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SOCIAL DEVIATIONS AND THE YUGOSLAV BLACK WAVE: MULTIPERSPECTIVITY OF DEVIANCE

ABSTRACT: This paper proposes to investigate various forms of social deviations that can be related to the Black Wave in Yugoslav cinema. The analysis is structured according to the author's typology of possible models of connection between artistic and deviant contents (1. artist as deviant; 2. presentation of deviance as a theme of an artwork; 3. work of art as a deviant phenomenon or act [Matković, 2017]). There is a complex and heterogeneous perspective of the relationship between the Black Wave and the sphere of social deviance manifest at several different levels that provide the basis for a conclusion that there is multiperspectivity of social deviance connected to this artistic orientation. Among other things, it is pointed out that the most energetic socio-political reactions were provoked by presentations of social deviations with political connotations and those related to the dissatisfaction of different categories of population in Yugoslav society that directly threatened the interests of the official state ideology and the ruling regime, while the cinematographic treatment of socio-pathological phenomena in the narrow sense being undesirable nonetheless, was still tolerated and subjected to repression of lower intensity.

KEY WORDS: Black Wave, Yugoslav cinema, social deviations, social pathology, art and deviance.

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1. The Black Wave and reality in socialist Yugoslavia

During the period of socialism the attitude of Yugoslav authorities towards contemporary art was not well-balanced. It varied significantly depending on the kind of artistic form exposed to judgement. Considering visual arts, for example, the attitude was characterized by the absence of immediate political control (Unterkofler, 2012). Thus authors active in this field enjoyed high degree of freedom, sometimes even institutional support, unless their activity was directly aimed at criticizing the social system and the political regime. On the other hand, literature and film production were subjected to much stricter control, in other words, to a regime of political censorship. Writers and film-makers, in contrast to their colleagues in the sphere of visual arts, were open to quite rigorous surveillance, some of them enduring serious sanctions because of their artistic work (Unterkofler, 2012; DeCuir, 2019; Radosavljević, 2019).

In Yugoslav cinema the Black Wave holds the position of its own, especially considering the area of social deviation. Black Wave is a label used for denoting one particular segment of post-war Yugoslav filmmaking developped within the so-called new Yugoslav cinema originating in the sixties and being active all the way to the beginning of the seventies (of the 20th century) when, by means of various repressive measures, it was brought to an end, thus terminating a specific creative, albeit heterogeneous, tendency in Yugoslav artistic film production. The key feature of these films was readiness to present social relations realistically, focusing on various social problems (national, political, moral etc.), including those considered taboo subjects in the Yugoslav society. This artistic movement for the first time featured marginalized social groups and outsiders (cf. DeCuir, 2019), or, as V. Radosavljević expressed it (2019) "people from the fringe of society" (p. 90); another unifying characteristic was striking pessimism as a sharp contrast to the prevalent optimistic mood in general film production and in society as a whole. As it is usually put, the mainstream film production of the period tended to show universal progress in Yugoslav society in the period of self-managing socialism often being used as open political propaganda (cf. Tirnanić, 2011; Radosavljević, 2019). Opposing this the Black Wave presented a number of negative social phenomena realistically, ("the ugly side of life" [Radosavljevic, 2019, p. 89]), with marked pessimism, which were undoubtedly part of social reality in Yugoslavia. It is significant for our analysis that in a number of films many socially deviant aspects of behavior is presented in a narrower and broader sense of the term. Due to the characteristics mentioned, these films gained the status of controversial phenomenon within the Yugoslav society and, as a consequence, many of the authors who made them were stigmatized.

The relevance of the Black Wave for sociological, socio-pathological and criminological investigations is that the films of the movement can be connected to the phenomena of social deviations at different levels, not only considering themes and stories, but also in a broader context linking films and their authors to the community as a whole with sociopathological phenomena. The space in literature about the history of Yugoslav film, history of contemporary art in Yugoslavia, art criticism etc. (Volk, 1986; Petrović, 1988; Nikodijević, 1995; Gulding, 2004; Tirnanić, 2011; DeCuir, 2019; Radosavljević, 2019; Zlatić, 2020) dedicated to the phenomenon of Black Wave is sufficient to vouch for its importance in the context of contemporary culture. However, the absence of interpretation of these documents from the sociopathological point of view is immediately noticeable. Consequenly, this paper proposes to investigate the relation of art to various social deviations within the Black Wave of Yugoslav cinema.

At the beginning a typology of social deviations under study should be presented. All of them can be divided into two broad categories in the following way: 1) *social deviations in narrower sense*; 2) *social deviations in broader sense*. By the first one we denote sociopathological phenomena conventionally subsumed under this heading such as: criminal behavior, substance abuse, panhandling, loitering, idling, prostitution, gambling, suicide and attempted suicide (Jakovljević, Đukanović, & Živković 1984; Špadijer-Đinić, 1988; Bošković, 2020; cf. also Đurić, 1961; Lukić, 1976; Janković & Pešić, 1988; Najman, 1985; Milosavljević, 2003). Undoubtedly, there are many other social disorders defined differently by different authors, but the common denominator to all these is that they can be treated as social deviations or as social problems. Regarding general understanding of social deviation, social

disorder, social problems and other kindred notions in sociological, sociopsychological and criminological theories, it will be sufficient here to mention some of the classical authors in the field (among others: Brown, 1942; Elliot & Merril, 1950; Lamert, 1951; Bloch, 1952; Wooton, 1959; Cohen, 1959; Merton, 1961; Sutherland, Cressey, & Luckenbill, 1992). Especially significant to this investigation are the following negative social phenomena: powerty, unemployment, homelessness, aspects of social disfranchisement, problems related to disfunctional families or other disfunctional aspects of micro- and macrosocial environment. Moreover, there are those which may be termed "systemic deviations", that is, disorders in functioning of the socio-political system or some of its constitutive parts - exercise of power, misconduct of government representatives - and the opposite "antisystemic deviations", that is, questioning the values of the political system, endangering the social order and mistrusting the legitimacy of the Establishment (Matković, 2021). All these will be taken into account - in spite of being so heterogeneous in nature - subsumed under an all-encompassing label for the purposes of this essay: social deviations in a broader sense.

The structure of this analysis is based on the above mentioned general typology of socially deviant phenomena connected to art, which is the following: 1. the artist as deviant; 2. presenting deviancy as a theme in a work of art; 3. work of art as a deviant phenomenon or deviant act (Matković, 2017). We approach our problem from three perspectives: 1. deviancy as a theme of film; 2. the film as a deviant phenomenon; 3. the artist (the author) as deviant. We shall first examine socially deviant phenomena in plots and stories in films of some eminent authors of Black Wave.

2. Presenting deviance as a theme in a work of art: socially deviant phenomena in the films of the Black Wave movement

We focus on the work of well-known authors who influenced the development of Black Wave presenting different types of social deviance; in order to keep the scope of the examples under study managable, we survey the works of Živojin Pavlović, Aleksandar Petrović, Dušan Makavejev, Želimir Žilnik, Miroslav Antić, Jovan Jovanović and Lazar Stojanović.

Director and screenwriter Živojin Pavlović, in the films he authored or co-authored³ presented a number of socially deviant phenomena in the narrower sense and many other examples of social problems. He portrayed some of the characteristic deviations: different kinds of criminal behavior - thievery, violence, sexual assault, pimping, criminal association, juvenile delinquency – and connected social phenomena – alcoholism, prostitution, gambling, vagrancy etc.- social problems such as disfunctional families, resocialization - readaptation into the society of persons after serving long-time prison sentences - unemployment, homelessness and other problems relevant to a community. It is important to mention, in addition, staging contoversial issues regarding social and interpersonal relationships during the National Liberation Struggle (NOB).

Aleksandar Petrović, in his works⁴, concentrated on various social deviations both in urban and rural settings. Most importantly, however, he captured deviance among some marginalized social groups, the Roma minority, for example, in one of his best films *Skupljači perja* (Feather Gatherers)(1967). In this film-noir one can observe a whole gamut of sociopathological manifestations: violence, theft, assault against women, brutality towards children and members of family, prostitution, vagrance, panhandling, sexual deviation – incest, pedophilia - family disorder, marginalization and disfranchisement of whole communities, national discrimination, treatment of minority groups etc.

Dušan Makavejev depicted an array of social deviations in his films such as *Parada* (The Parade) (1962), *Čovek nije tica* (A Man Is Not

³ Kapi, vode, ratnici (Drops, Waters, Warriors) (1962); Grad (The Town) (1963); Povratak (The Return) (1966); Buđenje pacova (Awakening of the Rat) (1967); Kad budem mrtav i beo (When I am Dead and Pale) (1968); Zaseda (The Ambush) (1969); Crveno klasje (Red Grain Stalks) (1970).

⁴ Dvoje (The Two of them) (1961); Dani (Days) (1963); Tri (Three) (1965); Skupljači perja (I Even Met Happy Gypsies [Feather Gatherers]) (1967); Biće skoro propast sveta (There will be the End of the World Soon) (1968); Majstor i Margarita (The Master and Margarita) (1972)

a Bird) (1965), *Ljubavni slučaj ili tragedija službenice PTT* (A Case of Love-affair or a Tragedy of a Postal Clerk) (1967), *Nevinost bez zaštite* (Innocence without Protection) (1968), *W.R. – Misterije organizma* (W.R. – Mysteries of the Organism) (1971). In all these films one can recognize brutality towards family members and partners, swindling, alcoholism as well as some sexual deviations. Other social problems such as marginalization, poverty and dreadful living conditions are exhibited. Moreover, in his films, a critique of communism and the socialist establishment is often present.

Želimir Žilnik figures prominently among the authors in this context. First of all, because he was one of the originators of a new genre - docudrama. In his documentary films he showed actual situations of deviant behavior, true examples from the fringes of society, often deliberately covered up by the establishment, which were, nevertheless, fragments of *reality* in socialist Yugoslavia. In films such as Žurnal o omladini na selu zimi (Journal about the Village-vouth)(1967) Nezaposleni ljudi (Unemployed People) (1968), Pioniri maleni, mi smo vojska prava, svakog dana ničemo ko zelena trava (Little Pioneers)(1968), Crni film (The Black Film)(1971) the following deviations are documented: juvenile delinguency (in broadest sense of the term), theft, violence, mayhem, juvenile prostitution, vagrancy, panhandling, alcoholism, suicidal tendencies. Besides, other social problems are pointed out such as poverty, unemployment, disfunctional families, police brutality, misconduct of government officials. But Žilnik's full-feature film Rani radovi (Early Works)(1969) provoked the severest reaction of the public. The reason is that in this film Žilnik focused on socially undesirable, and for the then government extremely unpopular ocurrences in Yugoslav society and socio-political community, not so much on social deviations in narrow sense. This was pointed out by M. Pekić saying that Žilnik's films "destroy the representative picture of society in progress" (p. 49).

In his work Miroslav Antić represented social problems in Vojvodina during and immediately after the Second World War linked to radical sociopolitical changes in building a new socialist community. In his film *Sveti pesak* (Holy Sand) (1968) the focus was on the tabooed subject of the Cominform, while in *Doručak sa đavolom* (Breakfast with the Devil) (1971) on abuse during the imposition of compulsory crop-purchase system in Vojvodina and the reluctance of peasants to deliver their produce to the state followed by general dissatisfacion with the new "communist" government.

Jovan Jovanović also devoted much space to social deviations. He was one of the pioneers in filming some very controversial themes such as the beginnings of juvenile drug addiction in a socialist country; the expansion of organized crime and the co-operation of officials with members of criminal organizations, foreboding (anti-Yugoslav) terrorist activities, sucidal tendencies among young people etc. One should notice as well early examples of the open criticism of authorities, ridiculing values of Yugoslav society, government officials and symbols of power, misconduct of people's militia, "propagandist" media and bad press. Such examples can be found in his documentary films (*Studentski grad* (Student City) [1974], Kolt 15 GAP [1971]), in a short film *Izrazito ja* (Distnctly I) (1969), and most prominently in his full-feature fim *Mlad i zdrav kao ruža* (Young and Healthy as a Rose)(1971).

Last but not least, in this short historical analysis the name of the director Lazar Stojanović must not be omitted, not just because of his importance in the development of the Black Wave movement, but also because of the far-reaching consequences his work and he, as an author, had to suffer. He made just one full-feature film *Plastični Isus* (Plastic Jesus) (1971 – actually, his graduation thesis) which was permanently banned from screening, and the author himself was sentenced to a prison incarceration. Apart from sociopathological and psychopathological motives, this film was best-known for its antisystemic deviation – an ironic caricature of Josip Broz Tito and allusions to the totalitarian nature of the Yugoslav political system (Tirnanić, 2011; DeCuir, 2019; Radosavljević, 2019). What is more, due to its openly provocative attitude, the whole film can be taken as an antisystemic deviation in itself.

Naturally, other authors of the black wave contributed to presenting socially deviant phenomena in varying degrees in their productions. However, limits of space and methodological reasons prevent us to make a full systematic sociopathological analysis of filmography made within the movement.

3. The work of art as a deviant phenomenon or act: the Black Wave and censorship

As far as the relation between Black Wave and censorship is concerned a paradoxical situation can be noticed, for there is a manifest disproportion as to the number of formally, by judicial decision, interdicted films and those informally (actually) banned. There is, namely, only one Black Wave film, and only one in Yugoslav cinema in general, banned by judicial decree and that is the omnibus film Grad (The City) from 1963 (Radosavljević, 2019). This film was banned from public screening by the decision of the district court in Sarajevo, which remained effective until 1990 (Tirnanić, 2011; Radosavljević, 2019). Nonetheless, while some Black Wave films got away with restrictions or conditionally, others were banned altogether. The techniques applied were diverse; one of the best known was "putting away to a bunker", that is, rendering public projection impossible for an indefinite period. Thus from the early sixties to the beginning of seventies some forty films that is the usual count (Radosavljevic, 2019) - were put away and effectively "interdicted without interdiction" (Nikodijević, 1995), some for a short period, while others for many decades. The following examples serve to understand the phenomena better, by showing circumstances and exhibiting the mechanisms of these procedures of obstruction; they are not intended to give an exhaustive list and should, consequently, be taken with appropriate qualifications (cf. Radosavljević, 2019, p. 311).

Dušan Makavejev's *Parada*, made in 1962, was not allowed to be shown until some controversial parts were removed. However, his film *W.R. – Misterije organizma* (1971) was highly contested and put away for a long time, and was not premiered before the Yugoslav public until 1987. *Povratak*, the film of Živojin Pavlović, made in 1966, was shown only two years later, after being extended with additional scenes and an introductory segment. M. Antić's *Sveti pesak* (1968) was put away because it dealt with a politically painful subject – the Cominform. Yet another film of his *Doručak sa đavolom*, from 1971, was debarred from public screening due to its criticism of post-war Yugoslav government and the communist party. Žilnik's *Rani radovi* (1969) was brought to trial and despite of not being formally *permanently* banned, it was put away to "bunker" until 1982. (Volk, 1986; Nikodijević, 1995; Tirnanić, 2011; DeCuir, 2019; Radosavljević, 2019).

One widespread method of obstructing Black Wave films and their authors were articles in the media, public announcements of state sponsored organizations and addresses of distinguished personalities. In these texts emphatically negative judgements about the films prevailed, both from ideological and aesthetic point of view. According to Radosavljević (2019) the state's settling old scores with Black Wave films began with a publication of the article Crni talas u jugoslovenskom filmu (Black Wave in Yugoslav cinema) by Vladimir Jovičić in the newspaper Borba in 1969. The author of the article was the then president of the Commission for Ideological Action in the Central Commitee of the Communist Party of Serbia (Radosavljević, 2019). One has, therefore, to take into account the impact of this and similar texts had on the negatively charged public opinion, the assumed connections between these and directives coming from the top structures of the state and the Communist Party (Tirnanić, 2011; Radosavljević, 2019), to draw a coclusion about the serious practical consequences of this informal manner of censorhip.

4. The artist as deviant: disciplining and discrediting the authors

Among the authors of Black Wave Lazar Stojanović was the one who suffered the most drastic measures for his film *Plastični Isus* (1971). During 1972 the film was confiscated; Stojanović was arrested in November and sentenced to a three year term of imprisonment. This was the only example of a criminal prosecution and sentence passed against a Yugoslav film-director for his professional activity. During the controversies surrounding the trial, the director Aleksandar Petrović, who was Stojanović's professor and mentor, was expelled from the Faculty of Drama Arts of Begrade University, left the county and moved to Paris. Tomislav Gotovac, the protagonist in the film, suffered consequences too (cf. Nikodijević, 1995; Tirnanić, 2011; Radosavljević, 2019). In an interview given to a foreign journalist, Dušan Makavejev talking about the recent crusade against his film *W.R.- Misterije organizma* mentioned the active role the Association of Fighters in the National Liberation Struggle (SUBNOR) had in the course of events. The members of the association took Makavejev's words as a personal insult and sued him for attacking the heritage of National Liberation Struggle and the values of post-war socialist self-governing society of Yogoslavia (Nikodijevć, 1995). The accused, however, did not have to face the consequences, as the proceedings were cancelled after the first hearing. Yet, it was not all over; in February 1973 the film-director was expelled from the Communist Party.

On the other hand, the prosecution may not only be brought against the author personally, there were law suits whose purpose was to ban the film, and thereby, indirectly, of course, the author himself was targeted. A well-known example of a law suit in which the author himself was involved is the one brought against Žilnik's film *Rani radovi* (1969). He was facing accusations for comitting grave violations of social and political morality (Tirnanić, 2011). Žilnik, a lawyer himself, took active part in the proceedings trying to refute the accusations, in which he eventually succeeded. (Tirnanić, 2011; DeCuir, 2019). Nonetheless, the film remained put away for years; Žilnik, as an " anarchic-liberalist element", was expelled from the Communist Party.

In this context one may touch on the law suit brought against Miroslav Mandić, an artist from Novi Sad, apropos of his text *Pesma o filmu* (The song about film) from 1971. This text, among other things, contained a short film-scenario under the title "Josip Broz Tito". The gist of the scenario runs as follows: "Take a photograph of Josip Broz Tito in color, in one frame lasting for two hours. The camera is fixed. When inscription 'The End' appears on screen, the speaker says: This was Josip Broz Tito" (Mandić, 2011). This quip caused massive turbulence within the domestic artistic community, let alone the one it did in political circles. Mandić was sentenced to a nine month term of imprisonment (Denegri, 2013; Šuvaković, 2007; Matković, 2021).

There are two reasons sufficient, we think, to include the Mandić case into the broader context of prosecution of authors belonging to the Black Wave. Firstly, the article was written in the period when most creative work of Black Wave was in the making and secondly, Mandić was part of a neo-avant-garde artistic circle in Novi Sad that had a similar artistic sensibility as the film-makers.

One must bear in mind here that there is an even greater number of artists who experienced various forms un-institutionalized repression; their films were banned, their reputation ruined, their work obstructed or made impossible (cf. Tirnanić, 2011; DeCuir, 2019; Radosavljević, 2019). Due to such unfavorable circumstances, many authors decided to leave the country and become (half) dissidents (Radosavljević, 2019). As an example of how relentless these informal pressures can be, the tragic life of screen-writer Jugoslav Đorđević may be invoked. Not being able to stand up to the accusations and insinuations (Radosavljević, 2019) he committed suicide during the shooting of the film *Jezero* (1950??).

5. The deviance of Black Wave: its nature and perspectives

When speaking about social deviation in the Black Wave films, one should immediately notice that most of them belong to the category of socio-pathological in a narrow sense of the term, including phenomena such as criminality, addiction, prostitution, loitering, idling, panhandling, gambling, forms of sexual deviations, suicidal and auto-destructive behavior. Moreover, in these films many other socially undesirable phenomena are documented, which can be categorized as social deviation in a broader sense, such as homelessness, unemployment, unbearable living conditions and other social problems, to these we may add: discontent of citizens (social, political, economic) and the various asocial and anti-social tendencies related to these; difficult position of the working class, of minorities, of marginalized groups, of women, of children and juveniles; problems of discrimination; systemic deviations of ruling groups and political institutions; anti-systemic deviations; different social problems related to National Liberation Struggle and to the post World War II period. These phenomena are very heterogeneous by nature proving the worth of the documentary realism of the Black Wave.

To make an additional classification of social deviations represented in the films, some supplementary typologies can be applied. Considering presented themes, it is possible to distinguish: 1) deviations in private life and 2) deviations in the public sphere (governmental and social). In the public sphere, it is possible to distinguish: a) deviations of social functioning in general; b) deviations of state-government apparatus. Considering location 1) urban social deviations and 2) rural social deviations. Considering chronology 1) related to the period of National Liberation Struggle; 2) related to the immediate post-war period; 3) contemporaneous deviations (during the sixties and the beginning of the seventies). Considering approach to the phenomena it is possible to distinguish: 1) documentary realistic representation of socially deviant phenomena without explicit critique; 2) explicit criticism of socially deviant phenomena in Yugoslav society.

But, from the point of view of establishment, the most undesirable deviation represented in these films was political divergence from the dominant ideological course. The ways of representing dissent were various; from a revisionist outlook on pre-war and war history, that is, achievements of the National Liberation Struggle and showing weaknesses of the establishment and party structures, even open political provocation. It was also unpleasant to show various forms of people's discontent, especially that of working class and youth, with Yugoslav society and state by emphasizing disappointment, apathy, disillusion and lack of perspective of individuals and whole groups, as well as protesting, exhibiting revolt and rage. On closer inspection, however subversive presenting deviations in the narrow sense it may seem, one comes to the conclusion that it did not bothered the establishment too much; probably because the priority of the institutions of the state and party was to protect the social order and the regime in power by fostering ideals of optimism, enthusiasm and belief in all-embracing progress of Yugoslav socialist society. These socio-pathological phenomena were considered less dangerous, and, what is more, even tolerable, obviously because their potential to threaten the political system and the values it was based on was minimal.

The "social deviations Black Wave style" manifested themselves in different forms and under heterogeneous influences. Three modalities can be recognized: 1. representing socially deviant phenomena in the films; 2. the film itself understood as a deviant phenomenon; 3. the author as a deviant who threatens the political system. These provide the basis for a conclusion that *there is multiperspectivity of social deviance* connected with the Black Wave. Although there may have been similar tendencies in other artistic movements, Yugoslav Black Wave films, due to emphasized presence of different deviations on multiple levels, are one of the best examples of combined phenomenon of deviance.

It may be concluded the Black Wave made a significant contribution to documenting socially deviant phenomena in socialist Yugoslavia. This contribution gains even more importance if one bears in mind that these phenomena were often covered up and minimized in order to keep up the picture of Yugoslavia as a land of progress, free of social problems. There are good reasons to conclude that the Black Wave films, beside their primary artistic function, are one of the authentic preserved documents about the wide variety of social deviations in Yugoslav society. In the same time they represent compelling evidence of the deviations, due to the nature of the medium and its potential to preserve and convey information as well as its immediacy and vivacity in presenting audio-visual contents. This quality especially becomes prominent in the case of Black Wave documentary films in which the authenticity of the contents becomes verified. It is justified to notice that the phenomenon of Black Wave as one of the most efficient means to document the presence of social deviations in Yugoslav society is an important factor that may contribute to deeper understanding and more detailed exploration of etiological and phenomenological aspects of social deviation in this period of Yugoslav history.

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