information for the German public, and the auteur envelops this crude detail in the poetic situation. One rainy evening, Emmi enters the bar to find refuge. Ali asks her for a dance, afterwards he walks her home, she invites him for a coffee, they sleep together and he moves in Emmi's apartment. Their relationship is based on mutual understanding and respect. It sees its apogee in their marriage which they celebrate by having an extravagant lunch in the restaurant where Hitler, as Emmi explains to Ali, "had his breakfast regularly." Emmi and Ali try to live their lives as typical working people – Emmi is a cleaning lady and Ali is an auto mechanic – yet this is not meant to be. Their lives become disrupted by their surroundings. Everybody opposes their relationship: Emmi's neighbors, her children, a greengrocer, Ali's colleagues on the job, even a woman, the bartender from the Asphalt Bar. Only Ali's friends, the *Gastarbeiter*, understand. Unlike Ali's colleagues, who make malevolent jokes about his relationship with Emmi, his friends show acceptance and understanding.

In *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, Fassbinder radicalizes the notion of melodrama as a genre and in this sense he goes beyond Sirk. Fassbinder achieves this by widening the melodrama scope of interest with the introduction of new domains of awareness that addresses particular social circumstances. For Fassbinder, this is the question facing foreign workers and their treatment in Germany.

The author presents this issue as, at least, a twofold problem. Firstly, there is the question of “otherness.” For the Germans, this problem was embodied in the different culture and/or skin colour of the “visible” foreign workers, mainly of Arab and Turkish descent, known in Germany as the “*Gastarbeiter*” (guest-workers). And secondly, the auteur questions the conditions in which they live and work. Fassbinder discusses this problem in a painfully open and yet distancing mode. He situates Ali’s story about his life and work in Germany in his conversation with Emmi during their first dance in the Asphalt Bar. Sentimental music creates a romantic atmosphere. The dancers slowly sway to the rhythm of music and Ali says in the *Gastarbeiter’s* German: “Germans bad with Arabs.” When Emmi asks why this is so, he answers “Don’t know. Germans not same people with Arabs... German master, Arab dog.” With the title of the film, *Angst essen Seele auf* instead of *Angst isst die Seele auf*, Fassbinder announces the theme of the *Gastarbeiter*, who speaks broken German. Ali speaks broken German throughout the film but Emmi never mentions this fact to him, nor does she try to correct him. When, during a dance, he tells Emmi that he lives with six other workers in one room, she is appalled, and replies: “Six men in one room is subhuman.” Yet, the romantic music plays on and they continue to dance. Fassbinder employs a poetic setting as a background against which his basic concern with social injustice becomes sharply outlined.

Similarly, Makavejev in the fictional portion of *WR*, employs the “cinema of poetry” and its “technico-stylistic tradition,” towards the end of pinpointing and subverting politico-historical fallacies and the misconceptions affecting everyday life in a socialist country, Yugoslavia. In comparison with Fassbinder, Makavejev also employs the filmic space of imagination that offers the audience a simultaneous emotional and intellectual engagement.

This cinematic strategy results in deepening the viewer’s understanding. One of the devices of Makavejev’s “cinema of poetry” is a dialogue principle that encompasses the visual and textual components in the film. It “affirms the play of the structure,”³⁵⁷ and languages, thus asserting the Pasolinian cinema of poetry. As already discussed, Pasolini in “The Cinema of Poetry,” invited filmmakers to utilize new filmic language in portraying society. Makavejev’s *WR* employs different visual and textual languages that are organized on the principle of play. This play also announces the space of different interconnections of the visual and textual components that spread throughout the film, defying the concept of the center and fixed meaning.

WR, as discussed in the Second Chapter, accomplishes a similar effect by employing an interlaced visual and narrative construction that operates as a collage arrangement of a fragmented reality mirroring the existence of the individual searching not for wholeness, but for the expression of its diverse social, sexual and political potentials. The film uses various dialogic principles of the visual and narrative elements to bring into relation all the structural segments.

³⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, p. 279.

One of the film's structural components is the concept of frame as yet another constitutive element of Makavejev's filmic language. The model of frame is one of the elements of Pasolinian cinema of poetry which both Makavejev and Fassbinder use extensively. Pasolini asserts:

The inner law of the film, that of "obsessive framing," thus shows clearly the preponderance of a formalism as a myth finally liberated and hence poetic (the fact that I use the term formalism does not imply any value-judgment; I am well aware that an authentic and sincere formalist inspiration does exist: the poetry of language.)³⁵⁸

Pasolini refers here to a filmic formalism as "[...] a 'technical language of poetry' in cinema."³⁵⁹ He emphasizes the importance of the cinematic technique as a prerequisite for accomplishing the film's visual language. Makavejev uses visuality of a frame structure in *WR* either as a framing device of the scene or as an object in its own right. The frame as an object appears in several scenes in the film. I will discuss here the two shots in which the frame becomes a bearer of meaning in the scene. One is the shot of Jackie Curtis, a transvestite, holding in his left hand a framed photo of Gary Cooper. (Figure 4.) Cooper is both a metaphor for the *homme fatale*, a trope for patriarchy and this scene could be seen as revealing the framed or fixed concepts of sexual identity and gender, or in Judith Butler's words, "the gendered stylization of the body."³⁶⁰ Here Makavejev raises the gender question as a crucial part of sexuality and identity formation, a subject explored in Butler's conceptualization of the performative aspects of gender:

³⁵⁸ Pier Paolo Pasolini, op. cit., p. 553.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 552.

³⁶⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 141.

The view that gender is performative sought to show that what we take to be an internal essence of gender is manufactured through a sustained set of acts posited through the gendered stylization of the body.³⁶¹

Another example is the shot of Milena placing her face in an empty frame while uttering the sentence “Freedom to the female people, death to male fascism!” (Figure 5.) By recasting the Yugoslav communists’ WWII slogan, “Freedom to the people, death to fascism,” Makavejev simultaneously situates Milena’s utterance within the programmatic role of the feminist slogan and questions or ironises the notion of a slogan itself.

These two sequences highlight the fact that framed structures and fixed meanings are not possible to sustain, since there are always new emerging ideas and possibilities. The underlying thought of *WR* supports and connects all of the film’s elements in a web of interrelations. As opposed to Fassbinder’s *Ali*, Makavejev does not situate his film in the frame of linear storytelling. Rather there is a dialogue between the film’s documentary and fictional segments that mirror each other and allow meaning to arise from their relationship.

Fassbinder also uses the concept of a frame. The auteur creates the filmic poetry of images by conceiving the scene as a framed picture. Thus, we see Ali’s naked body in the door frame of Emmi’s apartment, or the couple having lunch in the restaurant after their marriage sitting at the table which is shot through the door frame. The shot of their lunch is visually structured in a mode which invokes the spatial construction of 17th century Dutch paintings. This type of visuality, which focuses on an everyday scene seen through the “channeled space,” is the central visual concept of these paintings. The

³⁶¹ Ibid.

viewer is put in the role of a passerby who witnesses the mundane scenes occurring in the kitchens or drawing rooms of Dutch bourgeois society. The scenes are usually flanked either by walls, drapes or door frames. Fassbinder uses a deep focus shot to portray the “framed” scenes, such as the scene of Ali and Emmi’s matrimonial meal which is shot thorough the door frame. This shot consists of multiple planes filmed in equally sharp focus. In the middle background there is a wall with the door frame in the middle through which the viewer sees Ali and Emmi having lunch. They discuss the menu with the waiter and the viewer is aware that this is a very special occasion, since the restaurant seems expensive and the waiter appears perplexed by having an Arab man and a German *Frau* as guests. Such a visually framed picture confers various social constraints, one of which is a young Arab man and an older white woman celebrating their marriage.

This “constrained” image works toward creating different feelings in the viewer’s imagination. These images can be beautiful, anxious, subversive or even anarchic. In *The Anarchy of the Imagination*, in an interview with Gian Luigi Rondi about his film *Despair* and *The Third Generation*, Fassbinder talks about anarchy as a method for dealing with social problems:

Today only the anarchists are in the position to change society without using the methods of terrorism. The anarchists are a bit like “the first generation,” which lived on ideals, but with more clear-headedness about putting them into effect.³⁶²

Fassbinder here comments on social boundaries and different forms of restrictions existing in society that can be overcome by using anarchy as a tool. By comparing the

³⁶² Michael Töteberg and Leo A. Lensing eds., *The Anarchy of the Imagination: Interviews, Essays, Notes Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, trans. Krishna Winston, Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, p. 127.

anarchists with “‘the first generation,’ which lived on ideals,” the auteur designates his films as the space of anarchy that offers a possibility to change society.

Fassbinder translates this anarchy in his films into “the anarchy of imagination,” which allows him to deal with a wide variety of social and interpersonal problems. The anarchy of imagination is further transposed into visual codes of filmic imagination which work as the auteur’s message to the audience.

The message itself is carried out by visual codes, such as the restaurant where Emmi and Ali celebrate their marriage and Hitler had breakfast regularly, or the various social situations in which the couple is socially outcast. So we see that the grocery owner, otherwise Emmi’s friendly neighbor, openly tells her that she is not welcome in his store; the audience also witnesses the situation in which Emmi is discarded by her own children in the sequence with the broken TV set; there are also scenes with the neighbors in Emmi’s building, who not only exchange their bitter comments about the couple, but also question Emmi’s “Germanness,” since her surname does not sound Germanic, but Slavic.

In his seminal article from 1936, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin both prefigures a “decline of the aura” provoked by the abolition of art in its *l’art pour l’art* mode of artistic production, and discusses the need for political engagement of avant-garde art and film. Whereas Benjamin’s understanding of sociopolitical role of art and film is relevant to all films under discussion in this work, I use the article here to elucidate Fassbinder’s *Ali* and its relation to the audience.

Benjamin asserts:

From an alluring appearance or pervasive structure of sound the work of art of the Dadaists became an instrument of ballistics. It hit the

spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. It promoted a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator [...]. By means of its technical structure, the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect.³⁶³

Benjamin explains that, in comparison with Dadaism, in other words, avant-garde art, film produces more than a “moral shock effect.” For him, “[...] the shock effect of the film [...] should be cushioned by heightened presence of the mind.”³⁶⁴ This is thanks to the film’s potential to “[...] use the apparatus as such for the artistic presentation of reality [...]”³⁶⁵ that put the audience in a role of a critic. Benjamin’s concept, that the film’s role is to put the public in the position of the critic, gives ample possibilities to broaden the scope of investigation in order to uncover possible affiliations. Thus, when Laura Mulvey asserts that “Ideological contradiction is the overt mainspring and specific content of melodrama, not a hidden, unconscious thread to be picked up only by special critical processes,”³⁶⁶ she talks, analogous to Benjamin, about the specific critical response of Douglas Sirk’s melodrama films. It is this critical apparatus of Sirk’s melodrama that Fassbinder employs to engage in social criticism. In other words, he does not use Emmi’s and Ali’s relationship to shock the public. Rather the auteur uses the couple to invite the public to think.

³⁶³ Walter Benjamin, op. cit., p. 238.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Laura Mulvey, “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama,” *Movie*, no. 25, Winter 1977/78, p. 53.

Yet, at first glance, there is an incongruity between Benjamin's understanding of art as "an instrument of ballistics" and Douglas Sirk's melodramas. Whereas Benjamin sees art as a potent weapon against the bourgeois system, Sirk's films give women a voice which, in Mulvey's words "'act as a corrective' of the system's inconsistencies."³⁶⁷ Nevertheless, it is possible to detect points of conjunction between these two positions. My point is that the subversive quality of Sirk's melodramas, as acknowledged in the contemporary academic arena, promoted this film genre into a socially important "artistic and cultural form."³⁶⁸ Barbara Klinger notes that "British and U.S. Marxists and feminists defined Sirk as a significant political auteur and subversive master of melodrama."³⁶⁹ It is this critical force of melodrama which Fassbinder and Makavejev employ in their films.

The fictional, narrative segment of *WR* is melodrama that is tightly connected to the documentary material which follows Wilhelm Reich's life. Melodrama assemblage is punctuated with documentary assemblage. Makavejev uses melodrama to exemplify Reich's teachings, in other words, the auteur animates Reich's theory in "real life conditions." *WR*'s melodrama tells the story about the love affair between the famous Russian figure skating artist, Vladimir Ilich (Ivica Vidovic) and a common girl from Belgrade, Milena, (Milena Dravic). Their love dalliance occurs during the Russian figure skating artists' visit to Belgrade, sometime in the late 1960s. Yet, besides an exploration of the possible significance of a "real" love experience in the Reichian sense of the word, the auteur employs a melodramatic form to investigate a variety of social and political

³⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 54.

³⁶⁸ For the analysis of the reception and meaning of melodrama, see Barbara Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning, History, Culture, and the Films of Douglas Sirk*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, p. xii.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. xi.

concerns. Makavejev exposes the differences between Russian and Yugoslav understandings of socialist reality.

Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, is a remake of Sirk's melodrama, *All that Heaven Allows*. Sirk's melodrama is about a love story between a woman in her late forties, (Jane Wyman) and a man fifteen years younger than her, (Rock Hudson). Though the age difference seems slighter in Sirk's film, Fassbinder closely follows this narrative pattern in his picture to create melodrama which he uses as a springboard for social criticism. A comparison of the melodramatic component of *WR* and Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, reveals that both authors use melodrama, in Benjamin's words, as "an instrument of ballistics." These auteurs further engage the potentials of melodrama by interrogating mechanisms of authoritarian coercion which support and advance the hypocritical values of both systems, bourgeois – capitalist or proletarian – socialist.

Makavejev's use of melodrama, by mirroring other structures of the film, enhances its sardonic message. In other words, melodrama in *WR* works in synergy with politico/historical layers of the film to deepen their meanings.

Fassbinder, however, forthrightly employs the more subversive qualities of Sirkian melodrama enabling the transmission of the message directly. This is obvious in the romantic scene at the Asphalt Bar in which the romantic music works as parody, similar to the stylization in Sirk's melodramas.

Makavejev also ties the first meeting of his characters to music. Though this is not romantic, but Russian folk music, it too plays a similar role in connecting two lovers. Milena is utterly enchanted by Vladimir Ilich's dancing prowess. Yet the comparison of Fassbinder's and Makavejev's films appears as incongruous as the Benjamin/Sirk

comparison. These traces of this lie primarily in the fact that Fassbinder's film, in its conception, is a "pure" genre film, in this case melodrama, while Makavejev's film is a compound of genres and film materials containing such elements as documentary, interviews and fiction. Nevertheless, there are compelling reasons for their comparison since the fictional part of *WR* is melodrama, which, by bearing the same critical potentials, questions the system's pitfalls and fallacies. And here another question is raised related to the validity of such a comparison. Fassbinder's and Makavejev's films come from different political systems: capitalist and socialist. Are these systems at all comparable? If the answer is positive, where would the tangential points between these two systems be? To answer this question, Makavejev's film needs further elucidation since its documentary and fictional narrativisation comprises both ends of the political spectrum: capitalism and socialism.

Melodrama in *WR* functions as a tragic love story, a narrative about an orgasm which ends disastrously. At the moment when Vladimir Ilich, the Russian skating champion, and Milena, a common girl experiencing sexual fulfillment, in other words, when they experience a climax, that in Reich's words is imbued with "orgasmic potency," tragedy occurs. Vladimir Ilich kills Milena with the skate blade by cutting her head off. The film ends with the fantastic scene of Milena's severed head on a coronary tray telling the story: (Figure 6.)

Cosmic rays streamed through our coupled bodies. We pulsated to the vibrations of the universe. But he couldn't bear it. He had to go one step further. Vladimir is a man of a noble impetuosity, a man of a high ambition, of great energy. He is romantic, ascetic, a genuine red fascist. Comrades, even now I am not ashamed of my communist past.

Milena's statement that Vladimir Ilich is a "genuine red fascist," and that she is not "ashamed of her communist past," points to Makavejev's interest in revealing the ubiquitous permutations of politics intermingling with everyday life. The auteur bluntly revisits this fact throughout the film. By alternating images of the two lovers, Milena and Vladimir Ilich, with that of Stalin, he interprets the position of the individual as conditioned by historical circumstance. The name of the film's hero, Vladimir Ilich, is an open allusion to Lenin, and an effective device, which employs humor and satire and is a compelling way to examine socialist reality. By employing humor, Makavejev plays with the icons of the socialist and communist master narrative, such as Lenin.

Yet, for Makavejev, the degree of this interpolation of historical circumstances into an individual's life is variable. Milena and Vladimir represent different ways in which the political and historical conditions affect the individual. Vladimir, who communicates by declaring his dry, clichéd statements about life, reiterates in this way communist proclamations about the party's care for all "socialist men," is a proponent of the individual being subjected to historical forces. Stalin's image, which is a trope for history and politics determining individuals' lives is from Milena's point of view meaningless. The image of Stalin is not only representative of a sign, in Benjamin words, that "The true picture of the past flits by,"³⁷⁰ it is also detached from the traces of history. Milena thus stands in opposition to Vladimir Ilich's dogmatic understanding of socialist reality. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History," Benjamin investigates the relationship between "the class struggle" and "spiritual things":

The class struggle, which is always present to a historian influenced by Marx, is a fight for the crude and material things without which no refined

³⁷⁰ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," p. 255.

and spiritual things could exist. Nevertheless, it is not in the form of the spoils which fall to the victor that the latter make their presence felt in the class struggle. They manifest themselves in this struggle as courage, humor, cunning, and fortitude. They have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers.³⁷¹

It is this understanding of “refined and spiritual things” that makes the gap between Milena and Vladimir Ilich so precipitous and tragically unbridgeable. It also makes Milena, together with Fassbinder’s Emmi, a character whose ideas are supported by actions, and who transgresses the boundaries by breaching them. For Milena, who declares herself “a communist,” this is primarily a question of the quality of the revolution and its “lack” of understanding “the primordial power of sex.” Moreover, both female characters serve the filmmakers to explore the ways in which an individual operate within the confine of the established social modalities.

Fassbinder’s *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, also examines the question of the individual’s position entangled within social circumstances, and the possibility for change. Fassbinder explains his fascination with Douglas Sirk: “I was also in danger that I would just copy *All that Heaven Allows*. Then I tried to do a remake so to speak, of what I had seen – that was *Ali: Fear Eat the Soul*.”³⁷² For Fassbinder, a successful remake means to “transpose.”³⁷³ He illustrates this with the scene of the broken TV in his film, which bears a completely different meaning when compared to the TV scene in Sirk’s *All that Heaven Allows*.

³⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 254-255.

³⁷² Ernst Burkelt, “Responding to What you Experience: An Interview with the Film Directors Douglas Sirk and Rainer Werner Fassbinder,” in *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, ed. Joyce Rheuban, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1985, p. 194.

³⁷³ Ibid., p. 194.

In Sirk's melodrama, the story of the two socially incompatible (due to their age difference) lovers is built around the misunderstanding of their love that comes from their surroundings. All the people around the lovers scorn their love, beginning with Jane's friends from the club, and ending with the final inclusion of her college-aged children. The scene in which Jane's children present her with a TV set for Christmas, is a sad and ironic look at Jane's life as it is interpreted by her family. By giving her a TV set, the children expose their expectations for their mother to follow the traditional life of a widowed woman. After Christmas dinner the children leave, and Jane sits in front of the TV set staring at her reflection on the screen. This moment serves as a breaking point for Jane, foretelling a life of desolate solitude if she obeys social expectations. Yet Sirk makes Jane a rule-breaker, a precursor of feminist struggle, when she decides to rupture social mores and to live her life in her own way and move in to her young lover's house.

Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* both follows and breaks the pattern of Sirk's film. In Fassbinder's words, this is what a remake does. It follows the pattern of the original film by transposing to a different time and social environment what is governed by different laws. In other words, a remake is at the same time synchronic and diachronic. It is synchronic in terms of the original pattern which remakes generally follows and diachronic in terms of the social circumstances in which the original pattern is implanted. Fassbinder shows this with the example of the TV set scene. He includes this scene in his film, but does not afford it the same level of importance and meaning as it has in the case of *All that Heaven Allows*.

The TV set at the beginning of the seventies represents an utterly different social meaning in comparison to its importance in the fifties. It is broken by one of Emmi's sons

when she invites her children to tell them about her marriage to the Moroccan man. After a moment of silence in which all of Emmi's children and her son-in-law find themselves utterly dumbfounded, one of the sons gets extremely violent and kicks the TV set with his foot. The shattering sound of broken glass falls on the carpet and becomes a visible and threatening sign of Emmi's children's anger and her own helplessness.

After seeing this sequence, the viewer becomes outraged just as was Fassbinder, when he wrote in his analysis of Sirk's works:

[...] Jane tells Rock that she is going to leave him, because of her idiotic children [...]. And there Jane sits on Christmas Eve, her children are going to leave anyway and they've brought her a television set for Christmas. It's too much. It tells you something about the world and what it does to you.³⁷⁴

This impassioned Fassbinder to take revenge in his film, *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*. It is the reason for Fassbinder's violent expression of rage. The auteur is practically forced to radicalize the scene. It is not only that so little has changed in terms of social mores and attitudes between the time of Sirk's film and Fassbinder's, but that things got even worse in Germany during the sixties and seventies, with the emergence of the *Gastarbeiter* factor.

Fassbinder uses the scene with the broken television set both to pay homage to Sirk and as well as to discuss different social questions. By radicalizing this sequence, he opens up a whole array of possibilities for the critique of German society. In Sirk's film, a TV set is a sign of affluence, technological wonder and a status symbol. In Fassbinder's film, the television set in Emmi's apartment is part of the furniture, easily exchangeable, and it is just one item among a wide array of consumer goods. The television set is not a

³⁷⁴ Rainer Werner Fassbinder, "Six Films by Douglas Sirk," in *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, p. 198.

status symbol, but a sign of affluent consumer society. In the case of Germany, the affluence and economic development/expansion in the sixties and seventies was tightly connected with the new labour force of the *Gastarbeiter*. Guest workers flooded the country at the beginning of the 1960s, and with their labour helped expand the German economy.

Yet what has changed in the domain of social relationships? This is the question which Fassbinder asks in the scene of the broken television set. By showing Emmi's children's utterly astonished reaction after meeting their mother's much younger Arabic husband, and the violence that ensued, Fassbinder deepens the film's message. He also offers a solution which calls for, in Benjamin's words, "[...] the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage."³⁷⁵ What Fassbinder communicates with the scene of the broken television set is the need for a radical intervention into the traditional values of social relationships promoting inequality and non-tolerance.

In *WR*, Makavejev poses the same requirements for a radical intervention into social relationships in capitalist and socialist societies alike. The auteur uses the public sphere of New York and Belgrade to articulate the voice of protest. Both city spaces serve Makavejev to convey his political attitude. Tuli Kupferberg³⁷⁶ appears in several sequences that intersect the body of the film in a seemingly unrelated fashion and with no direct connection to the stories of Reich or Milena. Because of its apparent detachment from the rest of the picture, the scenes of Tuli's meandering through Manhattan substantiate a meta-narrative that carries out a clear message.

³⁷⁵ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," p. 221.

³⁷⁶ Tuli Kupferberg is a poet, musician and a rock n'roll star from the sixties.

Tuli's appearances convey the film's message in a direct way. In all sequences that feature Tuli, he is clad in sham military attire, carrying a gun and a helmet on his head. The city zones in which Tuli circulates clearly point to Makavejev's understanding of the city as a domain of social protest. This is obvious in a sequence in which Tuli, with a gun in his hands, circles a group of confused businessmen in front of a building on Wall Street.

Makavejev transfers his idea of protest from the capitalist setting to the socialist milieu. It is in the city of Belgrade where the worker, Radmilovic, demonstrates against the "red bourgeoisie." (Figure 7.) As explained in the first chapter, this coinage comes from the student protest in Belgrade in June 1968. Radmilovic ridicules the red bourgeoisie, *nouveau riche* strata and its newly acquired taste for luxury goods, such as branded cosmetic products. He renames the brand Max Factor as "Marx Factor." Here again, Makavejev uses humor as a tool against the communist authoritarian structures and their failed promises about equal opportunity for all social strata. Radmilovic builds a street barricade during the night which prevents a white Mercedes, a status symbol of the *nouveau riche*, from going through. When the driver wants to move, the worker proclaims the 1968 student slogan: "Down with the red bourgeoisie." Makavejev raises here the question of the city space which, as the public sphere, is supposed to be shared by all participants in the city life.

By employing, in this sequence, a famous symbol of urban protest, a street barricade, as the main means of organizing all the city upheavals, Makavejev examines social injustice and political aberrations. Radmilovic's protest stands for a rebellious

revolutionary enthusiasm which is a parody of communist authorities in Yugoslavia and their revolutionary promise of equality.

The white Mercedes, as a symbol of the communist nouveau riche class, not only contributes to this parody, but it is also a token of the social relations between the working class and the new class. The social problems that this relationship provokes, are revealed in the domain of the public sphere in which the question of the public space vs. private space becomes critical.³⁷⁷ Djilas in his *The New Class*, as mentioned in the Second Chapter, reveals that the Yugoslav and Soviet Communist Parties were the first historical examples of the social class, which did not come into being as a consequence of the production relations in the Marxist sense of the word, but more as a product of the political relations and politics. Djilas's analysis correctly detects the source of the private riches both in Yugoslavia and USSR, which were not accessible to the general public but only to a few members of the upper echelons in the respective communist parties. In the case of Yugoslavia, there were other resources for the wealth of the wider community. As previously discussed, Yugoslavia, during the 1950s, began with economic changes which in the 1960s produced the strata of people who belonged to the private sector, such as different trades or even managerial staff who were in the position to build up substantial property. This economic model resulted in a stratification of society, while Communist authorities maintained the ideological concept of a classless society.

There were also the strata of society that worked in foreign countries either as *Gastarbeiter*, or professionals such as doctors or dentists. The tensions in society were coming from the fact that social structure was stratified, and the political concept was an old one. In the scene which portrays Radmilovic's street protest, Makavejev addresses the

³⁷⁷ See: Jürgen Habermas, op. cit., pp. 1-26.

problem of hidden social stratification, not acknowledged by communist authorities in order to implement adequate measures to protect workers.

WR interprets the urban space as the site in which the fringes of society articulate their voices in socialist and capitalist systems alike.

[...] urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded. The language of power is in itself “urbanizing,” but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power. The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points where one can take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to administer.³⁷⁸

WR portrays New York’s social “ruses” as the strata on the verge of gaining a social recognition. The camera follows Jacky Curtis, a transvestite, and her friend as they walk along New York’s 42nd Street. They share an ice cream while the voice-over radio commercial announces: “You own the sun with Coppertone.” This shot promotes several possible and opposed meanings: both that gay culture is emerging from the margins of society and that mainstream consumerism is creeping towards it to exploit its economic potential. The next shot shows Jacky Curtis and her lover in the back seat of a car driving along a New York street. Curtis talks passionately about her gender. She changed her sex, but she points out that in her life nothing has changed. She emphasizes that she is the same person. Curtis is upholding the “gender revolution” against fixed values, which is fought on the personal level.

³⁷⁸ Michel de Certeau, op. cit., p. 95.

By radicalizing their filmic messages, both Fassbinder and Makavejev follow Benjamin's understanding of film as a public arena for the articulation and critique of a wide range of social concerns. By engaging melodrama as a platform to talk about contentious matters of life such as gender, sexuality or the position of workers, the auteurs employ radical leftist positions. In this way they follow Benjamin's expectation for artistic production to act as a weapon against authoritarian systems.

Fassbinder's and Makavejev's attitudes towards the techniques of visuality are the other components which act as features connecting their filmic work. The visual language of the cinema which they employ is directed to promoting at once the social message the auteurs communicate and the self-reflexive look they cast upon the medium itself. The method of distanciation, as a mode of detachment in combination with emotions, allows the viewer to engage on multiple levels, intellectually as well emotionally, and emerges as the most prominent filmic strategy. Their films invite the spectators to contemplate both the message and the visual modes for conveying its meaning.

The city is the stage for Makavejev's *WR* and Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, which they engage to examine the relationship between the individual and urban spaces. The visual language of the cinema is a privileged site in which the architectural and historical spaces of the city, seen at once as sites of rupture and new possibility, are perceived by both auteurs as conditioned by various contingences of history and social interactions within the practice of everyday life.

Fassbinder explores the tension between the socio-historical rupture and new possibilities in the scene where Emmi and Ali celebrate their marriage in the Berlin restaurant that used to serve Hitler his breakfast. When the auteur situates the couple in

this specific restaurant to celebrate their marriage, it is obvious that he exploits this information as a sign of the historical rupture which is built in to the city's architectural and public spaces, in order to offer a possible solution for overcoming social fissures by discussing the relationship between Emmi, a German woman and Ali, an Arab man.

Although this bond appears to be utterly incompatible, the fact that the filmmaker presents their relationship not only as friendly and compassionate, but also as sexual, speaks about Fassbinder's belief that social misunderstandings can be bridged if entrenched and obsolete social rules are altered. Here Fassbinder closely follows Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows*, since both films talk about the relationship between older women and younger men as a love relationship. Whereas Sirk's film limits Jane and her love life to kisses conforming to film codes of the 1950's, Fassbinder's film presents Emmi's and Ali's love following the conventional codes of the 1970s; after a romantic encounter the couple ends up in bed making love, and has breakfast the next morning. Makavejev projects similarly positive expectations by giving his dead heroine a voice and by finishing the film with two smiles, those of Reich's and Milena's.

This segment explored modalities in which Fassbinder and Makavejev employ melodrama to engage in social and cultural debates. Although Fassbinder's *Ali* belongs to the film genre of melodrama and Makavejev's *WR* is a collage picture in which one of its components is melodrama, the comparative structure in this segment was based on the fact that the auteurs use melodramatic narrative to pronounce their social critique of and reengagement with Hollywood melodrama to express new social concerns.

The next section discusses the ways in which individual expectations are met by the city, as a site of nomadic desires in Wenders' *Alice in the Cities* and Makavejev's

Switchboard Operator and the ways in which these auteurs portray the public sphere as a space of heterotopia and memories.

Cities, Workers, Wanderers: Wenders' *Alice and the Cities* and Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator*

Ordinary people, traveling from one city to another in search of their identity, as in Wenders' *Alice in the Cities*, or those searching for the meaningful existence and love within the communist/revolutionary social framework, as in Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator*, are the central theme of these two films. The following analysis reveals Wenders' and Makavejev's visual and narrative strategies for portraying changes in identity positions which the films' characters experience. The aim of this examination is to understand the films' protagonists' relation to the city as the place of their dwelling and the ways in which their personal experiences are shaped by the urban environment, such as New York, Amsterdam and the Ruhr district cities in Wenders' film, and Belgrade in Makavejev's film. The city space in both films figures as the setting which provides a set of circumstances affecting the characters in a way that is always idiosyncratic. In other words, what characters experience is closely related to the space in which they are situated at that particular moment in time.

De Certeau posits that "There are illegibilities of the layered depth in a single place, of ruses in action and of historical accidents."³⁷⁹ Makavejev and Wenders portray such places in their pictures. The act of seeing, as an observational filmic technique, is conceptually different in these films. Whereas Wenders ties the space of changes his

³⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 200.

characters go through with the movement captured by the long and panoramic shots, Makavejev ties it with the seemingly static space of an “abstract didacticism and cold rationality,”³⁸⁰ portrayed by the alternating camera movements, ranging from the fixed camera shots to the fluid camera movement and erratic rhythm of the hand-held camera.

Existence between Fear and Play: *Alice in the Cities*

Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I am not the same, the next question is “Who in the world am I?”³⁸¹

Lewis Carroll’s heroine of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice, repeatedly asks, “Who in the world am I?” to express her existential anxiety while traveling through the underground fantasy world. By naming his heroine Alice, Wenders ties his film, *Alice in the Cities* with the book, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and, at same time, offers viewers a clue about the film’s concerns with existential and identity crises. *Alice in the Cities* is a road movie, depicting Philip Winter’s (Rüdiger Vogler) travels through America, documenting his existential, cultural and financial crises, which he then overcomes while journeying through Germany with Alice (Yella Rottländer).

Wenders begins the picture with a panning shot of a plane in flight and finishes the film with an aerial tracking shot of a train winding along the Rhine River, which captures the Rhine Valley with the geometrical crop fields across the railway road. By

³⁸⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, p. 322.

³⁸¹ Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, New York: Dover Publications, INC., 1993, p. 8.

framing the film, with the shots of the plane and the train respectively, the auteur substantiates the structure of his picture as a road movie.

The film is also about America and Europe as seen through the eyes of Philip, a thirty-one year-old German journalist and his traveling companion, a nine year-old girl, Alice. Philip is commissioned by a journal from Munich to write an article about the American social scene. At the beginning of the film we see him returning to New York from a trip across America. During his journey, unable to write, Philip takes a lot of Polaroid photographs. He reaches New York without having written the story and shows the editor the pile of Polaroid photos, explaining that: "When you travel across America something happens to you, through the pictures you see there. And the reason why I shot so many pictures is part of my story." After learning he has missed the deadline, and will not be paid, Philip concludes by stating that he is going to finish the story in Germany. He goes to a travel agency to buy a ticket and he encounters Lisa, a young woman, and her nine-year old daughter, Alice. After realizing that, due to a strike, they cannot fly immediately, Philip helps Lisa and Alice find a hotel, and goes to spend the night at his friend's.

Wenders uses this sequence to portray Philip as a young man in search of an identity, who is not able to see the needs of those around him. He enters his friend's apartment without noticing that she is unhappy with his night visit. He just passes by her, and starts telling the story of his trip, while walking by the window through which the skyscrapers can be seen filling the vision with a random scattering of light in the night. He says: "As soon as you leave New York everything looks the same." Philip continues his story informing her that during his trip, when he listened to "sickening radio and

watched inhuman television [...] I almost took leave of my senses.” The young woman answers:

But you lost them a long time ago. No need to travel across America for that. You take leave of your senses when you lose a sense of identity. And that happen to you ages ago. That’s why you keep needing proof that you really exist [...]. That’s why you keep taking those photos. Further proof that it was really you who saw something.

Philip does not really listen to her. Instead, he starts preparing for bed. Before kicking him out, the woman says: “If you come to an intersection in this city it’s as if you come to a clearing in a forest.” Philip is perplexed by the ways things are and has no answer for his friend, and so he leaves the apartment. He finds himself in the street, watching the buildings around him recede in the night. Eventually, he goes to the hotel where Alice and her mother are.

Elsaesser asserts that for Wenders, “the relation to America and Hollywood is absolutely central.”³⁸² The auteur uses the film to carry out a complex and perplexing dialogue with American culture to express both his admiration but also his hatred and disappointment with the commercialization of images by the television media. The film’s conventional linear narrative structure often employs unconventional means to propel the story such as rock ‘en’ roll verses and references to American musicians such as Chuck Berry. The film’s visual language consists of a host of references to Hollywood directors such as John Ford and Nicholas Ray, which Wenders uses as a point of reference for launching a critique of the present American mass media and its seeming abuse of images.

³⁸² Thomas Elsaesser, “American Friends: German Post-War Cinema and Hollywood,” p. 9.

The film's establishing sequence introduces the viewer to the story directly. The panning shot of the airborne plane moves down to capture an American street sign reading "B-67th Street," and ends on an empty beach. The next shot is a panning shot of a boardwalk which tracks down to show a male figure sitting under it. He is alone, leaning against a wooden piling, occupied with himself. He takes a Polaroid photograph of the beach and begins to sing, "Under the boardwalk, down by the sea, on a blanket with my baby, that's where I want to be." With this scene, in which Wenders situates his hero Philip under the boardwalk, with the Polaroid in his hands, taking photos of an empty beach, the auteur conveys his personal experience of America, "[...] land of imagery./ Land made of images./ Land for images."³⁸³ To accomplish this, in this scene, Wenders uses the metonymic paraphernalia of American society such as a Polaroid camera or a beach with a boardwalk. The director writes about his experience with a Polaroid camera:

[...] while I was traveling in America I'd taken a lot of old-style Polaroid pictures, the type where it takes a minute or so and then the fully developed photograph comes out. We'd heard rumors of an amazing piece of equipment that took pictures and you could actually see the pictures as they developed. We wrote off to Polaroid and they lent us a couple of these new cameras long before they appeared at the market. I've still got the first picture I took with one in a café in New York City.³⁸⁴

The other component of this sequence is the boardwalk. Kathe Geist, in her book *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: From Paris, France to Paris, Texas*, addresses the importance of a boardwalk, which is a trope for American beach culture, for Wenders' filmic imagination. Geist writes: "[...] Philip sings lines from the Rolling Stones' 'Under

³⁸³ Wim Wenders, op. cit., p. 127.

³⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 253.

the Boardwalk' at the beginning of *Alice* while he sits under an actual boardwalk.

Wenders specifically sought out the location because he learned the song in Germany and had always wondered what a boardwalk was.”³⁸⁵ Geist touches on the question of the presence of the American cultural paradigm in the subconscious of German youth growing up during the sixties in the era of rock ‘n’ roll and flooded by the sounds and images coming from America.

The first half of *Alice in the Cities* takes place in America. The opening sequence of the film shows Philip Winter taking a rest during his journey through America. Philip’s trip through America enables Wenders to tackle various social problems such as the manipulation of the visual imagery for the sake of commercial interests, which he sees as the manipulation of everyday reality.

The auteur’s uneasiness regarding the ability of images to convey reality is clearly stated in the scene in which Philip stops at a gas pump, gets out of the car and takes a photo of a building in front of which is a black boy on his bicycle who says: “Hey man, what you are taking a picture for? I don’t like it.” Philip answers: “Just like that.” In the next scene, he is in the car looking at the picture he has taken a few minutes prior and makes the comment: “They [pictures] really never show what you’ve actually seen.” Philip continues his voyage through America, which Wenders presents by directing our attention to the most visible symbols of American society. Thus Philip passes by monotonous little towns, whose architectural settings look the same in their design and neglected conditions, with gas pumps and motels and their flashy, flickering and colorful

³⁸⁵ Kathe Geist, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: From Paris, France to Paris, Texas*, Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1988, p. 41. Geist asserts that “Under the Boardwalk” is a Rolling Stones’ song. The song is by “The Drifters,” (1964) and was sung by many other groups. I am grateful to Angus Mac Donald for this information.

neon advertisements, and the steel TV- tower-sprinkled landscape. Yet, Wenders does not miss the chance to show well-off neighborhoods, which Philip sees through the window of his car while he passes by. These big houses surrounded by their green lawns, immersed in the tranquility of a moment, make the viewer aware of America in all its contrasts.

Along the road, the camera captures close-ups signs reading TEXACO or SODA, and long shots of empty streets littered with parked cars. Philip's trip lasts several days, and during the night, he takes a room in one of the motels. Wenders discuss the intertwined problem of overpowering commercial images and their relation to an American film tradition, by portraying one such night that Philip spends in a motel in front of which is the neon sign denting its name "Skymotel." The neon sign can be seen through the room's window and the TV is situated in front of the window.

Wenders succeeds in accomplishing his goal of talking about this relationship by staging a multilayered picture which simultaneously displays all of the elements that concern him and which he captures in one long shot. The fixed point of view shot shows the TV set seen from Philip's perspective lying in bed. This scene is visually constructed as an image composed of several visual strata, with the TV set that Philip watches in the foreground. The television is situated between the bed and the window. The window takes up almost the entire wall and through it can be seen the vertical multicolored glitzy neon motel sign. Wenders' 1984 poem, "The American Dream," talks about his fascination with American neon signs:

Before I ever went to America,
on a country road in Holland, once,
not far from Amsterdam,

I passed a newly opened Holiday Inn,
the first of its kind in Europe,
as far as I recall.

And by the side of the road, in the light dusk,
stood that great neon sign,
green and yellow against the dark-blue sky,
that I knew from films and postcards
from the USA.

I got out of the car and went slowly and excitedly
around this bright and flashing thing.

For me it was more than a company sign.

It appeared to me like a symbol of America.

A monument to my expectations of “Amerika.”

This sign was not there only to be seen and to draw attention to
the hotel that stood behind it.

It was also there on its own account.

It was a sheer pleasure to see it.

It transcended its function in such a way
that its excess made me happy.

That’s how I imagined America:

a country of excess,
of great illuminated signs
to give you wings and enlighten you.

I saw America as the country where vision was set free.³⁸⁶

Such a thought was something that Wenders upheld before seeing America first-hand.

The motel sequence serves the auteur as an opportunity to talk about the American dream
which is lost, to discuss American television which is “[...] incredibly noisy, tasteless,
calculated [...],” and with an obvious lack of the “[...] slightest connection between

³⁸⁶ Wim Wenders, op. cit., pp. 133-4.

reality and its representation in images.”³⁸⁷ This is why the scene, which can be seen from the motel window, is so visually exaggerated.

The street lights are randomly scattered on the left side and behind the motel sign, and recede in the distance, adding to the motley atmosphere of the night scene entering Philip’s visual domain. The TV set, which is turned on, with its black and white moving apparitions, adds another layer of images to the over-saturated visual environment that is seen through the window.

The television is showing John Ford’s *Young Mr. Lincoln*. Philip is immersed in watching the film, which is interrupted intermittently by flashy and loud television advertising. At one point, when the television marketing images again disrupt the film, Philip abruptly gets up from his bed and knocks the television set over onto the floor. Wenders’ hero does not stop with this, but continues smashing the TV set, which eventually becomes a pile of broken pieces. Wenders uses such a detailed representation of Philip’s violent act, in order to voice his discontent over the commercialization of images and the ways in which they suffocate the true American filmic tradition. Wenders in this scene announces,

[...] the death of the mythical American cinema of the 1940s and 1950s that had inspired him, finding one reason for its extinction in the kind of vision and visuality nurtured by the television phenomenon and the commercial interests it represents.³⁸⁸

The sequence that features a TV set being destroyed by the film’s protagonist expressing his anger, is a mythical film scene in New German Cinema. Although having

³⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 135.

³⁸⁸ Alexander Graf, *The Cinema of Wim Wenders: The Celluloid Highway*, London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2002, p. 73.

different connotation, meaning and message, the sequence with the broken television set is also employed by Fassbinder in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, which the auteur uses to make a comment on various social prejudices such as those towards foreign workers. The TV sequence in *Ali* is Fassbinder's recasting of the television scene in Sirk's *All that Heaven Allows*, which also carries out the message of social criticism.

Whereas Wenders's usage of the broken television set scene also conveys the auteur's social condemnation, this time the critique is directed towards the manipulation of images *per se* and the television media as its producer. The auteur, by using Philip's outrage, in a dramatic fashion and almost with urgency, raises the question of the status of images which lose connection with reality in the contemporary world, and are put into the service of corporate interests. Images are thus emptied of their possible meanings and used as a void in which to inscribe uniform meanings that serve specific corporate requirements. While sitting in front of the TV set Philip writes on television media:

The inhuman thing about these TV programs is not that they hack everything up with advertising but that in the end every program becomes advertising. Advertisement for the established status. Every shot is trimmed somehow to one common, disgusting radiation of boastful contempt. Not one picture leaves you in peace.

Wenders explores the meaning of images throughout the segment of the film shot in America. After driving the entire night, Philip, in the morning, goes by a sign which he reads aloud: "New York City." By pronouncing the words "New York," Philip gives the viewer a hint about the possibility that he does it out of admiration, but perhaps loaded with expectations. In the scene showing Philip in Queens trying to sell his car at a used car lot, where he bargains with the owner for a better price for his car, the echo of the

organ music can be heard. Philip says to the owner: “Sounds like an organ.” The owner answers: “Yes the organ from Shea Stadium.” The next shot cuts to the vastness of the huge stadium with an empty playground at its bottom, while the organ music plays continuously. The subsequent shot shows a woman, the organ player, who is positioned at the top of the stadium.

Not only does this sequence, in its construction, appear to the viewer as surreal, but its meaning is equally perplexing, standing as an isolated island in the narrative without having any logical connection to the story of Philip. Here Wenders explores the question of images, their meaning and relation to the film’s narrative and visual structures. This scene operates as a free floating signifier or non-diegetic narrative component devoid of a structural signification and the relation to the story of *Alice*. The scene can be understood as a carrier of meaning which is not related to the story as a narrative system based on logical proceedings, but to the story being understood as “the play of the structure.”³⁸⁹ Wenders disrupts the model of narrativization based on, in Derrida’s words, the “center/margin” principle that does not allow for an expenditure or surplus story segments since all the elements in the story serve its logical construction. The organ player is such an expenditure serving the solely purpose of a play with the narrative structure.

In the following sequence we see Philip at Shea Stadium train station. He is sitting on the bench behind which a sign reads “Shea Stadium Train Stop.” The viewer supposes that he waits for the train to Manhattan. The organ music can still be heard, and the spectator is unsure, was it Philip who saw the organ player, or was this just a playful and not economic move of the camera in terms of the film’s story *per se*. Was this

³⁸⁹ Jacques Derrida, op. cit., p. 279.

straying of the camera to record the scene, which stays frozen in the film's economy, as an utterly dispensable expenditure, unlike those television advertisement images?

The organ player sequence has no justification either in terms of the film's narrative or its visual structure. Wenders shows that the images can live a life on their own without being always employed in exclusively purposeful ways as signifiers standing for commercial use, or even for the sake of making the story coherent. For Wenders, the play with the narrative structure produces the meaning in itself. A Derridian play with the narrative structure can also be seen as play with a medium of artistic expression, which is interchangeable in its nature. It pertains both to the narrative and visual texts. That is why, for Wenders, the play with the structures and media is also related to music, which he sees as a substitute for lost American images and "the pictures that block off your vision."³⁹⁰ Following this train of thought, music then becomes a carrier of the new meaning that transcends the boundaries of the medium itself and performs the new cultural role embedded in the specificities of its ever changing expressions. In "Emotion Pictures," Wenders asserts:

Music from America is more and more replacing the sensuality that the films have lost: the merging of blues and rock and country music has produced something that can no longer be experienced only with the ears, but which is visible and forms images in place and time. This music is above all the music of the American West, whose conquest is the subject of John Ford's films, and whose second conquest is the subject of the music which has developed between Nashville and the West Coast of the United States, more than on the "European" East Coast. San Francisco and Los Angeles also gave birth to the American cinema. Meanwhile, 'Motion Pictures' has become a definition of music.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Wim Wenders, op. cit., p. 55.

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 56.

In *Alice*, Wenders pay homage to both John Ford and Chuck Berry. The scene, in which Philip smashes the TV set because Ford's film *Young Mr. Lincoln* is interrupted by advertisements, is complemented by the last sequence in which we see in close-up the newspaper headline, which Philip reads, announcing Ford's death. The close up photograph shows Ford's face and the title below: "*Verlorene Welt.*" (*Lost World*) Wenders finishes the film with a panoramic shot of the Rhine Valley showing the vast landscape miles into the distance. This shot pays homage to Ford's famous long shots and the iconic panoramic vistas of Western American deserts. In the article "Emotion Pictures: Slowly Rockin' On," Wenders pays tribute to the director John Ford, while simultaneously expressing his dissatisfaction with most contemporary American films:

What other films are there left to go to, a few exceptions apart? Seeing becomes an act of missing: I miss the friendliness, the care, the thoroughness, the seriousness, the peace, the humanity of John Ford's films; I miss those faces that are never forced into anything; those landscapes that aren't just backgrounds; [...]. The new America Films are bleak, like the new unusable metal pinball-machines from Chicago, on which you try in vain to recapture the pleasure of pinball. Music from America is more and more replacing the sensuality that films have lost [...] "Shady Grove" by the Quicksilver Messenger Services: images of emotion you very seldom find in cinema, not blurred or sentimental, but with a clear and self-assured pathos.³⁹²

It is the portrayal of the images of emotions and "a clear and self-assured pathos," to which Wenders devotes the second part of *Alice* in which the relationship between him and nine-year-old Alice develops against the background of the cities and places in West

³⁹² Ibid.

Germany through which they travel in order to find the Alice' grandmother. Their relationship, which goes through various phases, from Philip's annoyance with the little girl to the point at which he finally accepts her, happens after the Chuck Berry concert in Wuppertal which Philip attended. It is important to notice that the concert sequence make use of the first verse of Berry's song "Memphis Tennessee," because the lyrics are a crucial element in the film:

Long distance information, give me Memphis, Tennessee
Help me find the party trying to get in touch with me
She could not leave her number, but I know who placed the call
'Cause my uncle took the message and wrote it on the wall
Help me, information, get in touch with my Marie
She's the only one who'd phone me here from Memphis, Tennessee
Her home is on the south side, high up on a ridge
Just a half a mile from the Mississippi bridge

Help me, information, more than that I cannot add
Only that I miss her and all the fun we had
But we were pulled apart because her mom did not agree
And tore apart our happy home in Memphis, Tennessee

Last time I saw Marie she's waving me good-bye
With hurry home drops on her cheek that trickled from her eye
Marie is only six years old, information please
Try to put me through to her in Memphis, Tennessee.³⁹³

Wenders, in his article "Le Souffle de l'Ange," explains the connection of this song with the film. The auteur tells that he was inspired to make the film after listening to the song and seeing, in his previous film, *The Scarlet Letter*, one short scene between Rüdiger Vogler and little Yella Rottländer:

[...] a very precious moment, when I said to myself if the film was all like this it

³⁹³ Chuck Berry, lyrics of the song, "Memphis Tennessee."

would be bliss. During the editing, [of *The Scarlet Letter*] I listened to Chuck Berry's song "Memphis." For most of the song the words give you the impression it's about a woman, but just at the end you're told he's talking about a six-year-old girl. I said to myself: that scene with Rüdiger and little Yella, with this song over it, would make a film. Near the end of *Alice in the Cities*, you see Philip Winter at a Chuck Berry concert and he's singing "Memphis."³⁹⁴

It is important to note that Wenders situates the relationship of Alice and Philip, inspired by this song, in West Germany. The auteur thus offers an open tribute to American Rock and Roll culture which helped to shape his filmic attitude. Wenders asserts: "With *Alice in the Cities* I found my individual voice in the cinema."³⁹⁵ The auteur develops his voice not only by assimilating different cultural traditions like the Western or Rock and Roll, but also by exploring various thematic structures such as the complex condition of the relationship between the individual and the city.

With *Alice in the Cities*, the filmmaker announces his interest in the city as a site in which different forms of human experience conflate with and contrast to each other. The picture's title gives the viewer an impression, similarly as Berry's song *Memphis* did to Wenders, that the film is about a woman. Yet both the song and the film are about a little girl, who in the film is named Alice. As previously discussed, the film also plays with yet another cultural icon, Carroll's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, that the filmmaker refers to when he portrays his heroes' existential anxieties. Wenders as well echoes in the title his first impression about Chuck Berry's song "Memphis" to which he ascribes the power to change Alice and Philip's relation from annoying to trustworthy. The cities, New York, Amsterdam, and Ruhr district cities, especially Wuppertal, serve

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 253.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 254.

Wenders to examine how the city structure and its various special constructions such as architecture with its inside and outside spaces, streets and buildings affect the individual.

Wenders perceives the space as the product of a whole set of intermingled spatial practices. These spatial practices encompass both architectural structures (buildings and streets) as well as “an intelligence of the body.”³⁹⁶ In other words, what the auteur does is put his protagonist in direct relation with the city structures, either as their users or voyeurs, visually enjoying the city’s architecture. Thus Philip meets Alice and her mother Lisa for the first time in the travel agency while they are trying to buy a ticket for Germany. Later, when his friend asks him to leave and he goes to the hotel where Alice and Lisa are staying, he takes a taxi. Philip is puzzled by the situation, and the camera expresses this confusion by taking a look from the car’s perspective upwards towards the buildings, whose walls of lighted windows seem from that position to be forming rectangular geometric shapes streaming up into the night sky.

The closest description of such a moment in which emotions seem to resonate with the buildings, would be de Certeau’s explanation of a homology between verbal figures and the figures of walking that both consist of “[...] ‘treatments’ or operations bearing on isolatable units, and in ‘ambiguous dispositions’ that divert and displace meaning in the direction of equivocalness in the way a tremulous image confuses and multiplies the photographed object.”³⁹⁷ It is this instant when emotion fuses with city surroundings that a person experiences a sense of consolation. The same situation occurs in the moments of gazing at New York skyscrapers through a telescope that offers a similar experience of fusion with architecture. The scene at the Empire State Building

³⁹⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *op. cit.* p. 174.

³⁹⁷ Michel de Certeau, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

presents two distinct views of New York architecture, that of Philip's and that of Alice's. She lets the seagull lead her gaze towards buildings that appear as a backdrop against which the bird performs its stunts. The viewer does not know what the girl watches: the bird or the building?

Although the Empire State Building sequence does not deal with the "figures of walking" in de Certeau's words, as pedestrians which roam through the streets do, it deals with the figures of a specific way of walking which is related to the particular space of sightseeing where the city buildings coalesce in a "tremulous image" of the city space. That image is equivocal and not easily read. For Alice, who follows the seagull through the lens of a telescope as the bird flies through the buildings' canyons, this image represents hope. Alice waits to meet with her mother down below the birds and skyscrapers, in the street which is a space of promise for her. That is why she wants to prolong the time on top of the building by meticulously examining the view: she begins with the twin World Trade Center buildings. She then traverses Times Square and follows the bird.

Philip however, uses the telescope in a practical way. After capturing the Chrysler Building in an instant with its metallic peacock crown, he directs the instrument to the street in front of the hotel in which they stay. He watches Alice's mother leave the hotel and understands that he has been stood up. He cannot wait to get down and makes Alice angry by interrupting her first experience of a visual voyage across the cityscape. When Philip reads the note, which Alice's mother left for the receptionist, asking him to come with Alice to Amsterdam where she would meet them, he is put in a situation of having no choice. Although Philip seems annoyed with the development of

things that are out of his control, on the plane he takes good care of Alice letting her sleep in his lap, like a father.

The sequence that depicts Alice and Philip waiting for the bus taking Polaroid photographs, presents their relationship as becoming more trusting. Wenders uses the Polaroid photo itself to demonstrate this. When Alice takes Philip's photo he explains to her that it takes time for a Polaroid photograph to develop. Alice looks at the picture's wet surface in which she can see her own reflection. As the photo develops, Philip's image emerges and blends with the reflection of Alice's face which, for the moment, creates an overlapping image of them both.

Such a pictorial representation of their faces works on a metaphorical level pointing to the complex relationship that is developing in favour of a more profound understanding, yet possesses a certain tension due to the fact that she is a child. Alice invites Philip for a tour of Amsterdam, her city, where she lived until her mother decided to move to New York. Alice is not happy with Philip's lack of interest in seeing more of Amsterdam and she tells him: "Amsterdam is much prettier than New York." After this sentence, she complains that she is hungry. Philip replies that she is always hungry. The next shot cuts to the Chinese restaurant where Alice complains that it is a cheap eatery and that she is used to having a meal in better places.

When Alice, after waiting for her mother in Amsterdam, realizes that she is not going to come as promised, the little girl locks herself in the airport's washroom and starts crying. Philip promises, in spite of the fact that Alice cannot remember which German city her grandmother lives in, that they are going to find her. Their search begins in a toilet, where Philip enters to comfort Alice. He kneels down in front of the locked

door and reads to Alice from his travel book listing all the names of German cities. When he pronounces “Wuppertal,” Alice says that this is the word she remembers and they commence their voyage through the cities in Germany. They take the bus and go to Wuppertal which serves as an opportunity to develop further the relationship between Alice and Philip. They go to the hotel which is near the elevated train. When Alice, who is already in bed, asks Philip to tell her a bedtime story, at first he angrily refuses, but then reluctantly begins telling a story that he supports with facial expressions. He invents a story on the spot, sentence by sentence, which follows the series of connected events.

During the course of Philip’s telling the story, the viewer becomes aware that Philip enjoys his story and does not finish it, even though Alice was already asleep. This sequence can be seen as simultaneously fulfilling two purposes. First, as already noted, it further defines and develops Alice’s and Philip’s relationship. Second, it comments on the process of creation. Rüdiger Vogler’s superb acting directs the viewer’s attention to Philip’s balancing on the brink of self-irony, and speaks about Wenders’ intention here to relativize the act of creation, allowing a whole host of ideas to pour in which are not necessarily logically interlinked. This is also connected to Philip’s problem of putting his story about America into words, as opposed to the pile of Polaroid photographs which he shows to the editor, and for which he states that images are part of the story.

The next morning Philip rents a car, and the two of them meander through the streets of Wuppertal. Wenders uses point-of-view shots of the streets from a camera perspective inside the car. The spectator is put into a situation of alternately watching the buildings lining the streets and a close-up of Alice face. Her face gives the impression that she is focused on watching the buildings along the streets. The viewer observes the

buildings as well, and notices that they represent an unrelated mixture of stylistic characteristics often situated right next to each other. Those buildings, whose architecture of the ornamental adornments, lead the audience to infer that they are built before WWII, are situated beside those with simple, bare facades, and no ornaments. The astute observer suspects that they are substitutes for buildings destroyed by Allied bombing raids during the war.

Alice uses the opportunity, when Philip, during his search around the city, passes by their small hotel, to tell him that she is thirsty. For the sequence in the hotel's restaurant where the two enter, Wenders constructs another tribute to American culture and music. The conversation between Alice and Philip occurs against the background of Canned Heat's song "On the Road Again." The medium close-up, which shows them through the glass of the restaurant, cuts to a little boy sitting next to a juke-box in the café, listening to the music and singing along. Here again, Wenders in this scene transfers his own childhood longing and nostalgia for juke-boxes and American music. He talks about it in great detail in his "American Dream":

The first time
I put money in a juke-box
was for 'Tutti Frutti' by Little Richard,
I didn't speak any English,
but I hummed along
and mouthed
the craziest variants on the lyrics.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁸ Wim Wenders, op. cit., p. 132.

The little boy, sitting next to a juke-box and murmuring the song, is an evocation of Wenders as a child, paying homage to his love for rock 'n' roll. Alice and Philip do not engage with him, or acknowledge his presence. The boy is just an element of the *mise en scène*, a component of a meta-narrative of which this scene is composed. Alice explains to Philip that her grandmother does not actually live in Wuppertal. Philip at first does not react, goes to the bathroom, laughs at himself in the mirror, and returns; after which the conversation between them begins:

“Why didn’t you say that before? Do you think I am crazy about driving little girls around and spending my last cents?”

“I told you I wanted to stay in Amsterdam. What is it you have to do? All you do is scribble away in your notebook.”

The remark hits directly on Philip’s own inner uncertainties about writing, which become articulated by a child. Philip reacts to Alice’s honesty by telling her: “I am taking you to the police.”

The scene, showing Philip on his way out of the police headquarters, follows him walking down the stairs. On the left side of the stairs is a mural representing the city’s historical burghers clad in period clothing, performing their trades. At one point, as Philip stops for a moment, his figure seems to be visually blending with the citizens of the mural. Such an image may signal the fact that Philip, a well-traveled representative of a younger generation, belongs to Germany’s cultural background.

While passing by the building, he sees the advertisement for Chuck Berry’s concert and in the next shot we see Philip at the concert after which he finds Alice in front of the hotel who enters the car and sits beside him. Philip starts laughing and

Alice explains to him that she has found out where her grandmother lived. Alice told a policeman that when her grandmother read to her, “tiny bits of coal came through the window.” The policeman knowingly informed her: “this is simple, your grandmother lived in the Ruhr District.” Then, Alice opens her wallet and gives Philip a photograph of the house she forgot to show to the police. After seeing the photo, Philip concludes, that it will be simple to find her now. Their voyage begins through the cities of the Ruhr District. The first city they visit is Essen.

They pass by old houses along the street and stop to ask an old couple sitting on a bench beneath a huge tree. They look at the photo, and the old man responds: “I don’t know. Not around here. You know, these old houses are all getting torn down, so that Krupp’s can build a new hospital.” With this sequence, Wenders comments on the system of urban planning driven by corporate interests, which are oblivious to the interests of the community. The auteur underlines his social criticism in the next scene in which Alice watches the old houses slated for demolition, and utters: “I think it’s a pity these lovely, old houses must be demolished.” Philip remarks: “They don’t bring enough rent.” Alice continues: “The empty spaces are like graves.” Philip at this point is driving the car along a street with brick houses on the right hand side backgrounded in the distance by a vast industrial landscape of coal and steel facilities with a forest of tall slender smelter chimneys.

Soon, Philip stops the car and they get out on the street where Alice shows the photograph of the house to a group of school children. While she is talking to the children, Philip takes a Polaroid photograph of the nearby house. In front of him, a medium close-up frame captures a couple passing by. The man’s mustache and the

woman's headscarf reveal that they are *Gastarbeiter*. The woman pulls her white scarf even higher on her face when she notices that there are some people around. Here Wenders portrays the historical moment of foreign workers who live and work in Germany, without entering into more elaborate discussion, since neither of his characters pay attention to the couple. Philip, who holds in his hands a Polaroid camera at this moment, does not take a photo of the couple. Obviously, he does not see this instance as incentive to make a report about the "German scene," which is the topic of his article about America, and for which the photo would be an example of a diverse social fabric in Germany. With the scene, in which the couple of foreign workers is shown seemingly unmotivated by the narrative, Wenders merely acknowledges the existence of different cultures in Germany.

Alice and Philip continue their search by showing a taxi driver the photo of the house. The driver lists the cities, one of which is Oberhausen. When Alice asks where they will go first, to Gelsenkirchen or Oberhausen, Philip answers resolutely: Oberhausen. This scene points to yet another reference, this time to the Oberhausen Manifesto and New German Film itself.

Now they travel along the street in Oberhausen and the viewer is visually situated in a car, watching through the window the rows of brick houses in the suburb of the city. By following a little boy on a bicycle, the camera enters some side streets displaying endless rows of houses perpendicular to the street the car is driving along. The city landscape looks the same as in Essen, surrounded by heavy industry's slender, tall chimneys and massive lead furnaces. Graf, in his explanation of the sequence in Oberhausen, asserts that

The sequence becomes an autonomous episode because, as with the earlier scene atop the Empire State Building in New York, the story and characters are, for the moment, forgotten, and the visuals take over as the form of descriptive narration. The spectator can sink, with Wenders, into the shared activity of still observation, meditation and contemplation – taking part in Wenders’ search for pure images, and Winter’s and Alice’s search for home, even though the search is forgotten for the moment.³⁹⁹

Whereas Graf perceptively acknowledges the importance of Wenders showing the streets and buildings in such detail by employing “observation, meditation and contemplation,” Graf fails to notice that this is not just an exercise in the visual mediation which dispels the characters. As previously discussed, Wenders closely ties the narrative, the visuals and the characters together. All of these elements support the film’s construction. Alice and Philip are connected not only by the whims of fate at the New York travel agency where they meet by chance, but they were also born and grew up in the cities of the Ruhr district. That is why they comment on old buildings which are going to be destroyed. Wenders pays special attention to the lethal symbiosis of cities and industrial facilities, even when the characters do not make comments about it. The auteur becomes politically engaged without pronouncing any bias against the harsh and harmful environmental circumstances in the Ruhr district. Wenders invites his audience to think when he employs the child’s story about her grandmother and “the pages [that] rustled as she turned them because tiny bits of coal came through the window,” which, with its childish naiveté, amplifies the auteur’s message. In other words, this sequence becomes Wenders’ bitter comment on detrimental environment conditions to which the people living and working in the Ruhr district were exposed.

³⁹⁹ Alexander Graf, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-9.

The Ruhr district is where the majority of foreign workers live, and Wenders portrays this through visual or narrative clues, one of which is the *Gastarbeiter* couple that Philip runs into in Essen. The other clue comes when Alice recognizes her grandma's house and goes to it. Alice returns disappointed, when an Italian woman opens the door, and tells her that she has been in this house for two years and that she never met her grandmother. Here Alice and Philip's search ends for the house, but their quest for friendship continues. Wenders ends the film with a scene in which the two of them continue their trip, this time by train leaving for Munich where Alice's grandmother or mother is waiting for her. Alice asks Philip about his plans for Munich. He answers that he is going to finish the story. Alice asks "Your scribblings?" This time Philip laughs and the two of them stand up, pull the window down to look at the scenery and feel the wind blowing in their hair. The camera captures the iconic image of all train travels: from the outside with a tracking shot, which moves away from the train and rises up, high above it. The aerial shot reveals the Rhine Valley and the train winding along beside the river.

The viewer follows the train which becomes a tiny line in the landscape and it produces the feeling that this is not the end of Alice and Philip's relationship, but just one of many stages offering a clue for further development. It is around this relationship that Wenders builds his hero Philip's identity development.

At the beginning of the film, we meet Philip, sitting under a boardwalk somewhere on an empty beach in America, taking Polaroid photos. He sings, inspired by his physical surroundings: "Under the boardwalk..." which can also be understood as a metaphor for the situation of his life which he does not see clearly and which wavers between taking photos, writing or combination of the two. As the film progresses, the

viewer is made aware of the difficulty Philip has with his identity. His trip across America serves to underline for the audience that this is a voyage of self.

Self-absorbed, Philip complains to his friend in New York about his problems with images in America and the “sickening radio” which she dismisses by saying: “I cannot help you my friend. I don’t know how to live either. No one showed me how.” The relationship with the girl Alice helps Philip to learn how to live. By taking responsibility for a child, Philip learns how to take responsibility for himself. Wenders, however does not present this relationship as a simple hierarchical adult-child relation. Their relationship goes through moments of role reversal. In some instances during the film, it is Alice who teaches Philip and acts like an adult by talking with him about his hidden fears.

The scene in the Amsterdam airport hotel unfolds as one such moment. Philip is confused by the situation, and the viewer learns this in the scene in which he watches through the hotel window after turning on the radio which plays classical music. The next shot shows him taking a bath, soaking in the water. Alice stands by the door, so that Philip can hear her. Alice asks, “What’s up with you?” Philip answers, “I’m afraid.” Alice asks, “What kind of fear?” He is surprised by the question and asks, “Are there different kinds?” She tells him convincingly, “Yeah.” Philip’s answer reveals an unresolved problem with his identity when he answers, “I am afraid of being afraid.” But Alice does not give up: “Why are you afraid of being afraid?” All that Philip can say to this question is “Well, why?” Alice interrupts this existential conversation in which Philip obviously loses his feeling for the outside world, by asking a simple question, “Aren’t you cold?” The hairdresser sequence in Amsterdam is yet another scene in which

a complete role reversal takes place. Philip, who is seated in the barber chair, and who cannot speak Dutch, asks Alice to explain to the barber what kind of hair-cut he would like. He is not clear with this explanation and Alice completely takes the situation in her hands by explaining to the barber how to cut Philip's hair. The barber does not address Philip any more, but talks directly to Alice who expresses her own likes and dislikes about Philip's hair, and the barber. As their relationship becomes more defined, they feel close to each other to such an extent that during their swimming picnic, while they lie on the ground, Alice asks Philip: "What do you think, do people think that you are my father?" He seems pleased with the question and answers: "What else can they think?" Slowly, Philip's identity gains new direction, which is at the beginning almost entirely defined by his relationship with Alice. In the last sequence of the film, we see that Philip's journey to America will find its conclusion in the story which he is going to finish. Alice does not answer Philip when he asks her about her plans for Munich. Wenders leaves it up to the viewer to finish the story.

Alice in the Cities is a road movie in which Wenders discusses his precarious relationship to American culture. The auteur talks about his fascination with American Rock 'n' Roll culture and film auteurs, such as John Ford, but he also deconstructs American mass culture and the abuse of images that are put in the service of corporate system. Analogous to Fassbinder in *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul*, who employs the scene of a broken TV to condemn social hypocrisy, Wenders uses the scene in which Philip destroys the television set, to voice his critique of mass culture.

Wenders builds the film's narrative by using different conceptual frames. One of them echoes the model of identity anxiety in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

that the auteur openly acknowledges by naming his nine-year old heroine, Alice. Another conceptual source of the film's narrative is the *Bildungsroman*, which the auteur follows closely. *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature* explains that the *Bildungsroman* is "A class of novel in German literature that deals with the formative years of the main character."⁴⁰⁰ The process of Philip's identity formation follows the principles of the *Bildungsroman*, such as social shaping of the hero's personality through tensions between the hero and his surroundings. Philip gets into conflict both with his editor and his friend in New York. After the heroes' existential predicaments, the *Bildungsroman* concludes with her/his successful social integration that is the case with Philip. He resolves his crises by deciding to finish the story.

To sum up, this segment has been engaged in understanding the ways in which Makavejev in his *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, Fassbinder in his *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and Wenders in his *Alice and the Cities* explore the relationship between cities and their dwellers, and the modalities in which they position themselves in relation to various power structures both in capitalist Germany and socialist Yugoslavia. The following section continues with exploring the subject of the relationship between an individual and city spaces that Makavejev discusses in his *Switchboard Operator*.

⁴⁰⁰ *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature*, Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, Publishers, 1995, p. 139.

Love, Death and Socialism: *Switchboard Operator*

Makavejev in his *Switchboard Operator* does not allow the viewer any space to imagine the future. The film is about a love affair between Izabela (Eva Ras) the switchboard operator and Ahmed (Slobodan Aligrudic), the sanitary inspector, rats' exterminator, which ends in tragedy. Izabela's dead body is shown to the audience at the story's outset. To begin a picture with the dead hero is not a novelty in film. Jacques Aumont asserts that,

It may not be revolutionary to begin a narrative with a preview of the tragic end (it's been done by others many times before from *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* to *Joszef Katus* and from *The Quiet American* to *Terra em Transe*), and the edited technique Makavejev illustrates does not lack celebrated examples elsewhere. But the installation of the critical level within the actual fiction of the film functions in a completely new way (which owes nothing to the Godard of *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, in particular); integrated and at the same time separate, it is like the façade of a fine piece of architecture.⁴⁰¹

What is novel as Aumont tells us, is the mode in which Makavejev constructs the narrative, referring particularly to the use of a critical, scientific level in the film's text. Not only is Izabela's dead body seen at the beginning of the story, but the film is constructed so that the body reappears throughout the film, beginning with its discovery in the well and later during the process of its preparation for a post-mortem examination. These scenes are intercut with scenes of Izabela walking along the streets of Belgrade, either alone or with her friend Ruza (Rizica Sokic), and with the sequences of the couple living together and enjoying their mutual love. This fictional level of the film is

⁴⁰¹ Jacques Aumont, "Several Routes to a Reading: *Switchboard Operator*" in *Cahiers du Cinema: The 1960s*, ed. Jim Hillier, pp. 303-4.

intersected by the critical level in which appear two experts, one a sexologist and the other a criminologist, whose scientific commentaries are supposed to elucidate the love story.

Moreover, Makavejev's story, which presents its end at the beginning, frees the viewer from expectations and persuades her/him to develop a *post factum* imagination, which concentrates not on the "who done it," but on the lovers' affection as it develops throughout the film. By asserting that "*Switchboard Operator* is a perfectly closed fiction which from the outset supplies the complete bunch of keys to itself," Aumont stresses that "the film's openness at the level of the narration" is what constitutes the film's modernity.⁴⁰²

Simultaneously the film focuses on wider social circumstances in a socialist country, whose representational symbols, such as flags, stars and parades are portrayed in an exaggerated stylistic manner, revealing yet another level of meaning. This plane of thought is concerned with criticism of the unfulfilled promises of socialism and its "historical degeneration."⁴⁰³ Makavejev situates his love story in the city. The film's narrative unfolds through the relationship between the city and its inhabitants whose life stories develop and end within the background of the metropolis structure. It is the movement of the film's participants through the city – either by inhabiting different buildings or by changing their apartments, or by participating in various urban manifestations, such as the hoisting of a huge Lenin poster on a building's façade, and watching the socialist workers' parade, or just simply by walking through the city – that makes *Switchboard Operator* a film about the city. It is this component of the film, which

⁴⁰² Ibid., p. 304.

⁴⁰³ Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*, p. 322.

investigates the characters' lives as connected with and/or conditioned by the city environment, that I am going to concentrate on in my discussion. I will show that more than the city's political context, in this case socialism, is the city's architectural and historical fabric that Makavejev uses as a framework for developing the visual and narrative filmic texts. Moreover, by employing highly stylized and exaggerated socialist paraphernalia in a strategic way, *Switchboard Operator* – similar to Sirk's application of techniques of stylization and distancing, which subvert the Hollywood visual and narrative schemes – exposes the socialist system's fallacies. I will elaborate on this argument later in the text.

The film begins with an epigraph that reads: "Will there be the reform of a man? Will the new man keep some old organs?" The following sequence introduces Dr. Aleksandar Kostic, an older man, the author of medicinal sexology – "Sexual Knowledge" – in a standing position, dressed in a formal suit with a butterfly tie, addressing the audience with a talk on the subject of sex, its meaning and representation throughout the ages. He is in his cabinet, which looks like a typical scientific cabinet. Dr. Kostic is surrounded by books neatly arranged on two shelves, on which some other scientific paraphernalia can be seen, such as a skull and a photograph of Dr. Kostic from his youth looking through a microscope. There is also a photo of him with his colleagues. Dr. Kostic formally addresses the audience directly, as if he was giving a lecture:

"You probably are interested in sexuality. And this is good that you are interested. It would be a deplorable fact if you were not interested. I am also interested in sex in a very lively way. Of course, as an object of research. Things are told about sexuality in a whispering tone. Yet, we don't have a clear picture about these whispering. Only if we can hear it clearly, we would know the extent of people's interest in the subject. During old times, comprehension of sexuality was

different. This was expressed through rituals of adoration of the male sexual organ which was represented in the form of a gilded sculpture 12m long, which would be carried in the procession, followed by music and young girls. Nobody would protest, not even those girls, who followed such a huge phallus. Or, in the Euphrates Valley, there was erected 54 meters phallus and the special priest would climb and stayed on top for seven days [...].”⁴⁰⁴

Dr. Kostic’s talk is illustrated by a host of photo material from the Yugoslav Cinemateque, (Jugoslovenska kinoteka) representing either fantastic drawings of phalluses that document phallic worship across centuries, or photos of the visual representations of sexual acts from the 18th and 19th centuries. They are mostly done to mock different styles, ranging from antiquity to 19th century drawings disguised in the form of Greek mythology such as the representation of Leda and the Swan.

It is important to notice that the film’s credits that follow – first introducing the names of experts, then non-professional actors followed by the names of the actors – are also punctuated by the same photo material as Dr. Kostic’s lecture. The sound which accompanies the credits is the music coming from a mechanical music box.

Makavejev introduces the audience to Izabela who is at work connecting phone lines between different cities throughout Yugoslavia. She recites the names of cities aloud while at the same time glances at some magazine in her hands. There is also her friend Ruza who works the same job and her colleague Mica, who is introduced in the credits as Mica the Seducer (Miodrag Andric). He jokes with Izabela, openly expressing his affection for her. She ignores his courting. In the next two sequences, Izabela and Ruza are seen walking through the city, discussing men and relationships. Izabela recalls

⁴⁰⁴ Establishing shot with Dr. Kostic’s talk, trans. mine.

one of her recent amorous encounters with a participant in the European Athletic Contest. During one of their visits, they accidentally meet Ahmed who introduces himself and invites them for a drink. Izabela and Ruza discuss the various ways in which they would like to have their beer served.

This sequence cuts to the scene of a well from where the police divers remove Izabela's dead body. She is wearing one of the tiny summer dresses that we already saw her wearing while she and Ruza were roaming through the city. The scene is accompanied by a voiceover explaining that the greatest problem for murderers is the hiding of the body. Then the film cuts to an expert talking about crime, wearing a dark formal suit, standing in his office in front of various murder weapons. The criminologist continues to list some of the hiding places which perpetrators use to hide a body, one of which is a well. Makavejev employs here a specific filmic strategy that plays with the Hollywood narrative system. In other words, instead of structuring the narrative that is told in its entirety by the actors, the auteur introduces the experts who talk about crimes.

This particular well, which functions as the site of crime in the film, is known traditionally as the Roman well.⁴⁰⁵ It is situated in the fortress which lies on the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers. It is made of limestone, and is exceptionally deep and slippery, with winding stairs leading to water on its bottom. The scene depicts all the hardships the policemen went through to get the body out. The voice-over describing criminal techniques, uttered in a cold, scientific and detached mode, makes the

⁴⁰⁵ The city of Belgrade dates back to Celtic times, but the most visible signs of history are those from the Roman period when it was known as the fortress city, Singidunum. Consequently, Belgrade is replete with many sites of Roman architectural ruins. It is the vernacular tradition to consider all structures which look old as Roman structures and this is why this well is called a Roman well. However, the well is much younger and was built at the beginning of the 18th century during a baroque Austrian reconstruction of the Roman fortress.

viewer follow the narrative not as a crime story nor to ask, who did this, but how did this happen? The previous sequence, which introduces Ahmed, can be understood as an open clue that the auteur offers to the viewer to suggest that it was he who killed Izabela. So, the question which the viewer asks is not who committed murder, but why?

In the next sequence we see Izabela and Ahmed in her apartment, talking about their earlier lives. Izabela's stove is out of order so she prepares the coffee using the iron's flat surface to boil the water. The couple gets closer, and Izabela tells Ahmed that she is a Hungarian, but a "domestic/indigenous" one. He says that he is a war orphan and a Party member. Although Ahmed does not declare his nationality, the viewer can suppose that he is a Muslim from Bosnia. Izabela brings the coffee and they sit down on a bed and watch television. The program is Dziga Vertov's *Symphony of the Donbas*, which shows a Russian Revolution mob storming an Orthodox Church pulling down the church spires from the roof and replacing them with the Bolshevik flag, followed by the destruction of the church furniture and icons. The lovers are oblivious to these scenes and continue with their conversation. In the next sequence we see them in the morning in bed kissing. The film then cuts to the morgue where Izabela's naked body is displayed.

Makavejev here employs dialectical montage that operates on the principle of clashing images. The meaning is created by juxtaposing two opposing images, which is aimed at the viewer's emotional reaction provoked by the visual incongruity.

The sequence in the morgue plays with the documentary reportage, since the coroner is an expert participating in the film. He performs his job as he would do in real life. He places the instruments for performing an autopsy on her belly and begins with a description of the body by detecting all the signs relevant for the crime investigation,

including the fact that she was pregnant. The coroner's assistant writes all this down. The coroner describes Izabela's necklace which is in the plastic bag. The scene cuts to the same necklace in Izabela's hands which she puts around her neck.

Makavejev puts here dialectical montage in the service of a story-telling model, which undermines Hollywood narrative system that narrates past events through flashbacks. There are no flashbacks in the *Switchboard Operator's* melodrama and crime story. The past and the present run parallel due to the montage filmic technique.

The following sequence shows Ahmed at his job in a white, sanitary inspector's uniform, where he is organizing a plan for catching rats. This scene is also accompanied by a voiceover. This time it is Ahmed himself who talks about the history of the grey rats in Europe, which came over from Asia due to a famine during the 17th century and which were initially welcomed by Europeans who believed that the rodents would aid in the extinction of an enormous number of black rats. As the grey rats were stronger and larger, they did help to eradicate the black rat population, but from that period on to this day they are such a problem, as Ahmed's voiceover emphasizes, that only a serious scientific approach can help control this pest.

The city setting for this sequence is New Belgrade, which is part of the city built after WWII across the Danube and Sava rivers on sandy ground. The scene is visually constructed as a deep-focus field, with Ahmed and his colleagues in the foreground, behind which is a background of three skyscrapers receding in the distance. The one that is the furthest is the Central Committee building situated in the far background on the right-hand side. (Figure 8.) This building, being an outstanding example of modernist architecture, built at the beginning of the 1960s, is almost an exact copy of Mies van de

Rohe's Lake Shore Drive buildings in Chicago from 1951.⁴⁰⁶ As previously discussed in Chapter II, Yugoslav Communists adopted modernism as the official representational system to promote political agendas. Modernism in architecture was most visible in New Belgrade. Makavejev uses this new part of Belgrade as a site where the film's hero, Ahmed talks about his rat extermination job.

After this scene, the film proceeds with sequences that show Izabela's and Ahmed's life as a couple in many occasions unfolding among the various city structures. These urban scenes serve Makavejev to engage in undermining the system's visual representation. He does this, as previously mentioned, by employing in highly stylized manner documentary scenes of communist parades equipped with the symbolic props, such as stars, flags and music. When I denote this strategy as a "stylized manner," I think primarily in terms of the way in which the auteur displays these sequences: these are very brief moments in which the viewer perceives them on a subconscious level without being able to describe the scene in detail, but the communists' symbols are noticed and recalled as the system's all-encompassing tropes. By flooding the viewer's visual field by the exaggerated abundance of the communists' visual symbols, the auteur points to their strategies of imposing an authoritarian system thorough the imagery of signs.

Furthermore, when Makavejev situates these short scenes between entirely unrelated shots, they become stylized pictures, thus assuming the role of undermining the system itself. Although Sirk's technique of using stylized images is pictorially different and operates on a different level, they can be compared since both provide the same effect to undermine the system. Here, it is worth revisiting Willeman's explanation,

⁴⁰⁶ For the role of Modernism in the communist politics in Yugoslavia, see my article, "The Case of Exploited Modernism: How Yugoslav Communists used the Idea of Modern Art to Promote Political Agendas," quoted in this work, p. 30.

which I had previously mentioned, in which he engages Russian formalist writer Yuri Tynyanov, who, in his analysis of Dostoyevsky and Gogol, asserts that “when stylization is strongly marked, it becomes parody.”⁴⁰⁷ In Sirk’s case, this is the system of Hollywood’s narrative and pictorial traditions, and in Makavejev’s socialist visual representation this embodies the corrupt substance of communist promises. When Ahmed brings Izabela to his apartment, which is situated in a circular wooden structure on top of an old building in the city center, the girl enters the apartment and goes to the window to see the street below. As she looks through the window, the scene changes to a shot lasting less than a few seconds, which shows the same street through which the parade goes, with flags and stars, followed by revolutionary, proletarian songs.

Besides these interpolated shots, Makavejev uses music in a strategic way which accomplishes the same effect as pictures. After Izabela visits Ahmed’s miniature apartment she invites him to move to her place. There they spend joyful moments while engaging in everyday activities. Such two moments are highlighted by Hans Eisler’s revolutionary music. The first one occurs when Izabela makes sour cherry pie. The sequence begins with a close-up of two eggs on top of a flour hill and fingers which slowly start kneading the flour. As Izabela makes dough, playing with it in her hands, Eisler’s energetic music underscores the process. Another scene, which occurs after, is the sequence in which Izabela is shown in the inner courtyard, hanging laundry on a clothesline. From this position, she can see the building’s wall across which has three floors of verandas stretching along the whole length of the edifice, with the doors leading to the apartments. At one point, Ahmed appears in front of their door, with a gramophone

⁴⁰⁷ See: Paul Willeman, “Distanciation and Douglas Sirk,” in *Imitation of Life: Douglas Sirk, Director*, pp. 271-2.

in his hands, placing it on the table. When Izabela asks what it is, he answers: “These gramophones from the brotherly DDR appeared in the stores, and I bought it.” Then, he plays a record, and Eisler’s music fills the courtyard.

Whereas the juxtaposition of the revolutionary music and the happy personal moments of a couple, whose tragic fate is revealed at the beginning of the film, can point to Makavejev’s bitterness in assessing revolutionary achievements, Elsaesser asserts,

The film’s bitterness, on the other hand, is also extreme. Unmitigated by the scenes of fragile bliss [...] or the pervasive tone of irony, the sarcasm reflects the disillusion of a generation, who seems to suffer from an exhausted aimlessness, coupled with intense emotional difficulties of adapting to modernity and its mores. Having been told that socialism would liberate the individual and emancipate sexes, this couple suddenly waits for the promised goods, utterly unprepared to grasp their own personal process of maturation as a necessary stage of social liberation.⁴⁰⁸

It is this personal problem of “adapting to modernity” that is at the core of the couple’s tragic situation. Izabela, who is a modern emancipated woman talking with her friend Ruza about her love life, found herself incapable of coping with the combination of her pregnancy by Ahmed and clandestine adultery with her tenacious colleague Mica, which occurs during Ahmed’s business trip. In other words, her emancipation appears to be only an empty shell and not a true substance of her womanhood.

Although she declaratively allows that she can transgress, what she announces in the song which she sings to Ahmed in Hungarian, and which tells that “man is not made of wood,” she does not forgive herself and she does not accept Ahmed’s proposal to get married when he learns that she is pregnant. Makavejev portrays her struggle for

⁴⁰⁸ Thomas Elsaesser, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

modernity in the shot in which she looks into the camera (Figure 9.) and repeats the words from her song that man is not of wood and that everybody can transgress, announcing thus that this can happen to her too. However, after she realizes her rights for sexual liberty, she suffers and cannot commit herself to the relationship because it is not pure. That is why she flatly rejects Ahmed's proposal, finding the false excuse in her right to liberty, by saying, "I did not sign the paper, and I am not your servant." This throws Ahmed into a cycle of alcoholic outbursts which leads him towards suicide. Izabela looks for him in the café where he makes himself even more miserable by listening to Bosnian melancholic folk music. She tries to communicate with him, but he will not listen and wanders through the streets trying to find a place to drown himself. Izabela is all the time behind Ahmed, trying to stop him with her hands, but he always succeeds in getting away. Eventually, he enters the well and wants to cast himself down into it. She starts crying and screaming, he starts running down the stairs, she is behind him, grabbing his hand, but he always succeeds in pushing her away. During one of these altercations she finds herself near the opening into the wall and gets accidentally pushed down the well. This sequence occurs with no sound except the screams of Izabela which reverberate from the well's walls. At the beginning of the film Izabela is an emancipated woman, who pays her struggle for love by her life at the end. Makavejev does not punish her emancipatory aspirations, the auteur tells us that that Izabela was not emancipated enough.

It is Eisler's music that follows the last two sequences in the film. The first one is the scene of the police capturing Ahmed, who for days lived in drunkenness, lies in the tall grass, in the building courtyard, similar to the building where he lived with Izabela. In

the moment when the police put his hands behind his back, Eisler's music fills the passage and streams out of the courtyard. The same music bridges the subsequent, last shot of the film, which shows Izabela and Ahmed climbing down the sumptuous baroque stairs of the building's façade where they lived together. (Figure 10.)

Switchboard Operator functions on several levels, offering in Aumont's words, different routes to reading the film's visual, narrative and aural texts. The film's novelty exists in the interpolation of critical material, which is expertly articulated by a sexologist and a criminologist, and adds an additional dimension to the cinematic text. This aspect introduces professional knowledge as part of the fiction in the film. Besides the sexologist and the criminologist, the film employs several other professionals: a coroner, plumber and bedcover tailor.

Makavejev affirms their knowledge when he has the experts display the tools of their trade. Thus Rade Ljubisavljevic, the plumber, neatly arranges his tools, hammers and chisels on the table before he begins to work in Izabela's apartment. Dr. Dragan Obradovic, the coroner, similarly carefully places his autopsy instruments along Izabela's legs. By paying close attention to these details, the auteur acknowledges the professions that do not operate verbally in the film, but are nonetheless vital participants in the construction of the film's narrative.

The city itself plays the role of a character in the film. With its streets, buildings and a historical site, a "Roman" well, the site at which tragedy occurs, Makavejev employs the city not only as a static *mise en scène*, but as an interactive structure offering its inhabitants various modes of exchange and circulation. It is this urban environment that provides the backdrop for Izabela's liberating decision to sleep with her colleague,

Mica, the seducer, because she craves physical contact in her boyfriend's absence. Makavejev constructs the scene, in which she makes her decision, by employing a method of self-reflexivity. The scene occurs in Izabela's apartment while she washes her clothing and plays with large soap balloons that she forms with her hands. (Figure 9.) Whereas the image of the soap balloons might carry different meanings, such as symbolizing her pregnancy or the fragility of happiness, the moment in which Izabela looks directly into the camera, repeating the words of her song that she sang to Ahmed in Hungarian, "a man is not made of wood," and adding the phrase "and me especially," is the moment in which she tries to act as a liberated woman, who takes action and is aware of the risks and consequences.

Furthermore, the auteur employs the city space as a space that enables the critique and deconstruction of the system's official visual representation. So, at the beginning of the film, we follow the scene of a huge poster of Lenin being suspended from the roof of a building in the city center. (Figure 11.) The scene is accompanied by a revolutionary song, and reveals the mechanisms in which the communists employed the visual to claim the city space, its buildings and streets.

Yet, at the same time, the city is also a site of emergent consumerism, which begins to take hold in Yugoslavia in the early 1960s. Thus, there are not only Communist Party parades in the streets, but also processions of consumer goods arranged by industry. One of the scenes, when Izabela wanders the streets, depicts a procession of carts carrying hugely oversized models of toothpaste, detergent, and dolls displaying woman's clothing.

The film's seemingly simple plot operates on different levels of narration, which are both separate and intermingled, engaging the planes of science with fictional segments. This novelty in the narrative construction of *Switchboard Operator* is supported by the complex usage of the camera, which results in a variety of visual techniques. Such visual techniques enable Makavejev to tackle different social problems.

The film delivers his critique of communism and its missed promises by channeling the visual power of the documentary footage or photographic material such as the huge poster of Lenin's face displayed on a façade. The fixed camera centered on the speaker films the critical, scientific level in the film, in which the two experts talk. Here Makavejev follows the convention of media that focuses on maintaining the viewer's undivided attention. Yet, even in these instances, the auteur plays with the convention.

The example for this is the way in which Makavejev employs a fixed camera shot depicting Dr. Kostic's talk on a crucial dilemma that science has yet to solve, specifically how organs are formed. The scientist begins his speech, standing in front of the henhouse in the courtyard, from which he takes an egg in order to illustrate his point. At one point he approaches the camera, which is fixed but positioned very low, so that the speaker stands sideways in order to remain in the frame. The scene, in which Izabela talks to the camera announcing her plans directly to the viewer, also filmed by a stationary camera, which is this time put into the service of self-reflexivity that privileges the media over the narrative. The other instances in which the auteur employs a stable camera include nearly all the sequences of the lovers in bed.

However, in the scenes of the lovers' distressed moments, during which they run along the streets and down the well, Makavejev uses an extremely unstable, hand held

camera. With its shaky and erratic movements, the camera transfers Izabela's and Ahmed's tragic existential position into the pictures which seem to be on the brink of exploding.

Although the film employs the technique of montage that creates meaning through the juxtaposition of incongruous images resulting in irony or sarcasm, by simultaneously juxtaposing and overlapping incongruous images, *Switchboard Operator* does more than create irony or sarcasm. Makavejev reveals the ambiguity of reality, in which, Lenin's poster hanging from a building's façade, or parades of stars and communist flags, exist in a parallel world with the consumer goods marching along these same streets, simultaneously. It is this ambiguity, which the auteur offers to his audience as a way of comprehending the preordained and fixed structures, whether they belong to the communist or Hollywood systems, in order to understand that the way out lies in the perpetual rediscovery of everyday reality.

In this segment I have conceptualized models that portray the public city sphere, entailing its social and political substance, in the films of Makavejev and Wenders. These auteurs, with their discursive filmic imagination, capture and examine the relationship between the city, with its architectural space, and the individual in different social formations, such as capitalism and socialism at different geographical locations during the Cold War. The directors portray the city space as the privileged space of cinema in which different forms of socio-historical relations emerge and develop among its inhabitants. In this constellation, the city setting, with its wider social context, might impose various constraints on the individuals as in the case with the heroes' of both Makavejev's and Wenders' films.

These constraints in *Switchboard Operator* have proven to be fatal for Izabela and Ahmed. The auteur employs their tragic love story as a narrative device to reveal its wider socialist setting in which communist authorities operate with empty slogans. Makavejev, nevertheless, portrays the city as a space of renovation and promising novelties. The film displays this tendency by depicting the characters as they wander along the streets and massive infrastructure building sites, cluttered by hills of unearthed soil and heavy machinery. It is interesting to note that Wenders also presents the streets as sites for building, as is the situation in front of the hotel where Alice and Philip stay in Wuppertal. Wenders' characters, however, continue to move from one city to another, and thus open new horizons with abundant cities waiting to be discovered.

In summary, Chapter Four has been devoted to comparing Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* with melodrama segment of Makavejev's *WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, and Wenders' *Alice in the Cities* with Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator*. The conceptual frame, which I use as an incentive for the analysis, is the city concept and the modalities in which the city dwellers communicate with power structures by engaging in the networks of interrelationship: cultural, judicial, social or architectural. I used a wide variety of theories on city and theoreticians such as de Certeau, Grosz, and Lefebvre.

In Chapter Five, I will conclude my journey along transnational lines of circulation between New German Cinema and New Yugoslav film, without really closing this edifice.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The story you will read is yours alone. Between your reading and my intention lie endless rifts of incomprehension and human isolation. The only certainty, the only thread which we – with the tendency of the drowning – will grab for you and I, is punctuation: the meaning of the comma, the necessity of the period. I could have taken those from you as well, but whom would I have to speak to, then?⁴⁰⁹

The awareness that the stories we read or the films we watch “are ours alone,” that they are here to be read and revealed, is a crucial part of my writing strategy. Similar to this notion is my belief that films, or books for that matter, should be reread and reinterpreted to disclose new possible meanings and relations among them since our comprehensions are diverse, shifting and depend on the era in which we live. This thought has been my driving force while examining the relation between New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film, which has, until now, not been studied.

As discussed in my introductory chapter, Chapter One, the comparative analysis of films that I conceptualize in this work, understands comparisons as the process of circulation, rather than a comparison between two separate, static entities. In other words, the method of evaluating the relationship between films, grounded on a model of

⁴⁰⁹ David Albahari, *Words Are Something Else*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996, p. 99.

comparing and contrasting, becomes the intention of comparisons based on the exchange and flow of ideas. The investigation into the system of cross-cultural exchange and transnational filmic communication, or cultural circuit and lines of circulation, locates New Wave movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia in the wider cinematographic milieu in which the French New Wave exerts an equally important influence.

This critical comparison of two cinemas, such as German and Yugoslav New films, emerging from different political systems, capitalist and socialist, or to put it more specifically, German capitalism and Yugoslav socialism, is possible today thanks to a change in the last two decades of historical and theoretical settings: since the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the end of the Cold War. A new cultural awareness and innovative approaches in film provide a theoretical framework for this work. Deleuzian rhizomatic schemata offer an appropriate theoretical background to analyze the ways in which the new auteurs of the 1960s and 1970s develop their work by influencing each other. These cineastes, despite their diverse political and cultural origins, carried out their filmic works along the lines of circulation with “multiple entryways.”⁴¹⁰ This connection or affiliation is best denoted as their social engagement.

In Chapter One, I analyzed new developments in picture making that began with Italian Neorealism and continued during the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s with French New Wave. This provided the terrain for New Film cinemas to emerge in West Germany, Yugoslavia, and in the countries of the Eastern bloc, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. This new concept of images and image-making that circulated between national cinemas in Europe, at the same time revaluated Hollywood cinema. This process enabled the transnational exchange and circulation of pictures.

⁴¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 12.

Deleuze theorizes these changes in his *Cinema 1 and Cinema 2*. He posits that cinematic images after WWII went through a transformation from movement-image or action-image to time-image or mental-image. Deleuze explains that changes in image perception were related to the understanding of time which resulted in the creation of a new image that treats time as an object in itself, which gave birth to the French New Wave and other subsequent new cinemas all over Europe and the Americas. Deleuze credits Hitchcock with the introduction of the mental image into cinema, produced by camera work that is no longer “defined by the movements it is able to follow or make, but by the mental connections it is able to enter into.”⁴¹¹ Deleuze denotes this mode of image creation, as a “camera-consciousness.” Deleuze theoretically illustrates Pasolini’s analysis in his text, “The Cinema of Poetry” that he read during the first New Cinema Festival at Pesaro in June of 1965.

Pasolini’s programmatic text discusses a new filmic practice and describes the goals of the new cinemas as they emerged during the end of the 1950 and the beginning of the 1960s. Pasolini specifies the stylistic features of the cinema of poetry, concluding that the “recent technico-stylistic tradition [of the] ‘cinema of poetry’ [...] is senseless unless one then proceeds to an examination of this phenomenon in relation to a larger political, social and cultural situation.”⁴¹² Pasolini argued for a social engagement of new cinemas, the goal that both New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film accomplished with their filmic engagement.

In my reading, New Film movements in West Germany and Yugoslavia are the cinemas of political awareness. This connection or affiliation is obvious in their response

⁴¹¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 23.

⁴¹² Pier Paolo Pasolini, op. cit., p. 557.

to reality, which often takes the form of a radical reaction to social or political conditions and direct intellectual engagement. German and Yugoslav auteurs examine in their films the historical, social and political problems, as well as the concerns of an individual affected by social circumstances that they cannot control. I organize these filmic subjects in the dissertation in three chapters around the specific politico-cultural settings and problems. The basic argument that both cinemas understand and examine reality as being historically and politically conditioned, is an overarching theme that connects the seven films that I study here.

In Chapter Two, my analysis is focused on the question of history, which both cinemas problematize by confronting the social settings of their respective countries in a radical way. New Yugoslav Film subverted the representation of history that was based on mythologizing the wartime Communist resistance in Partisan films. Similarly, New German Film opened up the possibility of confronting Nazi history by discarding the “Papap Kino,” which, with its autistic and escapist treatment of reality, governed the German cinema scene after WWII. In this chapter, I compare Fassbinder’s *Despair* and Makavejev’s *WR: Mysteries of the Organism* that examine history from the position of displaced individuals, such as Reich in *WR* and Hermann Hermann in *Despair*. Whereas Fassbinder explores the Nazi ascendance to power and the subsequent terror they wrought, Makavejev investigates totalitarian governing structures such as McCarthyism and Stalinism. Here I find that the point of convergence between these two auteurs lies in the way in which they use filmic techniques. Although, cinematographically speaking, the auteurs deploy different cinematic strategies – *Despair* employs long takes and sequence shots and *WR* relies on specific montage techniques – both Makavejev and

Fassbinder employ methods of distanciation and a Brechtian *Verfremdung* effect to engage the audience intellectually. Yet, both directors also use the effect of emotions to heighten their messages.

My Third Chapter is devoted to the subject of history as a form of state terrorism, a concept that is investigated by Von Trotta's *Marianne and Julianne* and Pavlovic's *Ambush*. These films investigate the state's unlawful engagement with history that results in crimes committed in the name of protecting these very conditions. Von Trotta's film explores terrorism and its complex causes. The auteur investigates not only the cause of youth terrorism, but also the covert and deadly methods which the state employs in fighting insurgency, without trying to deal with its causes. This obscurity of means and procedures that the state exploits always leaves the greatest portion of the story of terrorism untold. Pavlovic investigates in his *Ambush* the history of communist crimes by illuminating their executions of innocent people who were politically opposed.

In Chapter Four I further investigate mechanisms of coercion imposed on the individual, either by the state which engages in different forms of violence, or by other modes of authoritarian involvements that govern social relations such as surveillance and various modalities of state or corporate interference. The films which are explored here are: Fassbinder's *Ali: Fear Eats the Soul* and the fictional part of Makavejev's *WR*; Wenders' *Alice in the Cities* and Makavejev's *Switchboard's Operator*.

By developing an analysis of the ways in which the city spaces accommodate and affect an individual, this chapter also discusses the problems that an individual encounters in terms of the structures of power and authority related to the practice of everyday life, regardless of the social and economic systems, capitalist or socialist. I

investigate here problems such as the connection between culture and identity and subject formation; otherness and inclusivity; transnational tensions as modes of communications and/or political or state pressures; social dynamics between different subjectivities and communities such as *Gastarbeiter*.

As already explained, I explore in this work the films that are connected by the concept, which I denote as “lines of circulation” that flow along the cultural circuit connecting these cinematic works on multiple levels. I understand “lines of circulation” as a rhizomatic concept, which is in tune with Deleuze’s explanation, that “Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways.”⁴¹³ Such spaces, where the circulation and flow of ideas have been most visible, are international film festivals. The Venice Film Festival for instance, has been a venue where both von Trotta’s *Marianne and Julianne* and Pavlovic’s *Ambush* won Golden Lion awards, in 1981 and 1969 respectively. In a similar way, The Berlin Film Festival has been another site where an exchange of ideas has continued. Pavlovic won the “Silver Bear” as the best director in 1967 for the film *Awakening of the Rats*, and Makavejev won the Special Jury Prize in 1968 for *Innocence Unprotected*. Berlinare also presented a review of the Yugoslav cinema in 1969 when the festival screened ten titles within the “Yugoslav Film Week.”

The question of the contemporary situation in film in the countries that have been examined here, calls to be briefly addressed in the concluding chapter. The face of Europe has been changed after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989. A year after this event, West and East Germany reunited, while at the same time Yugoslavia ceased to exist. The consequences of the bloody civil war that ensued are still evident in

⁴¹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 12.

the process of healing at the moment when one of the republics of the former Yugoslavia, Slovenia, has attained membership in the European Union while the rest, including Serbia, are still in the process of becoming the members. The attitude toward film and filmmaking went through tremendous changes as well. Some think that contemporary film in both Germany and Serbia has no connections with the heroic social and political engagements of the New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film of the 1960s and 1970s. In the case of German film, blame is put on the rapid commercialization of the film industry, and in the case of Serbian film, many doubt that there is any real cinema production to talk about in the first place. Whereas this opinion seems to be exaggerated, it does have validity for the situation of lost perspectives that is prevalent in Serbian cinema today.

David Clarke in his *German Cinema: Since Unification*, reports that German film in the 1990s “[...] looked to the model provided by Hollywood genre film rather than a European art-house tradition.”⁴¹⁴ Clarke asserts that this attitude towards filmmaking downgraded the notion of the auteur (*Autor*) at the expense of a “skilled technician,”⁴¹⁵ who is not interested in social comment or taking a political stance. He cites Elsaesser’s opinion about German film after Unification that “[...] the ‘new wave’ of the 1990s is ‘cockily mainstream, brazenly commercial’ and ‘wants no truck with the former quality label art cinema.’”⁴¹⁶ However, Clarke argues that the *Autorenfilm* tradition has not been disrupted entirely and that films like Tom Tykwer’s 1998 *Run Lola Run* and Becker’s 2003 *Goodbye Lenin*, offer hope for the revival of this tradition.

⁴¹⁴ David Clarke ed, *German Cinema: Since Unification*, London, (UK); New York: Continuum, 2006, p. 1.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

The situation in Serbian film after 2000 is best described as lacking genuine critical engagement with the problems of a post-war, post-Milosevic society in transition. Serious critical analysis discloses that there is no viable thematic and analytical engagement with the most recent past after the 1990s. There are certain attempts to analyze the country's most acute social problems, such as the widespread criminalization of society, obvious in the encroaching of mafia organizations in all segments of society, as Srdjan Glogovac's 2007 *The Trap*. This film, however, besides telling a compelling, yet emotionally manipulative story, does not enter into a real investigation of the problem.

This critical autism leads Serbian film to resort either to historical escapism, such as Srdjan Dragojevic's 2009 *St. George Kills the Dragon*, which examines the theme of WWI, or to the relatively recent past from the Titoist period during the 1970s, such as Jovan Todorovic's 2006 *Belgrade Phantom*, a film about the urban legend of a young man in a stolen Porsche, who eludes the Belgrade police for months, by driving the car faster than the police cars, along the winding Belgrade streets during the night. The 1990s war has been the theme of several films in recent years, one of which is Goran Markovic's 2008 "*The Tour*." It deals with war crimes, and aspires to function as a cathartic work of art, yet does not go any further than being compelling or watchable to the western audience.

In such a cinematic setting, films like Goran Radovanovic's 2009 *The Ambulance*, with its attempt to treat the everyday surrounding of a society that often does not understand the requirements imposed by modernity, is an example of a film that is timely and inquisitive. The ways in which Radovanovic explores the subject, recalls the tradition

of New Film movements from the late 1960s and 1970s. The subject of the film, the ambulance, is highly slippery terrain that borders on the possibility of slipping into a narrative that manipulates the audience's emotions. The filmmaker, however, uses emotions as a moving force for the viewer to engage intellectually in the perception of the various problems that the film treats. One of the examples of this approach is the film's use of a young female character in a wheelchair, which her father carries downstairs every morning, since there is no elevator in the building, nor facilities to accommodate persons with disabilities. Whereas Radovanovic employs this character to point to the treatment of various vulnerable minority groups in Serbian society, he does not manipulate the viewer's emotions, since the film does not treat the young female character as a victim to elicit the viewers' compassion. The auteur portrays the girl as an agent who takes responsibility for herself and her surroundings. The film concludes with the girl teaching a middle-aged female doctor computer skills. The film's visual language, unusual editing technique that supports the narrative, which does not revolve around the central character or story, is the film's primary artistic intention.

Pavle Levi in his *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*, asserts in Post Scriptum: "Horrific effects of mindless destruction are thus miraculously translated into a major cinematic crisis. The relationship between the eye of the camera and the profilmic reality has been thoroughly destabilized. The cinematic referent has become slippery and unreliable. But filmmakers are already at work on reestablishing its coordinates..."⁴¹⁷ Radovanovic's *The Ambulance*

⁴¹⁷ Pavle Levi, *Disintegration in Frames: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Yugoslav and Post-Yugoslav Cinema*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007, p. 161.

is one such film, whose innovative critical and artistic merits are inspiring for Serbian film.

My dissertation with its concept of transnational lines of circulation, offers various possibilities for further exploration. My new research project, whose elements have been laid out in the dissertation, examines cultural exchange circulating between American and European filmic experiences. The focus of my investigation is the concept of authorship and the ways in which particular cultural practices, such as the city space, are examined and represented. New Film movements in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, beginning with the French New Wave in the late fifties and early sixties, reevaluated the American genre film, such as the Western, melodrama or thriller. Although new film cinemas, with their auteur politics, were a radical opposition to the established forms associated with Hollywood, the French auteurs recognized that “American cinema was not, fundamentally an *auteur* cinema, that *auteurs* in the American cinema were to be found despite the system, as exceptions to it” (Jim Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinema*). American auteurs Howard Hawks, John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock become the focus of investigation into the concept of authorship. In *Alice and the Cities*, Wenders pays special tribute to Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* by displaying a road-sign reading “Northwest,” on the roadside where Alice and Philip wait for the bus to Amsterdam.

These future projects, as being tightly connected to my dissertation, reveal that the complexity of this work enables a possibility to develop subjects beyond its immediate interests in the relationship between New German Cinema and New Yugoslav Film. By looking at the relation of these two cinemas, their immediacy and radicality in reacting to

historical, political and social settings, it becomes obvious that their filmic engagement cast the projection far in the future. This future is here and now. It is the process of time that contemporary film sees it as the impetus to engage in the problems of everyday life with the fervency and intellectualism of their New Film cinemas predecessors. Moreover, by deepening understanding of transnational filmic circulation and exchange, this work contributes to the emerging field of transnational studies.

FIGURES

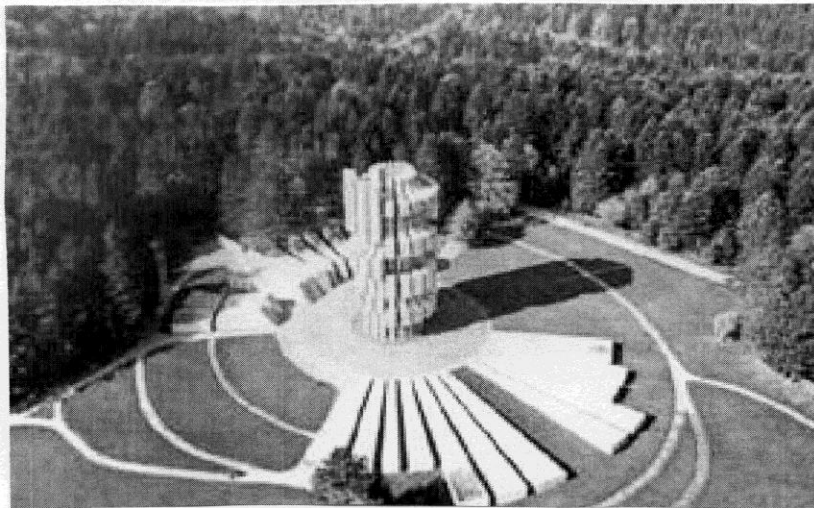


Figure 1. Memorial Monument Kozara



Figure 2. Makavejev's *WR* – The prison wall of the Federal Penitentiary in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where Wilhelm Reich died in 1956



Figure 3. Pavlovic's *Ambush* – A deep focus shot of the cemetery killing scene



Figure 4. Makavejev's *WR* – Jackie Curtis, a transvestite, holding a framed photo of the *homme fatale*, Gary Cooper



Figure 5. Makavejev's *WR* – Milena with the frame



Figure 6. Makavejev's *WR* – Autopsy room: Milena's "talking head"

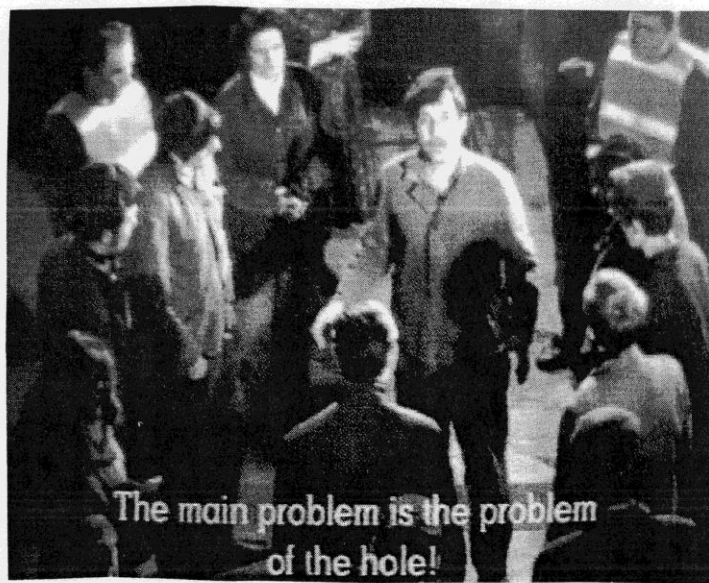


Figure 7. Makavejev's *WR* – The street protest: Radmilovic and his friends

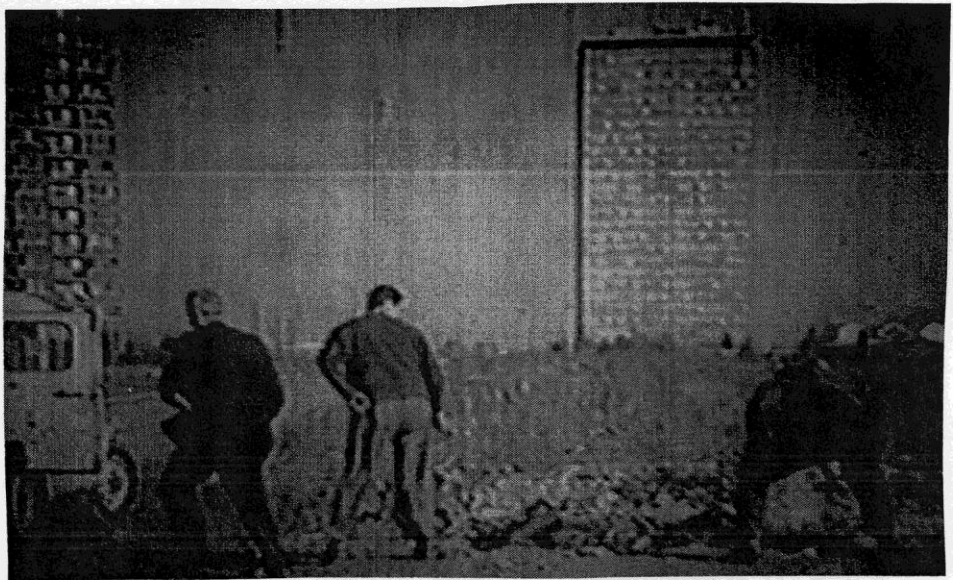


Figure 8. Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator* – The Communist Party Headquarter building in New Belgrade (1958 -1962), an early example of Modernism in Yugoslav architecture



Figure 9. Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator* – Izabela talks

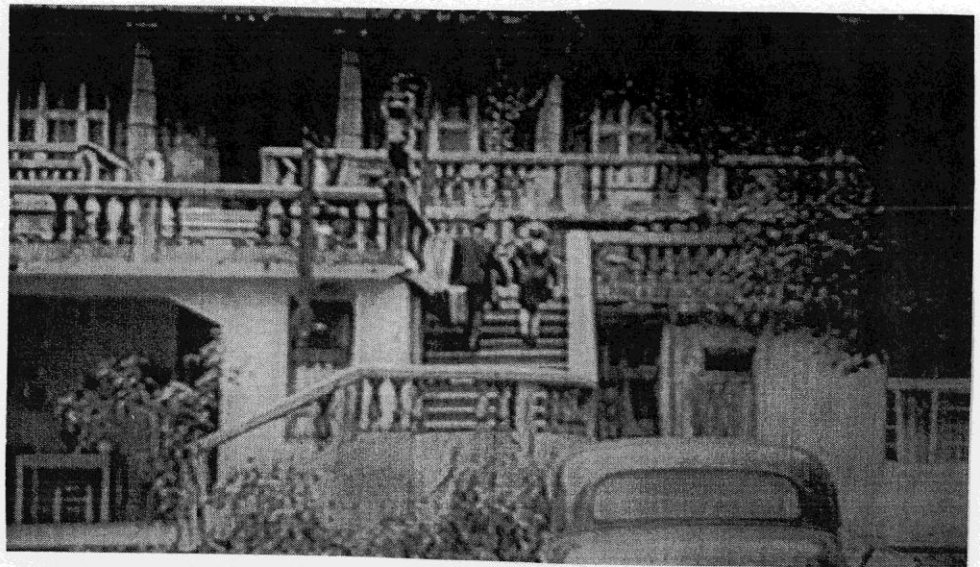


Figure 10. Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator* – Izabela and Ahmed

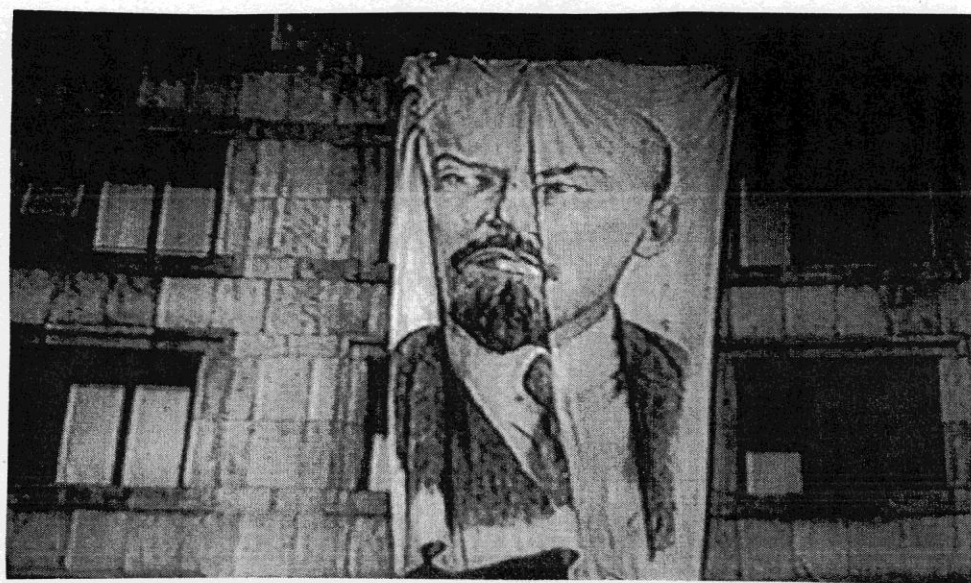


Figure 11. Makavejev's *Switchboard Operator* – Lenin's portrait

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Appendix A

FILMOGRAPHY

Fassbinder

1969

Liebe ist kälter als Tod (Love is Colder Than Dead)

Katzelmacher

Fernes Jamaica (Far Jamaica)

Götter des Pest (Gods of the Plague)

Warum läuft Herr R amok? (Why Does Herr R Run Amok?)

1970

Rio das Mortes

Das Kaffeehaus (The Coffee House)

Whity

Die Niklashauser Fahrt (The Niklashauser Journey)

Die amerikanische Soldat (The American Soldier)

Warnung vor einer heiligen Nutte (Beware of a Holy Whore)

Pioniere in Ingolstadt (Pioneers in Ingolstadt)

1971

Der Händler der vier Jahreszeiten (The Merchant of Four Seasons)

1972

Die bitteren Tränen der Petra von Kant (The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant)

Wildwechsel (Jail Bait)

Acht Stunden sind kein Tag (Eight Hours Are Not a Day)

Bremer Freiheit (Bremen Freedom)

1973

Welt am Draht (World on Wires)

Nora Helmer

Angst essen Seele auf (Ali: Fear Eats the Soul)

Martha

1974

Fontane Effi Briest (Effi Briest)

Faustrecht der Freiheit (Fox and his Friends)

Wie ein Vogel auf dem Draht (Like a Bird on the Wire)

1975

Mutter Küsters' Fahrt zum Himmel (Mother Küsters' Trip to Heaven)

Angst vor der Angst (Fear of Fear)

Schatten der Engel (Shadows of Angels)

1976

Ich will doch nur, dass Ihr mich liebt (I only Want you to Love Me)

Satansbraten (Satan's Brew)

Chinesisches Roulette (Chinese Roulette)

1977

Bolwieser (The Stationmaster's Wife)

Frauen in New York (Women in New York)

Eine Reise ins Licht (Despair)

1978

Deutschland im Herbst (Germany in Autumn)

Die Ehe der Maria Braun (The Marriage of Maria Braun)

In einem Jahr mit 13 Monden (In a Year of Thirteen Moons)

1979

Die Dritte Generation (The Third Generation)

1980

Berlin Alexanderplatz

Lili Marleen

1980

Lola

Die Sehnsucht der Veronika Voss (The Longing of Veronika Voss)

1982

Querelle – Ein Pakt mit dem Teufel (Querelle)

Makavejev

1965

Covek nije ptica (Man is not a Bird)

1967

Ljubavni slucaj ili tragedija sluzbenice PTT (Switchboard Operator)

1968

Nevinost bez zastite (Innocence Unprotected)

1971

WR: Misterije organizma (WR: Mysteries of the Organism)

1974

Sweet Movie

1981

Montenegro

1985

The Coca-Cola Kid

1988

Manifesto

1993

Gorila se kupu u podne (Gorilla Bathes at Noon)

1994

Rupa u dusi (Hole in the Soul)

1996

Danish Girls Show Everything/“Dream” segment

Pavlovic

1962

Kapi, Vode, Ratnici (Raindrops, Waters, Warriors)

1963

Grad (The City)

1965

Neprijatelj (The Enemy)

1966

Povratak (The Return)

1967

Budjenje pacova (Awakening of the Rats)

1968

Kad budem mrtav i beo (When I am Pale and Dead)

1969

Zaseda (Ambush)

1971

Crveno Klasje (The Red Wheat)

1973

Let mrtve ptice (Flight of a dead bird)

1976

Hajka (The Hunt)

1980

Dovidjenja u sledecem ratu (See you in the Next War)

1983

Zadah tela (Body Scent)

1987

Na putu za Katangu (On the Road to Katanga)

1992

Dezerter (The Deserter)

1997

Država mrtvih (The Country of the Dead)

von Trotta

1975

Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann (The Lost Honor of Katharina Blum)

1976

Coup de Grâce

1978

Das Zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages (The Second Awakening of Christa Klages)

1979

Schwestern oder die Balance des Glücks (Sisters or The Balance of Happiness)

1981

Hands up!

Die Bleierne Zeit (Marianne and Juliane)

1983

Heller Wahn (Friends and Husbands)

1986

Rosa Luxemburg

1987

Felix

1988

Paura e amore (Fürchten und Lieben; Love and Fear)

1990

L'Africana (Die Rückkehr; The African Woman)

1993

Il Lungo silenzio (Zeit des Zorns; The Long Silence)

1995

Das Versprechen (The Promise)

1997

Winterkind/ TV film

1998

Mit fünfzig küssen Männer anders/ TV film

1999

Dunkle Tage/ TV film

2000

Jahrestage /Aus dem Leben von Gesine Cressphal/ TV film

2003

Rosenstrasse

2004

Die Andere Frau/ TV film

2006

Ich bin die Andere

Wenders

1970

Summer in the City

1972

Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter (The Goalkeeper's Fear of the Penalty)

1973

Der Scharlachrote Buchstabe (The Scarlet Letter)

1974

Alice in den Städten (Alice in the Cities)

1975

Falsche Bewegung (The Wrong Move)

1976

Im Lauf der Zeit (Kings of the Roads)

1977

Der amerikanische Freund (The American Friend)

1980

Lightning Over Water/ Documentary

1982

Chambre 666 (Room 666)

Reverse Angle

Hammet

Stand der Dinge (The State of Things)

1984

Paris, Texas

1985

Tokyo-Ga/ Documentary

1987

Der Himmel über Berlin (Wings of Desire)

1989

Aufzeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten (Notebook on Cities and Clothes)/ Documentary

1991

Bis ans Ende der Welt (Until the End of the World)

1992

Arisha, der Bär und der steinerne Ring (Arisha, the Bear and the Stone Ring)

1993

In weiter Ferne, so nah! (Faraway, so Close!)

1994

Lisbon Story

1995

Jenseits der Wolken (Beyond the Clouds)

Die Gebrüder Skladanowsky (The Brothers Skladanowsky)

1997

The End of Violence

1998

Willie Nelson at the Teatro

1999

Bueno Vista Social Club/Documentary

2000

The Million Dollar Hotel

2001

Souljacker Part 1/Music Video

2002

Ode to Cologne: A Rock 'N' Roll Film/Documentary

Ten Minutes Older

2003

The Soul of a Man/Documentary

2004

Land of Plenty

2005

Don't Come Knocking

2008

Palermo Shooting