YOUTH CULTURE IN TRANSITION: ANALYSES OF FILMS *TILVA ROŠ* AND *KLIP*

by

Jovana Djurovic

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Supervisor: Professor Jasmina Lukić

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the case of two recent Serbian films, *Tilva Roš* (2010) and *Klip* (2012), by analyzing them as examples of coming-of-age genre. Aside from employing conventions of this globally popular cinematic genre, these films also include documentary elements which, on the one hand, differentiate them from most of the famous international coming-of-age films, and link them to previous Yugoslav tradition, on the other. I argue that through employing documentary aesthetic, these films transform coming-of-age story into a socially responsible genre that is engaged with 'transitional culture'. This, furthermore, allows for analyzing youth culture in transition: the ways youth identities are constructed/represented in these two films. Through intersections of identity categories of gender, class and sexuality – as well as generic norms of heteronormativity, oppressive heterosexuality, and nationalism – the analytical part of the thesis illustrates the way protagonists' process of growing up in Serbian transitional society affected their identities, shaped in a deeply gendered and classed social environment. Both the authors and main characters of these films are young, which may suggest reasons to speak of "generational films". Although the history of (post)Yugoslav cinematographies presents us with some examples of youth films, the interpretation of *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* as *socially engaged generational coming-of-age dramas* pinpoints the status of the 'new' in the category of 'new Serbian cinema'. Such interpretation, at the same time, disrupts the national(ist) framework of the category 'New Serbian film' in which films are primarily deemed 'new' in regards to "old Serbian" films of Yugoslav tradition.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This thesis sets out to explore *Tilva Roš/Tilva Rosh* (2010, D: Nikola Ležaić) and *Klip/Clip* (2012, D: Maja Miloš) as Serbian examples of coming-of-age film. Over the last fifteen years, the so-called East European cinematography has presented a number of films portraying post-socialist condition through coming-of-age narratives where adolescents serve as a crucial representational tool.[1] These movies achieve their goal either by re-visioning the socialist past, or engaging with the post-socialist present. Contemporary Serbian filmmakers have engaged in such representational practices as well, by choosing to speak about Serbian 'transitional society' from the perspective of teenagers. My question is: what does this genre allow for post-socialist filmmakers that others do not? What does this tell us about the process of post-socialist transition? It is also noteworthy that most youth films from other, not post-Yugoslav countries of East Europe, relate to the earlier phases of transitional processes. Given the nature of these processes in the former Yugoslav region, where they were partly halted, partly imbricated by the wars of the 1990s it should not come as a surprise that up until recently transitional coming-of-age films were not a prominent film practice there.

Although 'youth film' is an emerging genre in contemporary Serbian culture, films like *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* display certain characteristics, which may suggest reasons to speak about Serbian coming-of-age film as such. On the one hand, by employing documentary elements in

[1] For instance, Romanian films *4 Months, 3 Weeks, and 2 Days/4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile* (2007) and *Beyond the Hills/Dupa dealuri* (2012) by Cristian Mungui; *How I Spent the End of the World/ Cum mi-am petrecut sfarsitul lumii* (2006, D: Catalin Mitulescu); Polish *Hi, Tereska/Czesc, Tereska* (2001, D: Robert Glinski); Hungarian *Bonnie and Clyde of Miskolc/ Miskolci Bonni és Klajd* (2004, D: Krisztina Deák) and *I Love Budapest* (2001, D: Ágnes Incze) etc.

their coming-of-age narratives, these films rely on the Yugoslav cinematographic tradition of the 'Black film', in which documentary poetics served as one of the means of social engagement. On the other hand, the social engagement of *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* implies a dialogue with the context of Serbian 'transitional culture', embedded deeply in gender and class inequalities which are rooted in nationalist discourses that have shaped social relations from the times of Serbia's nation building in the 1980s onwards. Finally, these films are all made by young authors, which points towards a possibility of interpreting them as 'generational films'. With Serbia's recent war history in mind, such 'generational films' indicate not only the specificity of Serbian coming-of-age film, but also the symbolic importance of the 'Second generation', which is supposed to deal/confront with such moral heritage.

By arguing for a new Serbian cinema, this thesis also participates in a broader discussion about cultural and cinematographic frameworks usually associated with post-socialist film. Instead of following the national(ist) paradigm of cinematographic/art categorization, the intention here is to investigate the intersection of post-Yugoslav and East European frameworks, which will allow for a more nuanced approach to the complexities of the current Serbian cultural context. Interdisciplinary and intersectional approach will allow for the complex exploration of following questions: how do young(er) generations deal with communist/socialist heritage, how do they shape their ethics, life aims and choices within a 'transitional', neo-liberal society, do they question their country's past and present, political decisions, and if yes, how etc. In this light, my research can be seen as an attempt of showing how youth culture constructs and represents different cultural identities in a post-conflict, post-socialist, 'transitional' framework. It will contribute to the still scarce discussion on 'transitional culture' as an essential space for re-

creating cultural values and re-thinking concepts of gender, masculinity, heterosexuality and violence in Serbia.

Chapter 1 outlines the most important theories and concepts for analyzing *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*, and for interpreting the way youth culture shapes identities in a transitional, post-conflict and post-socialist cultural framework. The first section outlines the complex intersection between Serbian, post-Yugoslav, and East European frameworks; while the second introduces coming-of-age film as the subgenre of the *Bildungsroman*. It is, furthermore, explained what I mean by Serbian 'transitional culture'. The fourth section establishes the main lines of thinking about youth culture and subcultures in cultural studies; whereas the last section presents some basic concepts and categories, such as gender, class, and sexuality, which will serve as my main analytical tools for the films' interpretation. Chapters 2 and 3 constitute the analytical part of the thesis, in which *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* are analyzed according to the previously described genre features, and with the primary focus on the ways protagonists' identities are being re-shaped while growing up in 'transition'. The last chapter focuses on the usage of violence in these films, as well as it offers an interpretation of what it means for Serbian coming-of-age film to engage with violence as its main subject of matter.

CHAPTER 1: OUTLINING A THEORETICAL CONTEXT

1.1. SERBIAN VS. POST-YUGOSLAV VS. EAST EUROPEAN FILM

My research is based on the recognition of the new kind of Serbian cinema which has emerged over the last five years. It is important to notice how these films speak through a specific genre, which I here posit as a *coming-of-age story* (Schmidt 2002), supported with the documentary poetics, continuing the tradition of some Yugoslav film directors such as Želimir Žilnik.[2] It is in this light that I seek to analyze *Tilva Roš* and *Klip,* which will furthermore allow for drawing conclusions about the youth culture and its relations with the 'transitional culture' in Serbia. Both the authors and main characters of these films are young, which may suggest that there is a reason to speak of "generational films". Moreover, these socially engaged films deal with the period of post-socialism. What is particularly interesting regarding protagonists of these films is how they both are marked by (low/working) class, (coming of) age, subcultural belonging and participation in violent events. Following that, my analysis will focus on gender politics and the use of violence not only because they bring together the protagonists' above mentioned demarcations, but also because they are inherent to some of the main issues of contemporary Serbian 'transitional' society.

In the realms of Serbian film criticism, these films are most typically interpreted through the framework of 'New Serbian Film'. From 2006 onwards many Serbian film critics have recognized the potential in speaking of the novel aesthetic paradigm emerging in recent Serbian films. Some of them have even discussed the possibility of bringing these films together under a

[2] For informing on Žilnik's work see *Uvod u prošlost* (Buden i Žilnik 2013), or Žilnik's website http://www.zilnikzelimir.net/.

unique term of 'New Serbian Film' (see *Zbornik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti* 2011). Nowadays' situation with Serbian film – and culture in general – is rather controversial, or, at best, complicated. On the one hand, there is a great need to nationalize cinematographic/cultural heritage and contemporary cultural production; whereas some groups of critics, cultural organizations and institutions, strongly resist these processes. Simply put, it is a question of "conflicting" Serbian with the post-Yugoslav tradition, which can also be seen in the lights of the dominant anti-Yugoslav and anti-socialist backlash. In this respect, it could be asked: what is the 'old Serbian film' which preceded this 'new' wave? Or, whether this new/old dichotomy is implying the dominant practice of nationalization, which, further on, allows asking what might be its counter-practice?

The term 'New Serbian film' first appeared on the blog[3] of film critic Dimitrije Vojnov in 2007, and since then it has become a wide-spread notion indicating "an aesthetic, media, and author potential" (2011, 410); or as Ivan Velisavljević puts it – 'New Serbian Film' is supposed to channel film workers' *new* practices (i.e. poetics, themes, production), so as to constantly question the national framework, and the cinematographic context: conditions of the production, relation with the mainstream tradition, resistance against the 'Prague film school'[4], and relation with the Yugoslav cinematographic heritage (2011, 419).[5] Additionally, critics who support the

[3] http://dobanevinosti.blogspot.hu/2007/09/kominike-6-novi-srpski-film-i-istorija.html (Last approached May 2014)

[4] Under this phrase film theorists and critics usually assume some of the Serbian (former Yugoslav) film directors, such as Srđan Karanović, Goran Paskaljević, Goran Marković, and Emir Kusturica, who studied film at the Film Academy in Prague.

[5] Given the generality of the features this term/genre implies, movies which belong to the 'New Serbian film' category vary from one critic to another. All of them recognize Stevan Filipović's movie Satan's warrior (Šejtanov ratnik) from 2006 as the beginning of the new paradigm, but not all the films produced from that time onwards belong to the category. Velisavljević, for instance, includes also *The Fourth Man* (*Četvrti čovek*), *Charleston for Ognjenka* (*Čarlston za Ognjenku*), *Miloš Branković*, *Zone of the Dead* (*Zona mrtvih*), *Life and Death of the Porno Gang* (*Život i smrt porno bande*), *The Belgrade Phantom* (*Beogradski fantom*), *The Serbian Movie* (*Srpski film*), *Tilva Roš* and *Edith and I* (*Edit i ja*). For more detailed informing on similarities and differencies among critics defining 'New Serbian film' see *Zbornik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti* 2011.

idea behind the 'New Serbian Film' as a genre point to its strongly present social/political engagement, as well as the post-socialist transition portrayed like an episodic character of these films (2011, 416).

It is, however, important to notice that this notion/genre counts upon the aspect of *rehabilitation* of the Serbian national cinematography in previous Yugoslav tradition. As Vojnov explains: "Representatives of the 'New Serbian Film' are primarily trying to find evidence among the Serbian [read: Yugoslav] film heritage, which will show that serious, communicative, and repertory movies had been produced, parallel with the contemporary world cinema of that time".[6] This, nevertheless, is one of the reasons for my analysis not to rely on the national framework, and not fully on the framework of the 'New Serbian film'. Instead of the national(ist) framework, my interpretative position is located in the intersection of post-Yugoslav and East European frameworks.[7] As affirmed earlier, these 'new films' count on a certain *communication code* with the Yugoslav film tradition, while conversely reclaiming part of the films as rather Serbian than Yugoslav. In his presentation of the term 'New Serbian film'[8], Vojnov, for instance, interprets works of film directors Jovan Jovanović and Jovan Živanović as representatives of the Serbian tradition, regardless the fact that they lived and worked in Yugoslavia.[9] Having in mind the influence of Yugoslav cinematography on movies included in the 'New Serbian Film' category, repossession of the 'Serbian tradition' tells more about (nationalist) ideological moves than it

[6] Dimitrije Vojnov, *Kulturna Politika*, "Oblikovanje Novog srpskog filma" http://starisajt.nspm.rs/kulturnapolitika/2008_vojnov2.htm .

[7] I want to mention here *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas* (2012) whose editor, Aniko Imre, for its main aims states in the „Introduction": a challenge to the nationalistic demarcations of film cultures; bringing into dialogue Europe-wide films and ideologies during and after the Socialist period; and foregrounding the theoretical currency of Eastern European cinemas for a globally conceived film studies (7).

[8] For more details on this conference, see the official transcription in *Zbornik radova Fakulteta dramskih umetnosti* 2011.

[9] For information on Jovanović's works see http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0431270/, and Živanović's filmography at http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0957319/.

tells about the dynamics of cinematographic influence. In that sense, my analysis moves away from such a framing, but recognizes, at the same time, some of the aspects that the term 'New Serbian film' renders indicative of recent Serbian cinematography: social/political engagement with the transitional period in Serbia, similar topics (violence, pornography, post-socialism, youth etc.), documentary poetics, and relations with the Yugoslav film tradition.[10]

Alternatively, Jurica Pavičić's study "Post-Yugoslav Film: Style and Ideology" (2011) introduces a post-Yugoslav framework within which these films can be positioned both historically and aesthetically. In his attempt to illustrate the post-Yugoslav framework, he introduces complexities of Yugoslav cinematography, where some films were produced under a double (local and broader Yugoslav) socio-cultural influence, and others were not (2011, 18). After the breakup of the federal state of Yugoslavia, he notes, post-Yugoslav film productions have started to develop separately, in accordance with the separate political lives new states have started from that time on (2011, 19). In that sense, the aim of the post-Yugoslav framework is to question what consequences the separation had for the new cinematographies, and whether they are more influenced by the Yugoslav heritage, or by the social, political, and cultural contexts they currently "belong to" (Ibid.).

However, Pavičić's book shows certain incompatibilities with my approach to these *new* films. For instance, when he writes about *Tilva Roš*, he only focuses on stylistic analyses and, thus, completely overlooks the concept of ideology (see Jovanović 2012). Still, some aspects of his study are important for developing the framework of my research – such as his thoroughly

[10] A film historian, Jurica Pavičić, describes this *new wave* of Serbian film via set of movies that have similar features: fundamental distancing from the production and stylistic standards of the *middle wave* cinema; combining of featured and documentary poetics; avoiding famous and known actors as protagonists; choosing people extremely from the margins of the society, and looking for bizarre, violent, erotic and pornographic elements (2011, 52).

accumulated data about post-Yugoslav cinematography for, as Nebojša Jovanović notes, this study most certainly indicates Pavičić as a reliable chronicler (2012, 229). Pavičić's use of the phrase "post-Yugoslav film" is also an important move in local film criticism/theory because it stresses that we can speak about post-Yugoslav film in singular without obliterating its inner differences; something impossible if employing the framework of nationalist film/cinematography (2012, 227-8).

In that sense, my analysis will rely on some general notions of Pavičić's typology of post-Yugoslav cinema, but with a critical distance towards his categorization of some films, such as *Tilva Roš*.[11] It could be said that his study relies on a somewhat teleological perspective: always aiming at creating the base for opposing post-Yugoslav to East European cinema. On that matter, Pavičić creates general, unclear and sometimes vague characterizations of post-Yugoslav film types in which he includes films in certain categories as if only for purposes of creating a strong argument of differentiation. According to his logic, *Tilva Roš* belongs to the so-called "films collectives", because it foregrounds an individual within the collective/city/society whose life is represented via complex networks of relations conditioned by the political/social context (Pavičić 2011, 103). More importantly, this type of film is clearly opposed to those East European films whose protagonists are rather living on a margin, finding ways to escape society, whereas post-Yugoslav film protagonists are so embedded in the society that they can never escape from it (Ibid.).

As Jovanović puts it, the very dichotomy of individuals living on the margin and ones being embedded in the society is problematic and arguable: "The dichotomy overlooks the fact

[11] It should be noted that *Klip* is not a part of his book; given that the movie was premiered a year after this book was published.

that most protagonists negotiate their social environment, through which they try to find 'the right balance' between being marginalized and being a part of the collectivity" (2012, 230). Precisely because of this, I will – in a broader sense – use the literary category of *Bildungsroman* when interpreting both films. This category places *Tilva Roš* not in a "film collective" but in a *coming-of-age story* framework in which the protagonist negotiates his identity with the society, in a period of his initiation into the world of grown-ups.

Anikó Imre, in "Angels and Blockers in Recent Eastern and Central European Films" (2007), presents her own typology of East European cinema, based on different representations of masculinity in films. Her classification foregrounds aspects of East European cinema which are not only different than the ones indicated in Pavičić's study, but corresponds very well to some of the aspects of *Tilva Roš* important for my analysis. For instance, the so-called "blockers films" indicate a shift towards representing masculinities "back in the present" – from the 'time' of allegoric masculinity of the idealized past "when manhood was allegedly absolute and unquestionable" (2007, 77), back to the 'presence' of their domestic, everyday environment, "deprived of their nostalgic glow, often in gendered confrontation with women and at a generational war with their adolescent offspring" (2007, 78). Placing *Tilva Roš* in a broader context of East European cinema challenges Pavičić's study and his attempt to differentiate East European and post-Yugoslav post-socialist cinema with clear division. However, this does not place Imre's typology as a primary framework of this research, rather it serves to indicate the complexities and nuances of shared themes/topos' of post-socialist experience in cinema.

1.2. THE *COMING-OF-AGE STORY* AND THE *BILDUNGSROMAN*

In order to negotiate between frameworks of post-Yugoslav and East European film, it is necessary to introduce the *coming-of-age story*, a genre seen here as the indicator of difference in recent Serbian film, usually referred to as 'New Serbian film'.[12] With the analyses of *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* in this research, I seek to show in which way the *coming-of-age story* – being engaged with the subject of violence especially – becomes a socially responsible movie genre and how that, in relation to the inherited film tradition, positions these films as *new* and *different*. These movies, on the one hand, move away from what Imre reckons as "the 'artistic character' of East European cinema [from 1990s onwards] – *Eurocentric* male or masculine intellectual's attempt to process national history in a sophisticated, self-reflexive, allegorical film style" (2005, xii, my emphasis) – but also from two dominant discourses of the early transition period: anticommunist revisionism and hedonistic commercial films based on the celebration of the young consumerist society (Pavičić 2011, 86). On the other hand, this *new wave* of Serbian films diverges also from so called *films of self-Balkanization* grounded on "hopeless repetition of masculine stereotypes, […] represent[ing] post-Yugoslav space as a zone where distortions of extreme passions strive to satisfy the imaginary demand for violence coming from the Western Eye" (Longinović 2005, 46); a category which includes directors such as Srđan Dragojević and Emir Kusturica, from whom representatives of the 'New Serbian film' want to distance themselves. Still, how does a *coming-of-age story* come into the picture here?

In a theoretical sense, *coming-of-age story* does not have a solid genre definition. It could be described as a subgenre of *Bildungsroman*: a literary genre emerging in West-European

[12] My analysis here bases on two chosen films: *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*. However, recent Serbian cinematography presents us with some more examples of the *coming-of-age stories*, and its generic variations: for instance, *Skinning* (*Šišanje*) from 2010, and *S/tripping* (*S/kidanje*) from 2013.

literatures at the turn of the 18th century, which centers on a young (male) protagonist, who after a number of misapprehensions and disappointments *makes his peace* with the world (Jakobs i Krauze 2000, 396). This reconciliation with the world at the end of the novel is always portrayed with some dosage of irony; therefore the hero is all the time aware of his experience being a journey of *discovering his place in the world* (Ibid.). At the same time, the genre of *coming-of-age story* depends on a more precisely defined protagonist – s/he has to be an adolescent, whose age is his/her main characteristic.[13] In that sense, *coming-of-age story* is more about youth culture and its conflicts/contradictions with the parent/grown-up culture, than it is about traditional cultural values on which one grounds his/her spiritual being, something usually associated with the term *Bildung* (2000, 281). As adapted to the medium of film, from the 1970s onwards, this genre was primarily dominant in the American cinema (see Schmidt 2002). *Coming-of-age film* covers a wide range of themes and motives:

> The emergence of contemporary youth cultures, the breakdown of intergenerational norms, the crises of modern family life, the commodification of 'youth' and 'youthfulness' in the media and consumer marketplace, […] the redefinitions of gender roles, the ethnic revival, the increases in child poverty, the rising incidences of juvenile crime and violence, and, more generally, the individual's struggle for self-realization in a modern culture that is fragmented, uncertain, sometimes tragic, and often painful to grow up in.
>
> (Schmidt 2002, 11)

Schmidt traces the emergence of youth, as a new sociological formation, constructed and appropriated by the Hollywood cinema, back in the 1950s when a new, age-specific market was recognized in the youth (2002, 1). Film theoreticians Greg DeCuir and Imre (2012, 9) give a

[13] According to the *Free Dictionary Encyclopedia*, the term *coming-of-age* implies not only (legal/social) maturation when a child turns 18 or 21 years, but rests on a much more complex set of psychological characteristics of adolescents who are transitioning from the state of childhood into adulthood. Some societies even include certain 'rites of passages' in this process, but most usually it is followed *only* with the phenomenon of the adolescent culture. (http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Coming+of+age#cite_note-1)

simplified, and to some extent stereotypical, view of the Yugoslav film of that time. Namely, in accordance with the dominant political/social ideology of communism, Yugoslavia in that period produced the partisan film as a popular genre. Not long after, due to the country's delineation from the Stalinist communist regime, the Sixth Party Congress of Yugoslavia rejected 'socialist realism' as the paradigmatic form of artistic representation, which opened up a space for the 'Black Wave' movement (films of Dušan Makavejev, Aleksandar Petrović, Živojin Pavlović and Želimir Žilnik) in 1960s and early 1970s to "question the partisans in power through mocking the partisan film" (Imre 2012, 9). Such a claim is not only questionable, but rather incorrect. As Jovanović (2014) stresses in his writing, characterization of the Partisan film as 'spectacular', popular genre that promoted the regime belongs to a 'totalitarian paradigm' of representing Yugoslav socialist cinematographic experience in post-socialist domains of arts and culture. This representational practice grounds on a stereotypical dichotomy of 'propaganda vs. art' according to which 'Black film' becomes an 'artistic' response to a totalitarian Partisan propaganda (Jovanović 2014; 2011). Moreover, not only is 'Black wave' a wrong reduction of the whole 'New wave' of Yugoslav cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, but it is also appropriated as such for the means of the totalitarian paradigm (2014, 5). Circumstances surrounding both Partisan film and 'Black film' in Yugoslavia were much more complex, for both film practices were followed by series of public critical debates that constantly questioned their production (Jovanović 2014; 2011). For the purposes of this thesis, 'Black film' will represent not the 'New wave' cinematographic practice, but rather films of above listed directors.

Since the very beginning of the classic Yugoslav cinematography in late 1940s, youth was an important motive of the social representation.[14] Although it lacked a serious, skillful construction in films' narratives, the youth in the classic Yugoslav cinema occupied an important symbolic space. However, one of the first commercial Yugoslav films that represented youth culture was *Love and Fashion* (*Ljubav i moda*) from 1960 (Dimitrijević 2011, 172). 'Black film', in that sense, does not introduce the youth as an important (or a commercial) theme; it rather presents them as a resourceful social formation for problematizing the society – i.e. *Newsreel on Village Youth* (1967), *Little Pioneers* (1968) and some others by Želimir Žilnik, or *Young and Beautiful like a Rose* (1971) by Jovan Jovanović.[15] Furthermore, engagement with the youth, and with documentary poetics, combined with social/political criticism, shaped some of the most important generic features of 'Black Wave' cinema. Precisely these elements of the inherited film tradition can be recognized in the movies of recent Serbian cinematography; more specifically, in *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*, which I here analyze as representatives of the new Serbian *coming-of-age cinema*.

As I stated at the beginning of this section, one of the lines of my inquiry follows the way of *coming-of-age story* becoming a socially responsible genre in these two films, enabling authors to embed certain levels of social/political engagement with the period of post-socialist (late) *transition* in Serbia.[16] Again, given the nature of this genre – briefly outlined previously in

[14] Parts about the classic Yugoslav cinema are based on the public lecture "Kako se kalila ljubav" (How love was being congealed) Nebojša Jovanović gave at the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade (May 2014). See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-KgPdA0eXA

[15] It should be noted that other cultural forms, such as literature, have – in that time – shown great interest in the youth as its symbolic resource. The emergence of a whole new literary genre, specific for the Yugoslav literature of the 1970s – *Jeans-prose* as Aleksandar Flaker (1976) names it – presented a type of story very similar to the one of *Bildungsroman*, or the *coming-of-age story*: focused specifically on the protagonist, narrated from the personal, first voice position, and dealing mostly with the *problems* of the youth culture.

[16] Schmidt concludes on the topic of the modern youth films in the American cinema: „Because of their characteristic focus of the rites of childhood and the adolecent's or young adult's struggle to reconcile their passions and ideals with

this section – *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* rely on its conventions when they employ subjects from youth (skate and turbo-folk) subcultures, transition, and generational clashes between protagonists' culture and the one of their parents. Moreover, the importance of youth as a theme and social formation appropriated by this new cinema, lies on yet another symbolic level – as the motive indicative of the 'transitional culture'.

Franco Moretti (1987), in his book on *Bildungsroman* understood as a symbolic form, gives youth an important *role* in the discourses of modern Western culture. Following Karl Mannheim's idea about the phenomenon of youth in 'stable communities' – where being young means nothing more than being biologically immature – Moretti speaks about the status of the youth in societies in crisis (1987, 4). Although it seems rather hard (maybe even impossible) to define a 'stable community' as opposed to the 'society in crisis', the status of the youth in Moretti's interpretation seems very indicative of transitional societies. In societies where labor practices are changing uncontrollably fast, the act of socialization becomes a *problem* in a way that it makes the youth fundamentally problematic (Ibid.). Again, due to the "Western understanding"[17] of transition as a process that asks of its subjects to 'learn' *once again* how to live the freedom they gained (see Buden 2012) – as I explain further on – it could be said how the subject of 'transitional culture' becomes inevitably constructed as one that (politically and symbolically) has to come-of-age. This, I believe, shows another aspect of these films, by which they not only transform the *coming-of-age story* into a socially responsible genre, but also

those of the adult social order, youth films have been especially well suited for exploring the vicissitudes of social identities and ideologies at various moments of time" (2002, 11).

[17] Buden in his book keeps the West/East dichotomy on which he bases the interpretation of post-communist discourse on transition; he illustratively refers to the „Western viewers of democratic revolutions in the Eastern Europe" (2012, 50). Operating in such Cold-War-epistemological binaries goes along the lines with my interest to speak about the East European framework/cinematography.

differentiate themselves from the previous Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav cinematographic tradition.

1.3. TRANSITIONAL CULTURE AND/OR POST-SOCIALISM

'Transitional culture' is here understood as a symbolic practice deriving from socio-political processes of transition from the socialist/communist to the post-socialist/neoliberal society (ideology); followed by economic collapse, the closing of state-owned factories, high unemployment rate, and workers' strikes. As a socio-political phenomenon, *transition* refers to abrupt political changes of the late 20th century, when East European societies had overthrown their autocratic regimes, and hence started a process of building democratic societies. Pavle Jovanović, in his study on post-communist[18] transition – *Transitionism* (2006) – defines this process as ultimately twofold. On the one hand, it is a transition from one-party ideological monopoly to a multi-party competing democracy; on the other, a transition from planned state economy to open market economy (based on the private property and profit) (2006, 19). Although transitions from autocratic towards liberal democratic societies have already been witnessed in the previous century – i.e. some Latin-American countries – East European revolutions in 1989 were a precedent of a kind for it was the first time in modern history that a transition from autocracy to democracy was followed by a transition from command to market economy (2006, 20).

[18] When I discuss Jovanović's and, later on, Buden's conception, I will refer to the notion of post-communism because it is the term they apply in their studies. In other parts of the thesis I refer to the transitional context of Serbia as post-socialism, because Yugoslavia was officially self-represented as a socialist republic – Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.

This indicates two things: the importance of (neo-liberal) capitalism for transitional processes in East European countries, and the role of the state in regulating these simultaneous, political and economic, processes. With this in mind, it should not come as a surprise that main focuses of analyzing 'transitional culture' here will be those of class positioning, gender politics that go along with it, and different forms of violence – symbolically seen as acts of socialization in *transitional* social arrangements marked by a dramatic change from the state-regulated to a *wild* and unregulated market economy. According to Jovanović, as opposed to some 'successful' Western societies who had initially developed and strengthened capitalism before they started with processes of democratization; the post-communist transition to democracy becomes, at the same time, a transition into 'capitalism' (2006, 42-3). This then implies two opposed, yet simultaneous, logics crucial for the post-communist transition: democracy which mobilizes people and capitalism which socially differentiates them (Ibid.).

It is important to notice that post-communist transition takes place in times of neo-liberal hegemony which, according to Jovanović, triumphed in the East where during the transition its various 'recipes' could be tried out (2006, 124). Given that neoliberalism, can be defined in various ways, depending on the viewer's perspective, thus it serves as an empty signifier in which people inscribe the meaning they want to; this thesis relies on a rather strict definition by Marc Olssen:

> Whereas classical liberalism represents a negative conception of state power in that the individual was to be taken as an object to be freed from the interventions of the state, neo-liberalism has come to represent a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation. In classical liberalism, the individual is characterized as having an autonomous human nature and can practice freedom. In neo-liberalism the state seeks to create an individual who is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur. […] In the shift from classical liberalism to neo-liberalism, then, there is a further element added, for such a

> shift involves a change in subject position from 'homo economicus', who naturally behaves out of self-interest and is relatively detached from the state, to 'manipulatable man', who is created by the state and who is continually encouraged to be 'perpetually responsive'.[19]

Olssen's definition is important because he writes from the perspective of education, which is close to the perspective chosen here: I talk about growing up, education and maturation on different levels.

Boris Buden in his book on the ideology of post-communism, *Transition Zone* (2012),[20] by interpreting post-communism as a condition – "a change whose meaning goes beyond the idea of social transformation" – brings the philosophical dimension into play (183). It could be said that such philosophical inquiry brings together political, social and ideological levels of the post-communist condition in the form of a certain 'cultural logic'; logic that I here suggest calling 'transitional culture'. Furthermore, his study is important because it frames a transitional discourse about East European post-communist culture in a broader discourse of Western modernization, which constitutes liberal-democratic explanations of these countries' socialist/communist past. Thus, it shows how the notion of post-communism relies on political assumptions about transitioning towards liberal-democracy, and the Western cultural idea of modernization. Nested in a complex relationship between the socialist/communist past and the potential liberal-democratic future of East European countries, *post-communist condition can be recognized as a collective feeling of loss*. However, this should not be understood as the loss of a

[19] See Olssen "In Defense of the Welfare State and of Publicly Provided Education", *Journal of Education Policy* 11 (May 1996), 340. Quoted in Apple (2006).
[20] In original *Zone des Übergangs: Vom Ende des Postkommunismus*, I bring it here in my own translation from the Serbian edition, *Zona prelaska* (Beograd: Fabrika knjiga 2012).

social system, but rather as the loss of the fundamental experience of the *social* itself (Buden 2012, 182).

Buden talks about a political theory that engages with explaining the post-communist transformation, through a political jargon known as 'transition to democracy'. Because it lacks a specific post-communist political subject and political system, post-communism in political theory is analyzed strictly through the concept of transition to democracy, a concept coming from the very discipline of transitology based on a cynical idea "that people who had won their freedom, first have to learn how to truly enjoy it" (2012, 42). This 'learning' to live the freedom of liberal-democratic ideology echoes some of the political jargon concerning post-communist transformation: *upbringing for democracy*, *democracy examinations*, *school of democracy* or *democracy that grows and becomes more mature* (2012, 39).[21] People who live and reproduce values in transitional societies are seen as children, as ideal subjects of the new, democratic beginning, because just like a child they are unburdened by the past and opened to the future. The child "obliterates all the contradictions […] and foremost a contradiction between the master and subjected" (2012, 40-1). Going back to the *coming-of-age* genre, it seems a suitable form for these films to communicate not only questions and problems of the youth culture, but also complexities of the post-socialist, transitional society, understood as constantly in the process of *bringing-up*, and modernizing itself for the *Western Eyes*.

Importantly, Serbian 'transitional culture' cannot be understood in its full complexity without reference to its political, and primarily post-conflict, framework. Because of the massive

[21] This childly-metaphorical language in political theory about transition was first introduced by Dejan Jović in his presentation „Problems of Anticipatory Transition Theory: from 'transition from...' to 'transition to...'" at the congress *The Concept of Transition* organized in Zagreb in 2000 (2012, 39). Buden uses it in his book to support his argument about the repressive *infantilization* of post-communist societies.

crimes committed by the Serbian side during the post-Yugoslav wars,[22] moral guilt and responsibility are (or should be) a legacy that nowadays' cultural (re)production is based upon. As Nenad Dimitrijević (2011) and Dejan Ilić (2009) emphasize in their writing on transitional justice and cultural politics, current Serbian culture is marked by the crimes committed in post-Yugoslav wars. Thus, Ilić suggests that a legal/political concept of 'transitional justice' (2009, 163) represents an appropriate framework for thinking about 'transitional culture'. A society that points to democratic intentions must decide whether political, legal, and social confrontation with the country's criminal past has to be part of its transitional processes (Dimitrijević 2009, 137). If the new elites intend to lead the country toward its 'democratic future', their aims will be inevitably positioned in opposition to the previous, socialist ones (2009, 137-8). Following that logic, the new elites should deal with the former government's heritage: the war crimes committed by the Serbian side during the post-Yugoslav wars. Given that transitional justice's tools from the 2000s onward have not produced the expected results (Ilić 2010, 8-9), it could be said that Serbia at the present is still deeply marked by its conflictual past.

In that sense, it is important to question whether these new films have a relationship with Serbia's conflict ridden past – especially because they engage with the subject of violence – and if not, what does that tell us about young(er) generations' shaping of their future in a 'transitional' Serbia. Is a disassociation from the post-conflict narratives present because authors search for a unique *generational voice*; or because such narratives suppress contemporary problems of the neo-liberal (market) economy and poverty? All this signals the importance of

[22] For more information on post-Yugoslav wars in the 1990s see *Balkan Babel: the disintegration of Yugoslavia from the death of Tito to the fall of Milošević* (Ramet 2002); *Yugoslavia : a state that withered away* (Jović 2009), etc.

every described element of 'transitional culture' for starting to answer complex questions about the youth culture in transition.

1.4. YOUTH CULTURE AND SUBCULTURE(S)

Previously, this chapter has introduced *coming-of-age story* as one of the fundamental features of the movies *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*. Not only is it important for interpreting their nuanced delineations from the previous Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav film traditions, but – by applying some elements of documentary poetics – this genre allows authors to problematize social reality of Serbian 'transitional culture', and the ways such a context speaks to the youth culture, and its subcultural forms. This section establishes the main theoretical lines of thinking about concepts of youth culture and subculture; also, this section sets up my own positioning toward these concepts, given the complex terminological debate about youth cultural dynamics following main works of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (see Nilan and Feixa 2006).

When I talk about youth culture in Serbia, I refer to different cultural identities in a post-conflict, post-socialist, 'transitional' framework. The idea is to analyze how identities of young people are being constructed and represented in these two films, by using analytical categories of gender, class, and sexuality. It should be said that youth as a concept has, since the time it occupied a central position in the theoretical spheres of cultural studies, expanded its range of meanings: there is no bounded age cohort anymore, *rites of passage* have lost their previous importance for young person's maturation, and the corporeality of youth has seen its end (today being young is not strictly a matter of age anymore, but rather of social standing) (Nilan and Feixa, 2006, 6). All this indicates a somewhat softer conceptualization than was the case with

cultural studies' postwar research on the youth, where the youth was usually taken as the fundamental sites of resistance against the dominant groups in the society. As I will show in the analytical part of my thesis, youth culture is understood here as "fragmented, hybrid and transcultural" (Canevacci in Nilan and Feixa 2006, 6), rather than as a loci of resistant meaning production. The fact that the youth culture represented/constructed in *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* does not generate forms of resistance implies strong levels of youth commodification by dominant ideologies, both locally (in Serbian 'transitional culture') and globally (through importing elements of subcultural styles).

Still, cultural studies offer suitable theoretical tools for my analysis here, because they bring together Marxist political theory and structural semiotics, thus insisting on the category of class and its fundamental importance for cultural production (Rivkin and Ryan 2004, 1233). Cultural studies scholars and practitioners see culture as inherently political and, also, as a means for reproducing social hierarchies. Since the field of culture is conceived of heterogeneously, there is space for the analysis of different subcultures and their role in resisting the dominant culture. Precisely because of its insistence on class struggles and social hierarchies I choose to speak of subcultures rather than *lifestyles* (Miles 2000), or *post-subcultures* (Muggleton 2002); for I count these features among the vital problems of 'transitional culture'.

Dick Hebdige's study *Subcultures: the Meaning of Style* (1979) is one of the seminal works on subcultures in cultural studies. Through style, Hebdige explains, youth subcultures challenge the hegemony of the dominant groups/classes (1979, 17). For him, intentional communication, homology, and a signifying practice, are one of the most important features of the subcultural meaning production. Or as John Storey interprets it: "Through patterns of

behavior, ways of speaking or taste in music, youth subcultures engage in symbolic forms of resistance to both dominant and parent cultures" (1996, 120). Style is a signifying practice which communicates both cultural identity and difference (Ibid.). By employing the method of semiotics – a way of reading signs as texts – Hebdige introduces a novel perspective to doing analysis on subcultures: focusing primarily on the politics of style.

Phil Cohen (2005), on the other hand, focuses his research exclusively on class politics. For him, working-class youth subcultures represent attempts of solving the problems experienced by the parent culture. His most important article, "Subcultural Conflict and Working-class Community" [1972], is based on one main premise: from the mid-1950s, the working class had been confronted with two contradictory discourses: the new ideology of affluence and the traditional demands of the working-class lifestyle (in Storey 1996, 117). It is this symbolic conflict that youth subcultures are supposed to *solve*, point to, and question. Although his study relies on a particular British working-class context of the 1970s; it may be telling of the complexities and contradictions the (former socialist) working class confronts with in the 'transitional culture' of Serbia today. Essentially, a matter of the 'second generation', symbolically resolving problems of the previous (parent) one, is in my analysis indicative not only of the subcultural semiotic inquiry; it is also important for questions of confronting, and resolving, the country's violent and conflictuous past, marked by massive war crimes during the 1990s (see Dimitrijević 2009).

Finally, Angela McRobbie in her writings on girls' subcultures stresses some fundamental lacks in the previous works of (male) cultural studies' theoreticians, starting from equating subcultures with youthfulness, hence with the youth in resistance which refuses to conform to the

commercial tastes of the majority (in Storey 1996, 120); to the complete overlooking of the concepts of gender and sex, *allowing* consequently the term 'subculture' to acquire strictly 'masculine tones' (McRobbie 2000, 13-4). For the purpose of my inquiry, McRobbie's research on working-class girls' culture (from the late 1970s Britain) can be especially resourceful, because it focuses on family, school, and leisure as symbolic spaces where female identities are constructed, with regards to class, but more significantly to gender and sexuality.

1.5. IDENTITY CATEGORIES

Having introduced theories and concepts important for analyzing youth culture in these two films, it is now necessary to outline some of the concepts that bring together youth identities, protagonists' subcultural belonging, and their relationship with the social context. 'Transitional culture' shapes different forms of youth identities in these films, through a mutual interplay/interdependence of categories of gender, class and/or sexuality. Given the complexity of Serbian 'transitional culture' itself, based not only on post-socialist transitional processes, but also war conflicts as a way of pursuing nowadays' Serbian nation-state, a concept of the nation is also introduced here, as one that "mediates the relation between subjects and states" (Verdery 1996, 62).

Both gender and nation are deemed cultural – arbitrary – constructs, which through their utilization in social life become 'socially real' (Verdery 1996, 62) and, through multiple (patriarchal/nationalist) ideological moves, naturalized as *given* and *unchangeable*. Tamar Mayer's (2000) conceptualization of reciprocal relations between gender and sexuality, on the one side, and nation and state on the other, is of crucial importance here. She understands it as a

process of repetition of accepted norms and behaviors which re-creates the 'privileged' nation (2000, 5). In other words, practicing norms and behaviors such as reproduction, militarism, heroism, and heterosexuality, constructs one's gender identity but, at the same time, guards and reproduces the privileged nation and its demarcation of the *Other* (Ibid.).

In a similar way, theoreticians examine heteronormativity as an implied norm that maintains inequality between men and women:

> The suite of cultural, legal, and institutional practices that maintain normative assumptions that there are two and only two genders, that gender reflects biological sex, and that only sexual attraction between these 'opposite' genders is natural and acceptable.
>
> (Schilt and Westbrook 2009, 441).

Following that, heterosexuality indicates complexity of power relations within sexuality; conventional heterosexual practices suggest that relations of dominance and submission are neither natural nor inevitable, but results from the hierarchical ordering of gender (Jackson 1996, 23). All these notions are of fundamental importance for analyzing *Klip*'s protagonist's (female) turbo-folk identity – for instance, its rootedness in nationalism that shaped the turbo-folk genre from the 1990s onwards (see Grujić 2009) – on the one hand, and heterosexual activity which organizes social relations in the movie, on the other.

Tilva Roš, in a different vein, asks for the concept of masculinity, and its intersections with categories of class and femininity. For the purposes of this thesis, I will explore different forms of masculinity – shaped and (re)structured by the 'transitional culture' – through using R. W. Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and Paul Willis' studies on working-class masculinities. Connell's concept was formulated as a 'cultural ideal', suggesting embodiment of

the (currently) most honored way of being a man, while, at the same time, requiring all other masculinities to subordinate (2005, 832). Thus, hegemonic masculinity includes 'nonhegemonic' groups and patterns of masculinity (2005, 847-8), and it can be defined as a hybrid bloc that unites practices from diverse masculinities for the purpose of reproducing patriarchy (Demetriou 2001, 337). Willis, on the other hand, presents us with different studies on shop floor and youth working-class masculinities which indicate the importance of hard labor and economic circumstances for asserting masculine identities (see 2006, 1990). Finally, Cohen's study on subcultures in working-class communities (2005), serve as a useful source for framing youth culture and its masculinities in this film.

My analysis, among other things, aims to show the relationship between subcultural belonging and violence, and how violence represents an act of socialization or adaptation to social arrangements of the 'grown-up world'. As I will show in the last chapter, violence in these two films comes in different forms – physical, symbolic, psychological, or group (massive) violence. As a theme, violence here indicates certain disassociations from previous film traditions, and from dominant narratives about post-conflict society. Namely, these films represent violence not as something closely, and exclusively, related to nationalism and/or poverty; but rather as a form of assimilation to broader social arrangements of Serbian 'transitional culture'.

In the case of *Tilva Roš*, these social arrangements could be seen as consequences of the dramatic transition from the command to the market economy – if the rule of the market economy turns out to be 'the law of the stronger', violence seems as an appropriate way of accepting the violence of the market. In *Klip*, however, we see social arrangements as based on

heteronormative and heterosexist relations which, through a subculture of turbo-folk, signify residuals of the early Serbian transition, marked with armed conflicts and omnipresent nationalist narratives. Given all this, it should not come as a surprise that social patterns in these films can analytically be classified via categories of gender and class, and other generic norms – heteronormativity, (hetero)sexuality, nation(alism) – closely related to them, in structuring social hierarchies.

This research relies on two main methods: narrative (analysis of the film narrative: sequence of events, characters/narrators, point(s) of view), and critical discourse analysis (with particular focus on concepts of power, hegemony, exclusion and representation). Following chapters illustrate the ways *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* function as the Serbian version of coming-of-age film, by employing documentary elements through which they engage critically with the context of transitional culture, in which, again, violence is seen as an important part of protagonists' growing up. Analyses of films' narratives will furthermore allow for drawing conclusions about the youth culture in transition, and the way young(er) generation is constructed it in youth films. Youth identities shaped in a deeply gendered and classed transitional context will in these chapters be analyzed through identity categories outlined in this section.

CHAPTER 2: *TILVA ROŠ*

Tilva Roš is a movie about a young man, Toda, and his coming-of-age in Serbia. The boy's process of coming of age is closely linked with the specific context of his hometown Bor. This settlement was one of the richest industrial towns in former Yugoslavia, and the vast majority of local men worked in the mining industry. 'Tilva Roš' in the Vlach language means "red hill". It was the first ore reservoir on which Bor founded its mining industry. In the film, this hill represents the (glorious) past of the town, when Bor had had the biggest copper mine in Europe. In the post-socialist Serbia, where the neoliberal market has been established, Bor has become one of the poorest and least developed towns of the country. Its mining industry, which was the main source of work for its citizens in Yugoslavia, does not exist anymore.

Toda and Stefan represent the 'skate culture' in Bor. The film portrays these boys with their friends from the skating group *Kolos* enjoying their last 'high school summer'. Toda's father, a worker in a state mining factory, which is going through a rather complicated process of privatization, in the film represents the Serbian working class and its worldviews. Toda's friend Stefan could be best described as Toda's 'converse' in the film narrative, who has different, often opposite, opinions and points of view than Toda. After finishing high school, Toda stays in Bor to search for a job, while Stefan continues his education in Belgrade. Stefan's father is a high ranked local politician whose beliefs and concrete behavior are closely tied to the neoliberal paradigm.

2.1. DOCUMENTARY POETICS

The first chapter has introduced the main lines of my inquiry, in regards to which it has outlined the primary focuses of analyzing *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* as examples of Serbian coming-of-age films. What is important to pay attention to is the way these films, through employing documentary poetics, modify the coming-of-age film into a socially engaged genre. Although traces of engaged cinema speaking through documentary drama lead back to the 'Black wave' tradition, as I explained in the previous chapter, these two films apply documentary poetics in different ways. I will here focus on the way *Tilva Roš* employs some strategies that can be recognized in movies of Želimir Žilnik (1942), a pioneer of documentary film and docudrama in the Yugoslav film tradition, also one of the few directors from that era still active today.

Žilnik's engaged cinema is still considered unique. As Dominika Prejdova notes, the action in his movies comes from the way he associates people's individual destinies with their environment.[23] Crucial theme of his work is the relationship between ideology and its effects on people's lives, which is why his protagonists always come from the margins of society: street children, workers, homeless people, unemployed people, transvestites etc. Even when he makes docudramas, his protagonists are not actors, but 'actual' people from the hinges of society who play themselves. One of the most famous examples is his movie *Marble Ass* (*Mramorno dupe*) from the 1995, featuring a Belgrade transvestite Merlinka.[24] This film employs most of the elements that could be identified in *Tilva Roš*: mixing of documentary and fictional scenes, protagonists who play themselves, and the dialectic relationship between people's lives and their social environment as the main subject matter.

[23] When I speak about Žilnik's film in this section, I rely on Dominika Prejdova's text, available at http://www.zilnikzelimir.net/socially-engaged-cinema-according-zelimir-zilnik.

[24] For more information of this film see Kevin Moss (2002) „Yugoslav transgendered heroes: *Virgina* and *Marble Ass*", *REČ* 67/13 (http://fabrikaknjiga.co.rs/rec/67/347.pdf).

In the interviews[25] Nikola Ležaić, the director of *Tilva Roš*, has given for some international festivals, he explains how the idea for *Tilva Roš* was initiated by a real *You-tube* video, *CRAP: Pain is Empty*. This video was created by Toda and Stefan, and in it they perform various acts of harm and self-harm according to the *Jackass* aesthetics. In the movie, Toda and Stefan play themselves; they are not professional actors, and sequences of *CRAP* are also included as parts of the film's narrative.[26] In a way, the story about these two characters is a story about their real lives; therefore the movie's plotline develops on two levels: *fictional* and *real*.

The opening scene introduces several things important for my analysis here: documentary poetics, the boys' subcultural identities, and the story of 'Tilva Roš' hill. The movie opens with Stefan centered in the cadre preparing for a trick of sliding down into a hole, recorded with the handy cam by Toda, as we discover soon after. Due to the raw, untreated sound, and the shake of the camera, one gets the impression of a documentary footage. However, after some time, the camera moves away from Stefan and employs a wider cadre in which viewers witness the previously anticipated situation – Toda recording Stefan – which tells us that the documentary footage from the very beginning is actually part of a featured, fictional film. Right after the opening scene we see the 'original' documentary footage, a sequence of the boys' video *CRAP*. Thus, different types of documentary elements are introduced, which serves as a way of linking the boys' actual histories/lives with the fictional elements in the movie; their past with the fictional presence of the last summer they are spending together in Bor. It also renders essential the subcultural belonging represented in the movie via trick performances of the main protagonists. As I will show later on, the subculture they participate in should be seen as a

[25] See, for instance, an interview for the Estoril Film Festival in Portugal. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g92G4DqN9oI

[26] See *You-tube* video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IyWCqph6qAo.

mixture of two different global forms of subcultures (American '*Jackass* lifestyle' and 'skate culture') on the one hand, and local hegemonic elements of the 'transitional culture' on the other.

Apart from the documentary elements, the opening scene also introduces a story of the hill 'Tilva Roš', with Stefan explaining it to Toda who is behind the camera, a moment before performing a trick. The fact that viewers learn the story in the opening scene, implies not only the film's social engagement with the transitional context – after all, the movie is named after the hill – but also the importance of bringing together a socially engaged framework with the boys performing their skate/Jackass tricks; and, in that sense, linking 'transitional culture' with the status of the youth in it. Going back to Žilnik, his strategy of producing action exclusively from the dialectics of people's lives and their social environment evokes elements of *Tilva Roš* outlined in this section as symbolically introduced with the opening scene.

2.2. TODA'S COMING-OF-AGE

In order to read *Tilva Roš* as a Serbian variation of the coming-of-age film, one must interpret conventions of the coming-of-age genre as the intersection of the transitional, post-socialist context, and the boys' identities. This section, in that sense, analyzes the 'growing-up' of the parent's generation – being subjects of transition from the socialist to the post-socialist society – and boys' coming-of-age. However, even though the film is based on following Toda's and Stefan's friendship during their last high school summer, the film's narrative subtly and gradually centers Toda as a main protagonist. All other characters, including Stefan and their friends, as well as their parents, are in function of 'directing' Toda's coming-of-age. Throughout the movie, Toda increasingly changes; he re-adapts different forms of his masculine identity: in the

beginning he (rebelliously) delineates himself from his father's worldviews, and embraces a subcultural group identity. With Dunja entering the picture – she comes back from France and 'intervenes' in his and Stefan's friendship – Toda slowly begins to separate from Stefan and her, realizing his marginal position both in their skating group and in society. Following that line, Toda's process of coming-of-age is interpreted here through 1) the intersection of parents' and boys' generation, and 2) the motive of a 'love triangle'.

2.2.1. THE INTERSECTION OF GENERATIONS

As indicated in the previous chapter, one of the main aspects of the coming-of-age genre is presenting the youth culture and its relations/contradictions with the parent's culture. I will here illustrate the way fathers (older generation) in the film struggle to adapt to the new conditions, by focusing on class distinction and the types of work they do. Furthermore, I analyze the way their sons (young generation) create their own understanding of the 'transitional culture'; in regards to which I will interpret a unique form of the skate subculture that the boys in the film belong to. The intersection of the generations, via two fathers and two sons, serves here for mapping different masculine identities, their generational differences, and, finally, for tracing the way Toda separates from everyone, embracing his marginal position and appropriating the rules of the 'grown-up world'.

2.2.2. FATHERS

Throughout the movie, Toda's and Stefan's fathers appear only in several scenes, for – like other characters – they are primarily instrumental to the boys' growing-up.[27] However, Toda's father,

[27] It is interesting how in the film we find about Stefan's father's name – Ljuba – while Toda's father throughout the film is only referred to as 'father'. One can then conclude how this metaphorically implies fathers' opposite masculine identities – as a representative of the neoliberal paradigm, Ljuba has an individual name, while Toda's

in accordance with Toda's central position in the narrative, occupies more space than Ljuba. Features of the fathers' masculine identities are intrinsically related to the ways their sons perceive and construct their own identities. Two elements are important for mapping the fathers' masculinities here, 1) their different relation to the 'project' of transition, and 2) their belonging to different classes, which implies performances of different types of work. Clearly, all elements support and reinforce each other through the fathers' relations with other people.

1) Toda's father is a middle-aged man who works in a foundry, a factory which, like many former state factories, is going through a complicated process of privatization. This means that his job, as well as his family's livelihood, is under a threat. This situation can be related to Verdery's explanation of the process of privatization in post-socialism: „In each country the groups acquiring control over former state enterprises had slightly different compositions and different intermixtures of foreign capital, but in all, those who benefited the most were the former bureaucratic and managerial apparatus of the party-state" (1996, 212-3). Moreover, due to the privatization of the foundry, the basic element of Toda's father's (working-class) identity – a practice of labor performed outside of the home – gradually disappears. Given the fact that working-class man's identity is inextricable from his everyday practice of labor (see Willis 2006), transitional changes, such as privatization, affect Toda's father's personhood in a most direct way due to the threat of losing his job, hence *failing* as the breadwinner.

Marina Blagojević, in her study on lifestyles and gender relations in Serbia, notes how reduced chances for employment, as well as strong family solidarity and the pressure for survival, affect changes in a social model of the male 'breadwinner' (2012, 147). Unlike women who

father represents the working class which, ideologically, does not recognize individuality as its constitutional element.

experience certain commensurability between the ideological and the real, Blagojević states, men in post-socialist Serbia experience a discrepancy which further deepens the 'masculinity crisis' (Ibid.). In the film's narrative, Toda's father's 'masculinity crisis' is also reflected through the character of the mother who embodies the different aspects of work characteristic for working-class women in transitional societies: a (former) housewife who attends educative trainings for people entering the new labor market, and who informally sells cosmetic products. All these aspects indicate that she tries to adapt to the *new rules*, and thus she pursues different ways of asserting her 'transitional subjectivity'. But they also illustrate how, unlike her, Toda's father does not show any flexibility in the post-socialist context, in which his working position is utterly endangered due to the privatization of the factory.

Following the previous Verdery quote, one could say that by engaging in the privatization process Stefan's father, Ljuba, is more likely to gain profit than to risk his livelihood. It is important to mention here that the film narrative does not indicate clearly if Stefan's father is a local politician or the president of the Workers' Union. Nevertheless, his character is represented via a set of stereotypes about politicians including the way he dresses, the jargon he uses, the interior of his house as well as the car he drives. It might be that this sort of stereotyping was necessary for outlining the contrast between the two fathers. It could be said that being a local politician who represents the interests of the industrial workers in Bor, Ljuba's working practices rely on certain managerial/business skills. As it can be seen during the movie, he is the one who negotiates with state officials about the privatization of the former state factory in which Toda's father works. In other words, Ljuba is closely linked to the power structure, as a politician and as a negotiator of the workers' interests.

One of the most prominent motives in the film is the workers' demonstrations. As a motive which keeps appearing throughout the film, it reminds viewers of the transitional context and the political atmosphere; as one of the introductory scenes, demonstrations serve to situate the character of Ljuba, and afterwards that of Toda's father. Again, as a motive, demonstrations link the fathers as *being on the same side*, because they both fight for workers' rights. Needless to say, their positions are very different – Ljuba is on the stage in his expensive suit, convincing protestors of his party's correct intentions, and Toda's father is a worker, protesting on the street. Their different – and to some extent opposite – positions in the new, democratic/neoliberal ideology, re-shape their personhoods in different manners.

2) It is hard to speak about *strict* class distinctions in the context of post-socialist Serbia. Given that the film's narrative represents the boys' fathers as character-oppositions, this allows for outlining certain set of class distinctions between them. Also, this makes the masculinity distinctions more visible, because the working-class masculinity in 'transitional culture' is seen as a form of 'nonhegemonic masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 847-8), marginal to the current hegemonic cultural ideal, recognized here as the neoliberal paradigm.

Apart from the demonstrations which symbolically introduce the fathers' differences, two more things are important for their class distinctions: their financial situation represented through their homes, and their sons' education. The viewers see both of the fathers in their home environments from the very beginning. Because the narrative follows Toda and Stefan in some of their everyday 'rituals', the viewers also witness the scenes in which they meet their fathers in both home and working atmospheres. At the beginning, the film introduces Toda's and Stefan's different neighborhoods – a peripheral working-class area and a middle-class-looking complex of

buildings. Furthermore, scenes in Toda's family apartment indicate their poverty: worn out furniture, half-empty book shelves and some old-looking dishes at the dining table. On the other hand, Stefan's room is full of high technology equipment, and it is a place where, for instance, all friends from their skate crew 'hang-out' and watch movies.

In one of the scenes in Stefan's room Ljuba enters the apartment while they are watching one of the *CRAP: Pain is Empty* videos. He opens a beer and joins them, while insisting on watching the kids' video. Although we do not see his authentic opinion, Ljuba confirms that what they do is great and interesting. Given the nature of these videos – a sort of homage to the *Jackass aesthetics,* videos based on practices of self-harm and the challenging of pain tolerance – one might wonder how could the father approve, and encourage, such a hobby. In that sense, it is interesting to notice how this, again, serves as a way of contrasting the two fathers. Throughout the movie, Toda's father is very critical regarding his son's *jackass* performances. Every time Toda comes home with a new injury, his father is worried and criticizes him. This kind of relationship culminates in one of the last scenes, in which Toda's father, furious, finds Toda somewhere in the street, and slaps him for demolishing the supermarket with his friends: "Now you've decided to start demolishing shops, too?" This refers to the scene in which Toda's and Stefan's skate-team *Kolos* enters the supermarket on their skateboards and there video-record the action of violently sweeping products off the shelves. Clearly, this was just another video they made for the Internet; same as the one Ljuba found 'great'. Viewers get the impression of Stefan's father being very supportive about everything Stefan does, because he drinks beer with his son and his friends; he also seems like a very relaxed person who lives an easy life. Toda's father, on the other hand, still holds to his *old* working-class ethic, he teaches his son to deal with

his life problems "manly", to be a hard worker no matter what. As Ljuba in the above mentioned scene in Stefan's room tells Toda: "[Your father] is an amazing worker".

Unlike working-class culture, "middle-class" culture centers knowledge and professionalism as crucial means for raising the value of one's practical possibilities (Willis 2006, 151). According to that, for middle-class people theoretical knowledge represents a way of *climbing the social ladder* (2006, 152). This could provide another perspective on the reproduction of class difference, where sons have to stay in the class of their fathers, and where 'theoretical knowledge' as a means of 'climbing the social ladder' stays out of (social) reach. As we find out at the beginning of the movie, Stefan has an enrollment exam for continuing his studies in Belgrade, while Toda has to stay in Bor and find a job. Moreover, it is shown that education is important for Stefan's father; because in the same scene where he talks to Stefan's friends, he asks Toda, out of curiosity, what university he would enroll in. When Toda answers that he did not apply for any, Ljuba tells him that it was the right thing to do, because there is enough time for him to decide what to study. Very indicatively, Ljuba after this explains to Toda that he met his father and that his father is an "amazing worker". Although Ljuba had the best intentions by approving Toda's decision not to apply for the university, this could be interpreted as another level of differentiation in the film's narrative. Hypothetically, Toda could wait one year until he decides what to study, but as the movie illustrates, he does not have the privilege to wait and do nothing, because he has to find a job and contribute to his family's survival in transitional times.

Towards the end of the movie, in the same scene where he gets slapped in the face by his father, Toda says two things indicate his *maturation* and that he recognizes his desperate

marginal position. After getting a slap, Toda continues to provoke his father: "Hey dad, I think we can do this better", from which it is not clear whether he means that they should talk instead, or 'better' as: to hit him harder. Because Toda continues to provoke the father with talking, he incessantly receives more hits, as if trying to prove how he *learned to accept the violence from the world*; to deal with problems "manly", and accept responsibilities of his behavior when acting like a (subcultural) "delinquent". Correspondingly, after the beating stops Toda humbly says: "I saw a Dumper today at the demonstrations." This refers to the intimate 'father and son' scene in which the two of them talk about the father's work in the foundry, where the father explains what kind of a truck is the Dumper. Having referred to their intimate bonding time, and with receiving a beating without any resistance, Toda becomes closer with his father. Such an intimacy, finally, brings them together on a symbolic level – they are both *forced to 'grow up'* in a 'transitional culture' in which they occupy a rather desperate, marginal position.

2.2.3. SKATE (SUB)CULTURE

Youth culture in this movie is represented via a specific form of a subculture. This subculture can be seen as a merger of two Western cultural subsystems: 'skate culture' and '*Jackass* lifestyle'.[28] As I seek to show in the following pages, this form of subculture is a useful frame for outlining a particular form of 'transitional' masculinity, but, these boys' 'transitional' masculinity also resembles their fathers' masculine positions which, in the end, reveal the ubiquitous power structure of the hegemonic, neoliberal masculine forms.

In order to distinguish the semiotic levels (Hebdige 1979) of the subculture in this film, one must first interpret two subsystems that construct its symbolic system (Cohen 2005, 71).

[28] When I talk about the Western form of skate culture that influenced young people world-wide, I will refer to the 'skate culture'. When, on the other hand, I discuss a specific form of 'patchwork' between the 'skate culture' and 'Jackass lifestyle' recognized in this movie, I will refer to the 'skate subculture'.

Because subsystems undergo a series of transformations while creating a new symbolic/cultural system, it is possible to recognize some elements of different cultural systems in various shapes and in distant cultures (Ibid.). 'Skate culture' originates in the 1950s when, in California, the first skateboard was invented.[29] From that point on, different purposes of the skateboard production directed the way 'skate culture' was developing (*street skaters*, *trick skaters* etc.). In the late 1980s, 'skate culture' separated from the 'surf culture' of California and started forming its own cultural identity. Until lately 'skate lifestyle' was identified with a *punk*, dirty and street *image*, while nowadays it is usually linked to *hip-hop*, *reggae* or *hard-core* music and the cultural practices that come with those. By close relation to these music genres, 'skate culture' was spreading globally and became popular world-wide. On the other hand, *Jackass lifestyle* emerges from the *Jackass* reality show, broadcast in the period from 2000 to 2002 on the MTV.[30] The concept of the show started first as one actor's idea to try out various self-defense equipments on his own body, and then write magazine articles about it. After a production company accepted his idea, the first versions of *Jackass* shows, as well as the Jackass tricks, were created.[31]

What is particularly interesting in these two cultural subsystems is how they both rely on the symbolic of physical strength. Practices of both subsystems presuppose a strong male body, physical fitness and high tolerance for physical pain. In case of skateboarding, these practices include performing various dangerous tricks when riding the skateboard, which might entail a

[29] When talking about the skateboard culture in this paragraph, I rely on Tony Alva's article "The History of Skateboard Culture" http://skateculturehistory.tripod.com/Scateculture.html.
[30] In part about the Jackass reality show and its origins, I rely on the web-site article "*AbsolutJackass*: Your Official Source for Johnny Knoxville - Biography", http://www.absolutjackass.net/bio.html.
[31] In his study on youth culture in Great Britain, Willis notes how the treatment of the youth issues on the TV rely on the assumption of their laziness as viewers – youth programming predigests symbolic meaning of the presented content due to belief of the youth needing help in it (Willis 1990, 37). Willis furthermore concludes: "This assumption of youth symbolic laziness, or in some cases imbecility, is responsible in part for the development of two clear poles in the treatment of youth issues on TV – youth as 'fun', youth as 'trouble'" (Ibid.). In this sense, having *Jackass* as part of the MTV programming illustrates the logic Willis describes in his study.

series of body injuries.[32] The logic behind this is to become as good as possible in performing tricks, no matter how the potential injuries. Jackass tricks are performed exclusively for an audience: they are always done in front of the camera, and rely on communication via sharing videos on the Internet. Unlike skateboarding, Jackass practices use body injuries and physical pain tolerance as their main symbolic resources. The aim is to perform the most disturbing trick possible, and in the meantime challenge one's physical pain tolerance.

Toda and Stefan, together with their skating group, throughout the movie ride skateboard and perform skateboard tricks. Moreover, riding scenes are present in the movie as some sort of a poetic landscape, with a specific musical background, which indicates its symbolic importance for the film narrative. On the other hand, the same musical background follows sequences of Toda's and Stefan's *Crap: Pain is Empty* documentary video, which the director includes as part of the film's narrative. This shows not only the narrative emphasis on these scenes, but also how practices of skateboarding and *Jackass* videos are intertwined with the boys' masculine identities.

'Skate subculture' represents different symbolic spaces for Toda and Stefan and for the articulation of their identities. During the movie, Stefan pursues hobbies other than skateboarding – i.e. playing chess, learning about audio design – and also continues his education in the capital city. Toda, on the other hand, embraces this lifestyle as a space where he inscribes the meaning of life. Other than 'skate culture', he is left with nothing. Because of all this, Toda gradually changes and detaches himself from Stefan. Drawing on Connell's definition of masculinity, it must be taken into account that every day practices which constitute one's masculine identity also

[32] It should be mentioned how 'skate culture' can be seen as a form of sport, hobby or a lifestyle. As a sport, skate culture includes sport trainings, competitions and gaining awards. As a hobby, it is something young people do aside from their main occupation and aside from other hobbies. 'Skate lifestyle' includes not only practices of riding a skateboard and performing tricks, but also things such as night skate rides, drinking alcohol, hanging out as a skate community, and performing other symbolic practices like making music or tattooing.

rely upon its effects in bodily experience, personality and culture (2005, 71). If video recording of violence for fun is a distinctive practice of the boys' subculture in *Tilva Roš*, such performing of violence could also be seen as a ritual re-asserting of their manhood.

In one of the scenes, the boys decide to make another *Jackass* video in which they put a tin bucket on Stefan's head and each of them hits it once, as hard as possible. When it was Toda's turn, he crosses the boundaries of entertainment and starts hitting Stefan furiously. What is particularly important in this scene is that it symbolically illustrates Toda's dissociation from his friends, and primarily from Stefan. This scene indicates Toda's transgression from one to another form of violence, as from 'violence for fun' to 'real life violence'. Moreover, it anticipates Toda's change, followed by his gradual embracement of the working-class subjectivity his father represents. From this moment on, Toda's practices of self-harm become his own rituals; something he does when he is alone, and not for the purposes of the *Jackass* videos.

The skate subcultural practices that constitute Stefan's masculinity, affect Toda very differently – both his body and personality – which allows him to become more aware of his position inside the 'project' of transition. Toda's self-mutilation should be seen in a different light – it is a personal protest because of his livelihood, because he is being *forced* to grow up, his best friend is leaving Bor to continue studies, and his own family is in a rather desperate situation. In this way, it could be said that Toda's masculinity, as symbolized by his self-mutilation, reflects the 'transitional culture' which *demands* from a young man to perform various, often opposite, symbolic practices. As a young man coming from a poor working-class family, whose father's identity is also endangered due to transitional changes in the society, and whose mother tries to

adapt to the new, neoliberal, market rules in order to support her family; Toda is constantly challenged by Stefan's worldviews and the dominant culture he embodies.

In his essay on working-class subcultural conflicts, Cohen indicates that the latent function of subculture is "to express and resolve, albeit 'magically', the contradictions which remain hidden or unresolved in the parent culture" (2005, 71). In that sense, Toda should re-think and re-adapt his father's working-class (socialist) ideology to the new, neoliberal, 'transitional' culture. On a similar note, Stefan, as a member of the subculture, should 'criticize' and 'correct' contradictions and flaws of his father's, hegemonic, culture. However, a closer look at their characters in the movie indicates how neither of them fulfils this latent function of their subculture. As it turns out, instead of being the locus of subversion, 'skate subculture' is in conformity with the neoliberal ideology.

2.2.4. LOVE TRIANGLE

The *love triangle* structure in the film's narrative operates as another system of relations in which Toda realizes his delineation from his friends, and the rest of the society. Dunja's character is important here, because she initiates the love triangle, by showing up that summer in Bor. Her character is represented as a stereotype of a 'seductive woman' who shows up just to interrupt a relationship between two best friends; which is why she does not participate neither in skating nor in *Jackass* tricks. Although her character does not develop throughout the movie, her presence 'triggers' changes in Toda's and Stefan's relationship, which, moreover, allows the mapping of some fundamental elements of their identities.

From the time Dunja first appears in the movie, the audience witnesses how she gradually becomes closer to Stefan. Toda several times – implicitly and explicitly – reacts on

their intimate relationship, which finally culminates at the end of the movie when Toda smashes Stefan's father's *Mercedes* with an iron bar. However, this love triangle is primarily interesting because it reiterates and thus reinforces the power relations on which the (dominant) neoliberal ideology lies. Once Toda realizes the principles of the relation between the three of them – implying questions of possession, ownership or, even, property – his character starts to change towards his father's working-class ethics. It seems like after experiencing the potential of losing his best friend, or the girl he likes, Toda understands what adult relationships assume. In other words, he becomes aware of *the world his father is living in* – capitalist relations based on ideas of possession, profit and power that come along with it; a world his father tries to confront by not adapting his personhood, hence by re-asserting his working-class subjectivity.

One of the last scenes is indicative of Toda's change initiated by the *love triangle*. It presents Toda, Stefan and Dunja in Stefan's apartment, after the 'supermarket incident' described earlier. First, Dunja starts teasing Toda because he cried after what he did to Stefan in the 'bucket scene'. Viewers know that he went off after that violent act, sat on the edge of the 'red hill' and pierced his face with the needle, in order to allow himself to cry. However, crying is not a *manly* thing to do, especially when it comes to approving his manhood in relation to a woman. In that sense Dunja's teasing is something she does to provoke Toda's manliness, which is why he becomes very irritated. This teasing game culminates when Toda realizes that Dunja stole some oranges from the supermarket, despite the fact that the idea was just to skate between the shelves and record the sweeping off of the products:

Toda: You're a thief.

Dunja: […] Like you've never stolen fruit from your neighbor?

> Toda: I have. But that was the neighbor's fruit. […] Ok. I've stolen some fruit [once], but I've admitted it. She doesn't want to admit.
>
> Stefan: Why are you tripping? Like it matters.
>
> Dunja: What, like I don't have the money to buy oranges and I had to steal?
>
> Toda: I don't care about your money.

Several things are important here. First, if stealing fruit from the neighbor is legitimate, this assumes a sort of familiar solidarity with neighbors. This attitude also resembles a working-class masculine ethic of solidarity (Connell 2005, 117) and it seems of fundamental importance for Toda here, because he expects his best friend to support him. Second, Toda insists that Dunja should admit that she stole oranges, which can be interpreted as both his embracement of his father's working-class ethics – confronting with the task – and stressing her class position. By insisting on stressing that Dunja who lives in France and comes in Bor just for the summer break steals, Toda becomes more aware of his class positioning, hence his difference from Dunja and Stefan. Finally, as the dialogue shows, instead of supporting his best friend, Stefan defends Dunja. This was *the final trigger in Toda's character*; he runs out of the apartment and smashes Ljuba's *Mercedes* with an iron bar. When Stefan starts screaming at him, Toda simply states: "You said it yourself – it doesn't matter what belongs to whom." The teasing game that started with provoking Toda's manliness set off his final change, thus, his embracement of his working-class masculine subjectivity. Boys' different relation to the 'skate subculture' during the movie resulted in their final distinction: that of class. Once again, this resembles *the world of their fathers into which the boys are forced to grow up*.

2.3. CONCLUSION

The movie's last scene, interestingly enough, completely destabilizes previously accumulated meanings about Toda's and Stefan's relationship, their positioning in the love triangle, and in the 'project' of transition. Dunja is mysteriously disappearing into the wild, natural landscape somewhere outside the town;[33] Toda and Stefan, after saying goodbye to her, walk together talking about their future plans. As if nothing previously happened – their conflicts, misunderstandings, the serious material damage caused – these boys walk together discussing their future skate and Jackass tricks. In a way, such an ending corresponds to the conventions of the coming-of-age genre, for it formally closes the period of the last high school summer during which Toda experiences all his misapprehensions. In the last scene, Ljuba's *Mercedes* that Toda had previously destroyed is fixed; Dunja is going back to France; Stefan and Toda are walking together like at the beginning of the film; everything looks the same, except for Toda's physical and symbolic scars left from his painful growing up experience.

This chapter interpreted Toda's coming-of-age with the framework of 'transitional culture' which engages older and younger generations differently in their processes of articulating masculinities. In that sense, Toda's coming-of-age is represented as a process of re-articulating his masculine identity according to his subcultural group identity, on the one hand, and his working-class position in the 'project ' of transition, on the other. However, as I showed here, due to the omnipresence of the hegemonic, neoliberal, culture in transitional times, the

[33] It is very indicative of Dunja's stereotypical representation that she mysteriously disappears in the nature at the end of the film. In this way, her stereotypical image develops a twofold argumentation: she is a 'seductive woman', and as disappearing in nature she confirms the construction of such stereotype as 'natural'. Such a representation is, clearly, very problematic. But, given the conventions of the coming-of-age genre which centers only a protagonist, whereas other characters are rather flat and strictly in function of the protagonist's growing up, there is not enough space for criticizing such stereotypical construction of the only girl in the film.

boys' various directions of masculine articulations were fundamentally shaped by the hegemonic neoliberal masculinity.

As the last chapter will show, Toda's process of growing-up can also be mapped via his engagement with practices of violence: the way he distances from his skating group's violence, and participates only as the one who gets beaten up. He does, however, engage in some forms of violence – practices of self-harm – which eventually delineates him from the rest of his friends, and primarily from Stefan. Finally, analyzing Toda's coming-of-age via mutual shaping of his identity and 'transitional culture' brings us back to documentary poetics *Tilva Roš* employs, for, in the end, Toda 'performs' himself, allowing the audience to engage critically with the social context of Serbian transition.

CHAPTER 3: *KLIP*

Klip is a coming-of-age movie about Jasna, a young girl living in the poor project area of Belgrade. Jasna represents the young generation that grew up on turbo-folk music. This music genre emerged during the 1990s, in times of Serbia's early transition, and has since developed in line with different international music trends. It has, also, often been criticized for political conformism and sexism promoted by its performers (Grujić 2009). This social practice includes girls dressing in a specific, sexually provocative way: „Central to these constructions are heteronormative representations of women as loyal to community values and sexually subject to the model of man, created on the basis of the socially privileged image of men in Serbian society" (2009, ii-iii). In that sense, it could be said that movie engages with gender politics shaped within the heteronormative and violent environment.

Jasna's everyday life is also strongly marked by class: she comes from the poor working-class family and goes to school where most of the students come from the similar context. Moreover, her father is seriously sick and the family does not have enough money for his operation. She falls in love with a boy, Đole, who represents a violent, delinquent and sexist masculinity. Throughout the film, they are incapable of forming any other kind of a relationship but sexual one. When Jasna finally crosses the boundary of their *exclusively* sexual relationship by confessing to Đole how *she loves him so much that she would do anything for him*, Đole angrily switches the subject of talk back to Jasna's role of his *sexual toy*. Given all this, various relations of dominance and subordination can be traced in the movie; they culminate in the film's violent ending when Đole brutally beats Jasna because she kissed another boy.

3.1. (SELF)RECORDING

Tilva Roš and *Klip* are socially engaged coming-of-age movies which are using extensively documentary elements as important representational strategies. As illustrated in previous chapters, their employment of the documentary poetics allows for more direct engagement with the social context of transition. However, their use of documentary elements differs. While *Tilva Roš* continues the tradition of Žilnik's film making – actors who play themselves, and whose original documentary videos are a part of the film's narrative – *Klip* applies documentary elements exclusively on a symbolic level. In that sense, *Klip* is a featured film, in which actors play fictional roles; nevertheless, through the motive of Jasna's recording and self-recording with her mobile phone, documentary aesthetic serves a form of protagonist's 'intimate writing'.

As I will show in following pages, Jasna's self-recorded videos re-produce the 'masculine gaze' as a pattern of her self-objectification and self-identification – a move of becoming both socially visible and sexually desirable. These video clips bring together the narrative of the movie, cultural context, and the turbo-folk genre. It is particularly interesting how *Klip* engages with the turbo-folk genre – as a cultural framework that links the movie with its extra-narrative context, and via turbo-folk soundtrack in which song lyrics reflect both the movie plot and Jasna's ongoing changes. The way Jasna constructs herself in her private videos is the way movie's narrative constructs turbo-folk subculture – through employing heteronormative codes of communication (Grujić 2009).

Jasna's video clips serve as a form of her personal diary which, at the same time, stresses the importance of the things recorded: the opening scene which postulates a symbolic situation of Đole's gaze encoding norms of her behavior; scenes of explicit sex; sequences that portray Đole and his friends 'behaving badly', and, finally, a scene with her sick father in the hospital. This

central motive should be read as a site of (individual) inscription and (collective) articulation of heteronormativity, located previously in the turbo-folk subculture, and in mapping of the ways heterosexual activity functions as a pattern of hierarchical gender/social relations in the movie. This chapter, in that sense, analyzes turbo-folk subculture Jasna identifies with; it frames a wider context for analyzing heteronormativity, and presents some of the scenes Jasna's 'video-diary' foregrounds as crucial. Analyzed scenes, each in its own way, illustrate the importance of appropriating heteronormative patterns of behavior for Jasna's coming-of-age in Serbian 'transitional culture'.

3.2. TURBO-FOLK SUBCULTURE

Turbo-folk subculture, as opposed to previously analyzed skate subculture, originates in Serbia, in times of the early transition in the 1990s, a period marked with dominant nationalist ideology and war conflicts. This subculture's symbolic system centers around turbo-folk songs and performances, which have changed noticeably from the time this music genre first appeared. Given that turbo-folk music consists of a hybrid mix between the Balkan and South-Eastern traditional music sequences, and MTV electronic-dance-style music production (Grujić 2009, 2), according to changes of the MTV's music production, turbo-folk has also transformed over time. In that sense, youth culture related to the 'turbo-folk scene' in the 1990s, for instance the so-called *warrior chic style* embodied by gangsters, *femmes fatales*, or newly formed riches (Kronja 2004), is certainly different than the one *surrounding it* today.

Turbo-folk subculture represented/constructed in *Klip* can be analyzed as a form of (girls') *fan subculture* whose main symbolic practices consist of enjoying/listening to turbo-folk songs, watching female singers' performances and music videos, 'imitating' them – in a sense of mimicking the dressing style, and appropriating patterns of behavior suggested in song lyrics and

performers' public life narratives. Closely related to this is also a practice of dancing in either turbo-folk disco club or "kafana". "Kafana" is an emblematic Serbian bar, nowadays mostly associated with the rural, suburban areas, as a place of gathering of the working-class people/youth (Dimitrijević 2008, 40). According to Ljerka Rasmussen, the "kafana" is also associated with male-dominated notions of competitive drinking, mutual treating, and carousing (1995, 241-56). Girls' seductive dancing in "kafana" induces their pleasure in playing out fantasies constructed in turbo-folk song lyrics, but it also produces structures of heterosexual desire(s) serving to "please" the men; with *pleasing their gaze* girls, at the same time, satisfy their own fantasies constructed through everyday processes of self-objectification. As viewers witness throughout the movie, in every scene of the girls-night-out when they go dancing in the "kafana", a setting is the same: boys are standing behind the bar tables and drinking, while girls engage in (seductive) dancing, sometimes even getting into a fight over a boy, that is, 'for the eyes' of a boy.

McRobbie emphasizes in her writing the importance of home for girls' youth cultures, because it can also serve as a site of *inscribing* their leisure time: "Cosmetics of course were to be worn outside the home, at work and on the street, as well as in the dance-hall. But the rituals of trying on clothes, and experimenting with hair-styles and make-up were home-based activities" (2000, 16). In one of the scenes at the beginning of the movie, Jasna and her girlfriends 'hang out' in home of one of the girls, performing their *small rituals* before going out to "kafana" for dancing. The scene introduces four girls dressing up, looking for the 'right outfit' which will stress their 'sexy body parts' in a best way, so that they look seductive. From the way they worry about their looks – one of them is troubled with leggings outlining the cellulite on her thighs – one can also interpret narratives of self-objectification grounded in deeply sexist and

heteronormative discourses present not only in the turbo-folk entertainment, but also in the global MTV media culture.[34] This indicates that a part of girls' growing-up process also relies on discourses employed in the global media which address girls in such ways that they construct narratives of self-identification as shaped by the 'masculine gaze': purely objectifying and 'fetishizing' women.

When Jasna in that scene comforts one of her girlfriends, because she feels like she does not know how to put make-up properly, Jasna explains: „Who's looking at your eyes? You have tits, you have ass, you have everything, why do you need eyes in a discotheque?" In a similar manner, when she is alone in her room, Jasna sings turbo-folk songs in an imitative/performing way. In one of the first scenes she sings: „Platforms on feet, feet in the car and the tattoo on naked back," implying a woman who *calls herself for the action* – she knows how to dress, play and embody a desirable femininity in order to get/seduce a man. Viewers see from these examples how a site of home, either Jasna's or her friend's, represents an important element of girls' everyday practices, creating symbolic spaces for 'exercising' their fantasies through dressing-up and/or 'performing' female roles suggested in turbo-folk (as well as MTV's) songs/videos.

3.2.1. HETERONORMATIVITY

In her critique of cultural studies' construction of subcultures as masculine notions, McRobbie notes that, contrary to boys, for girls it is impossible to escape oppressive elements of adolescent heterosexuality with a "clearly signaled identity" (2000, 36); meaning that if they try to escape it, it will still have to be in accordance with their 'straight' sexuality. In order to trace elements of

[34] Global popular music today also relies on the fetishized female body as a main symbolic resource for communication with the audience – i.e. music videos by Rihanna, Miley Cyrus etc. This implies a certain norm of the music market which, then, foregrounds the overlapping of global popular music with the turbo-folk as its (local) subgenre.

oppressive heterosexuality in turbo-folk subculture represented in *Klip*, it is necessary to outline a broader discursive context of turbo-folk culture. By doing so, I create a base for mapping the heteronormative logic of turbo-folk songs/performances and their communication with the audience. This, furthermore, indicates possible anchoring of gender/social relations represented in the movie, in an already established (and naturalized) discursive space of heteronormativity in Serbian 'transitional culture'.

In her study on women, nation and turbo-folk in post-Yugoslav Serbia, Grujić problematizes the way women's performances of heteronormativity encode the relationship between individuals and the community inside the popular culture (2009, 168). For Grujić, turbo-folk is the most dominant entertainment practice based on the music scene which emerged after the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991 (2009, 2-3). "Stage identities" of women performing this music are central to the preservation of heteronormative community values (2009, 3). Moreover, particular conventions of the turbo-folk genre – hetero-pathos, youth, beauty, and fetishization of sexual difference – seem to outline patterns of Serbian national identity and compulsory heterosexuality (2009, 170).

Despite the changes of political climate and additional global influences, turbo-folk femininity constructed by discourses of racism and sexism still reinforces hegemonic relations of heteronormative power (Grujić 2009, 170). This new paradigmatic femininity also became a main commodity for the Serbian post-socialist popular culture market, influenced and shaped by both socio-political context and market demands (2009, 165). In that sense, visual representations of such a femininity re-produce the fetishized female body: "Short skirts, long and sexy legs, heavy make-up, bare shoulders and half-exposed breasts were the fetishized signifiers that were

'common place' for these videos, […] main code[s] of communication with audiences" (2009, 178). With this in mind, it should not come as a surprise that oppressive heterosexuality in *Klip* can be traced in gender/social relations nurtured on practices of turbo-folk subculture Jasna and her friends identify with.

3.3. JASNA'S DIARY

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Jasna's video clips serve as a form of her personal diary, which forefronts recorded scenes as important for her growing-up experience. This section, in that respect, analyzes several scenes that constitute the narrative of Jasna's personal diary – the opening scene which reflects the closing one, scenes of explicit (hetero)sexual activity, and the scene portraying her sick father in the hospital – through mapping heteronormative patterns of behavior on which social relations in the movie are based.

Turbo-folk songs/videos construct feminine subject positions anchored deeply in both heteronormative gender relations and class inequalities, in a sense that themes of the utopian romantic love in song lyrics are always supported with narratives on female singer's personal escape from the social bottom (Dimitrijević 2008, 44). However, becoming main commodities for the popular music market, these singers have also moved to a class position different than one previously associated with their image. They now enjoy the status of *stars* in the music entertainment, presented in tabloid media in their luxurious apartments, emphasizing their *high* status of living.[35] This suggests rather ambiguous positions offered for girls' identification, especially those coming – like Jasna – from a lower/working class background.

[35] For instance, private life of the Serbian most famous turbo-folk singer – Svetlana Ražnatović Ceca – became also a stage story in itself; Ceca „was perceived as someone who was telling an authentic story of herself, *something great as such* – a woman with a cursed, glamorous but tragic, shiny and miserable destiny – a Serbian heroine of transitional times" (Grujić 2009, 162-4). Coming from a small Serbian village and marrying a war commander

In that sense, *Klip*'s opening scene renders several things indicative of such identification. It brings together Jasna's self-narrative about a desired class/social position – a site of her identification with turbo-folk *stars* – and her deeply gendered position of a passive object in the heterosexual activity. The scene centers Jasna leaned on the wall, talking to the camera and answering questions to Đole whom we cannot see for he is the one filming. The fact that the camera is shaking evokes the documentary genre, engaging the audience with the social context. Placing Đole as the cameraman/director of the scene creates a symbolic situation in which his male gaze encodes norms of Jasna's behavior and representation, which later on in the movie gets reiterated multiple times, via her self-filming with the same mobile-phone from the opening scene.

The scene starts in the middle of Jasna's sentence, as if the audience interrupts an ongoing situation; almost as entering the dialogue from a voyeuristic perspective. The audience does not know how the phone ends up in Đole's hands, or how the two of them ended up in the dark room together. This beginning rests on the assumption that the audience recognizes the heteronormative pattern by which *it is normal and expected* for an adolescent boy to bully the adolescent girl (by taking her phone), hence that she finds it attractive and exciting:

Jasna: Dooon't.

Đole: Say something.

Jasna: What?

Đole: Whatever you want.

Jasna: My name is Jasna, I have a big house with the pool; and a mansion; you can get there by bus.

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accused of war crimes in the Yugoslav wars – Željko Ražnatović Arkan – Ceca represents a woman who gained her power and wealth by „replicating and utilizing the hegemonic, heteronormative cultural codes in the Serbian context" (2009, 169).

Đole: What do you want from me?

Jasna: What do you mean what I want from you?

Đole: I mean why did you come here?

Jasna: You told me to come in. Why the fuck are you messing with me, I don't like that.

Đole: And what do you like?

Jasna: I like to get it from behind. (Giggle)

A moment before this, we learn how Jasna got her mobile phone as a present from her uncle from Cyprus, and how her mother wanted to sell it. This statement clearly marks Jasna as someone whose family does not have enough money for buying her a mobile-phone, and who would rather sell the one she got as a present, in order to save/get some money. Having this in mind, the way Jasna portrays herself in their little *role play* – as a rich diva – does not come as a surprise. The rich-diva-role also indicates Jasna's relationship to the turbo-folk scene, which at the same time serves as a main symbolic resource for her practices of identification. On a level of the movie narrative, this opening scene creates a paradigmatic situation which introduces all the main aspects of the story, including Jasna's identification and *escapism* with turbo-folk songs/performances, but also her *class anxiety* present in various situations throughout the movie.[36]

Finally, this scene constructs a paradigmatic relationship based on domination/submission as the main logic of communication between Jasna and Đole. Not only that Đole holds the powerful position by having her mobile-phone and being behind the camera, but we see from the way Jasna looks at him and how she giggles on his almost abusive questions, that she desires his attention. In that sense, the scene develops a twofold direction regarding Đole's powerful

[36] For instance, she is embarrassed to tell anyone that her father is sick and dying, and how they need money for his surgery. Also, in one of the fights with her mother, Jasna says: „I'm not gonna talk to you anymore, 'cause soon enough you'll become a housecleaner".

position. First, he embodies a dominant, violent masculinity with which certain privileges come to be associated in the turbo-folk culture. Second, taking such a position, he can easily manipulate Jasna's expectations – like switching the subject from him "messing with her" with abusive questions, to her telling him that she "likes to get it from behind" – dominating both over her body and personality. The pattern from the opening scene continues to be repeated in various situations, further anchoring their relationship in discourses of heteronormativity.

If discourse of heteronormativity is, actually, always a discourse of male power, its patterns can be traced in every articulation of man's domination. In case of the above cited dialogue, Đole's dominant position is indicated not only the fact that he continuously asks questions and never gets to be asked, but also in the sex talk he subtly imposes. After switching the subject to Jasna's sexual desire, Đole continues to lead the conversation towards her performing what she likes; ironically, the performance reveals her desire triggering exclusively the sexual activity which is supposed to produce his desire. Through *subjectifying* her sexual objectification, Jasna portrays herself as a passive agent in the heterosexual activity, the one who wants "to get fucked" or "to get it from behind".

Performance of the (female) *passive desire* here serves to initiate the active desire in Đole, by simulating his *action in her passivity*. In this way, even when she performs the sex action, he is the one who holds the powerful position, for he is the ultimate referent and recipient, inducer and consumer of the heterosexual desire. Driven by the sex talk, at one point Đole puts his hand in Jasna's panties, asking her again what is it that she wants – she finally says: "Fuck me." Unsurprisingly, after several seconds, he takes out his hand, stops recording and *concludes complacent*: "You're good." This statement pinpoints several things important for mapping the

heteronormative logic. Saying only "You're good" and placing it as the closing replica in the conversation, obliterates ideological moves of the things unsaid, for it posits Đole as the ultimate source of evaluation. It does not say in what she is good, or on basis of what value system is she deemed the good one; it most certainly erases traces of Đole confirming his dominant position by taking for himself the right to judge, and giving his judgment the value of the closing statement.

It is also very indicative that production of the heterosexual desire through their dialogue culminates with Jasna's lack of satisfaction and Đole's value judgment in regards to that. Addressing her as "good" here affirms Jasna's identification with a desired sexual object; hence, it could be said that by internalizing this value she embodies certain type of social visibility in the heteronormative surrounding. In a different vein, this *approval* of her behavior/identity is also a proof of her being *on the right path* for asserting the turbo-folk femininity – a symbolic space that offers narratives of emancipation and *escapism* from actual social/class positions.

Lastly, it is important to notice how the last scene of the movie – Đole beating up Jasna at a party because she kissed another boy – reflects the opening scene. As if the symbolic violence of Đole's abusive questions, in the final scene transcribes into materiality of his brutal hits. Relations of dominance and subordination here take their most extreme form: physical violence. However, Jasna, severely wounded, gets up from the floor, showing how *strong* she is, how "good" she is for him, and they kiss. Indicatively, in the scene before this one, Jasna gets very drunk because Đole does not show any affection towards her; moreover, when she admits that she loves him, he humiliates her and leaves the conversation. Lyrics of the song that is playing in the club where she gets drunk say: „Ask whatever you like, I'll admit all my mistakes. If I'm guilty, it will disappear. Hit me hard, so it hurts me, maybe we didn't love each other that much.

[...] Hit me to see what I am made of, made for you, like a rock, I'm ideally yours". The final scene, anticipated in the song's lyrics, could be read through the opening scene which, then, decodes the kiss as a sort of Đole's affirmation of Jasna's position in their relationship, and therefore in the heteronormative society as well.

3.4. SEX VIDEO CLIPS

Apart from Jasna video recording herself in underwear, in highly sexualized and 'seductive' poses performed for the 'male gaze' – which make her "ass look *fuckable* because that turns the boys on" – her mobile phone captures many other sexual activities she carries out with Đole. Still, these scenes differ from each other, depending on who holds the mobile phone, Jasna or him. Interestingly, all the scenes and sequences Jasna records are those of her self-recording, their kissing, or her weeping after Đole rejects her. On the other hand, scenes that Đole makes with her phone are those which put him in a dominant position. Sex scenes which portray him as the active agent – by controlling the sexual activity according to his (hetero)sexual desire – or as the physically active one, pursuing sex 'from behind', or tying a leash around her neck while they 'do it'.

If by producing meaning through language, representation links language with culture (Hall 1997, 16); and if language is understood as a semiotic practice of (visual, textual or sound) articulation, then language is also *constructing* and organizing the social reality (Tonkiss 1998, 246). In that sense, one can interpret different ways in which heterosexuality – as a political institution whose normative status maintains the gender hierarchy that keeps women subordinate to men (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 44-5) – orders social relations in the movie, resonating also with the extra-narrative context of the post-socialist Serbia. Two clips are indicative of the oppressive heterosexuality operating as a way of hierarchical social organizing among teenagers:

1) a clip where Jasna 'blows' Đole in the school toilet, and 2) a clip in the scene where Đole "fucks [her] from behind".

1) This video clip is preceded by Jasna's short footage of Đole drinking in the school yard, which ends with him realizing that he is being recorded because of which he gives her the angry look saying: "What do you want?". Subsequent scene is the documentary clip in which Jasna pleasures Đole orally in the school toilet, right after which he goes without saying a word, and leaving her on her knees in the toilet. This scene not just reproduces the symbolic violence from the opening scene, but it also tells certain things about Jasna's growing-up changes, for this was the first time they had any contact after meeting in the opening scene. In a way, the 'toilet situation' is taken by Jasna as a success, for she *finally* succeeded in attracting him. More importantly, she now has a story to tell her girlfriends. Immediately after entering the classroom, Jasna starts talking about her 'success' – a story about 'beauties' of Đole's penis. But, once her girlfriends begin asking about Jasna's 'skills', and whether she performed it good, the story becomes a way of establishing Jasna's hierarchical position in their small group of friends, because *she has to have good skills* as a way of 'proving' both her subcultural and youth identity.[37] Gaining such skills here turns out to be a sort of an initiation into the grown-up world of heteronormative gender/social relations.

2) Somewhere in the middle of the movie, when Đole and Jasna had already developed their relationship, they have sex in his room. Once again, he is behind the camera, recording the act of "from behind", and asking questions without being asked:

[37] Extreme 'sexualization' of young girls is not only a part of turbo-folk culture, but rather part of a broader youth culture, represented globally in MTV programs, or various youth films and TV series. See, for instance, TV series *Shameless* (2011, D: Paul Abbott), film *Kids* (1995, D: Larry Clark), or MTV shows *Virgin Territory* (2007, D: David Leland) and *Jersey Shore* (2009, D: Anthony Beltempo, SallyAnn Salsano).

Đole: Do you like it when I fuck you in the ass?

Jasna: Aha.

Đole: You're for nothing better than being fucked in the ass.

As in the previous example, this 'sex talk' is not about actual 'fucking from behind', but rather about meanings that come to be associated with it. Noticeably, Đole's value judgment depends on a heteronormative code of communication 'cultivated' in various discourses of the nationalist, post-conflict and transitional Serbian society; as Grujić's (2009) study, in a way, also indicates. Nira Yuval Davis' concept of *Volknation* – a dimension of the national reproduction – might be of use for decoding Đole's statement. Namely, *Volknation* is a genealogical dimension of the nationalist project which is based on the myth of common origin and shared blood (Yuval-Davis 1997, 21). According to Yuval-Davis, this constructs the "most exclusionary/homogenous visions of 'the nation'" (Ibid.). Following this logic, women are the ones to carry the burden of 'reproducing the nation' and securing its 'blood origin'. In this way, girls/women who are 'worth' only of "being fucked in the ass" in fact do not 'deserve the honor' of being mothers (of the nation). But, what can also be interpreted from this discursive move of *othering* is the 'uselessness' of gay men for the heteronormative nationalist project, for instead of reproducing with women, they "fuck in the ass". Such heteronormative and deeply nationalist discourses have shaped gender relations in Serbian 'transitional culture' from the times of nation building onwards. In that sense, Đole's statement is inscribed in such discourses, but his intention was far simpler: to humiliate her as a 'dirty woman' and a 'faggot'. As the next chapter illustrates, statements like this throughout the movie also transform into Đole's physical bullying of gay boys.

3.5. THE SICK FATHER

It is important to notice how almost every sexually explicit and provocative scene is juxtaposed with sequences from Jasna's 'home situation' with her dying father, and her mother trying to do whatever is in her power to find the money for his operation. However, Jasna constantly refuses to help, and acts like a spoiled teenage girl who always has more important things to do. Towards the end of the movie, when her mother finally manages to place the father in the hospital, Jasna decides to show up. While their parents talk, she secretly records the way they hold their hands together, how they touch and kiss each other. It could be said how this clip resonates with Jasna's feelings for Đole, which she secretly inscribes in her video-diary. In this way, the hospital clip anticipates the next scene where Jasna at last chooses to express her love to Đole, and he, with no hesitancy, angrily switches the topic to her lack of 'blowing skills', and then leaves the room.

Both scenes are important for mapping Jasna's change, and her *acceptance of the rules of the grown-up world*. First, she realizes the love her parents have for each other, even in times of such poverty and sickness; then, after being rejected by Đole in the most brutal and sexist way, instead of moving away from him, she decides to *fight for his love*. Jasna engages in series of events to try and get him back – first by confronting him in the school yard, which was rather unsuccessful because she got scared of Đole in the end. Unsurprisingly, she turns to the 'female strategy' of getting her man back, praised in many of the turbo-folk songs – making him jealous – which led to the last scene where Đole brutally beats Jasna for kissing another boy. Accordingly, the song playing at the party where Đole attacks Jasna implies jealousy as the strategy of hetero-pathos: "Two stranger's hands are touching me, and I feel all sick […] Nobody except you [my boy] has the key for my weaknesses". More importantly, while Đole is beating her, the song

continues: "I am not a girl, nor a woman, my bed is desert like a rock […] I am not a girl, nor a woman", pointing symbolically to Jasna's coming-of-age, a transgression from being a girl into being a woman. Such a transgression is here represented as a violent initiation into womanhood. The end of the movie, parallel to the movie's beginning, through the song's lyrics overlapping with disturbing sounds of the hits she receives from Đole, Jasna's coming-of-age is symbolically brought together with the violence and oppression of the Serbian 'transitional culture'.

However, one may ask why it is that Jasna's father, and not mother, had to be sick in the movie. As if author tried to create the family atmosphere where the father/breadwinner is dying and Jasna, instead of carrying for her family in crisis, strives for living a hedonistic and pointless everyday life. After the opening scene, first thing audience sees is Jasna's sick father trying to get out of the bed. Having in mind the pornographic aesthetic of the opening scene, such development of the narrative deliberately contrasts these two situations. Could it be that the author is actually implying a critique of Jasna not being a father's *good daughter* who preserves her chastity and takes care of her family?

Following on that, characters in the movie are constructed almost like repositories for all the negative stereotypes about turbo-folk culture: promiscuous young women, disinterested for school; bad daughters; boys as violent drug dealers; all coming from the lower/working class.[38] This furthermore erases the potential for the critical edge of the movie, because it does not question complexities of the heteronormative society, and its relation to turbo-folk culture and violence – the author puts all the blame on the young people represented in the movie. Finally,

[38] Grujić notes on the negative discourse employed in debates on turbo-folk: „[It] has been subject to the criticism for its silent cultural discrimination of the cultural identity of the rural or semi-urbanized population or urban working class. That is why the anti-turbo-folk discourse was very often criticized [...] for cultural racism of the 'urban' and 'educated' elite toward the culture of the 'rural' and 'uneducated' lower strata" (2009, 50).

one cannot but wonder why she did not represent high/middle-class young people who are also part of the turbo-folk scene; for *Klip* looks like a subtle move of *othering* of the low/working-class youth. Like Đole in the opening scene, the author holds the privilege of being behind the camera, embodying the dominant (class) position, and encoding the image of the representation. In that sense it could be said that the movie, as a cultural product, induces a form of symbolic violence similar to the one represented in the movie's narrative.

3.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the way documentary elements in *Klip*, differently than in *Tilva Roš*, engage the cultural context, making *Klip* a socially responsible coming-of-age drama that illustrates Jasna's process of growing-up trough her falling in love. Moreover, the way movie employs the turbo-folk genre – via film's soundtrack and Jasna's subcultural belonging – frames gender/social relations in a broader discursive space of heteronormativity and oppressive heterosexuality. The narrative strategy of Jasna's video recording, interpreted as her 'intimate diary writing', introduces experiences that are important for Jasna's coming-of-age; but – through video clips that portray her in seductive, 'sexy', poses – the video-diary also indicates Jasna's self-identification with subject positions offered in turbo-folk songs/performances. Analyses of several diary-scenes illustrated the embededness of the movie's narrative in heteronormative discourses emerging around the turbo-folk culture. The pattern of gender/social relationships developed in the opening scene reveals various levels of discourses of male domination. As the audience witnesses throughout the movie, Jasna's and Đole's *love story* represents a highly oppressive, heteronormative and violent relationship. In that respect, the chapter also tackled the author's position towards her embededness in heteronormative discourses, which allowed for the

analysis of potential ideological moves in the representation of lower/working class youth in *Klip*.

CHAPTER 4: VIOLENCE

It has been stated throughout the thesis how violence in *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* occupies an important symbolic place. As a theme, violence brings these films close to the (global) trend that has been present over the last twenty years in the American and British cinema, portraying teenage protagonists as amply engaged in various practices of violence: i.e. *American History X* (1998, D: Tony Kaye), *Ken Park* (2002, D: Larry Clark, Ed Lachman), *Kids* (1995, D: Larry Clark), *Gummo* (1997, D: Harmony Korine), *This is England* (2006, D: Shane Meadows) etc. Also, the theme of violence places *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* in the line of continuing the previous tradition of post-Yugoslav cinematography – i.e. *To the Bone/Do koske* (1997, D: Slobodan Skerlić), *The Absolute 100/Apsolutnih 100* (2001, D: Srdan Golubović), Wounds/Rane (1998, D: Srđan Dragojević) and *Cabaret Balkan/Bure baruta* (1998, D: Goran Paskaljević) – that represents violence as the most indicative feature of Serbian post-war society. At the same time, the way *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* engage with the subject of violence differentiates them from the inherited tradition, where most of the movies illustrated violence as closely and primarily related to phenomena of nationalism, war, criminal, or poverty (with exceptions of, already mentioned, *Cabaret Balkan* and *Marble Ass*).

Obviously, violence is an important way of representing/constructing youth in films in global media culture. Whether through rites of passages, subcultural belonging, or school bullying, it could be said how the youth in global cinema stands for *actively violent*. *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*, in that sense, belong to such a representative practice, but with a fundamental difference: violent youth is here posited so that protagonists gradually move away from it, or accept it as passive participants, and those who receive violence instead. Violence in these films

is, above all, a part of protagonists' growing-up experience, where it functions as a means of accepting, and appropriating, the world of 'grown-ups'. Toda and Jasna receive both symbolic and physical violence throughout the respective films. This indicates a rather paradigmatic change in regards to the previous dominant way of representing violence in (post)Yugoslav cinematographies. In that respect, this chapter explores different forms of violence in *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*, what purpose do they have in regards to protagonists' coming-of-age, and what does that tell us about changes in film representations of youth and violence in post-Yugoslav cinematographies.

Toda's and Jasna's participation in violent events can be seen as passive in regards to the physical violence, for they constantly receive it throughout films. But, their participation should also be seen as active, in a sense that they provoke violence from other people, in order to show their capacity for accepting/receiving violence. Their provocations, however, slowly change from the films' beginnings, signaling different meanings that correspond to their growing-up experiences. I will here shed some light on the ways group violence is represented in these films, and what it means for protagonists' coming-of-age; so as what kinds of symbolic violence reflect the physical violence protagonists accept to participate in.

4.1. GROUP VIOLENCE

In both films group violence is represented as closely related to subcultures. Boys from skate subculture participate in violence differently than boys in turbo-folk subculture, meaning that aims of their violent engagements are, at best, different. However, the logic of mobilizing a group for participating in violence is the same: it is enough for one of the boys to start with provoking or attacking, and the rest of them will immediately join.

Somewhere in the first part of *Tilva Roš*, Toda and Stefan participate in the local karaoke show, with intentions of making fun of it and, in a way, satirizing the event by performing a famous Balkan pop song in a funny and disinterested way. As part of the 'mocking ritual', boys were also publically insulting the organizer who introduced them on the stage. After the show, Toda meets the organizer in front of the building, insisting on apologizing, but in a very ironic way: by offering him a rose. Importantly, Toda intentionally provokes people for whom he knows that they will react violently. In this case, it was a man who represents a typical "kafana" or (turbo-folk) disco owner, in transitional Serbia usually associated with post-war criminal, profiteering, and violence. The organizer, expectedly, attacks Toda, which immediately activates his friends for a counter-attack. Still, Toda rejects their help, continuing to provoke the man with offering him flowers. Finally, the whole group gets into a massive fight, while Toda calmly asks his friends to stop: "Let the man go. Let's see how much more he can beat me."

This scene induces a twofold symbolic. On the on hand, it can be read as Toda's subcultural performance, employing jokes similar to Jackass humor which communicates through elements of violence. Purposefully continuing to humiliate the organizer, Toda actually continues his and Stefan's act from the karaoke performance. With receiving hits from the organizer, Toda humiliates him on another level – by showing how he acts precisely the way stereotypical image illustrates him. On the other hand, Toda's act of offering flowers evokes the symbolic act during the 1990s demonstrations in Belgrade, when students were giving flowers to the police who treated them violently. In this way, the scene also employs some documentary elements, functioning as a means of critical engagement with the context of 'transitional culture'. Because this scene is among the first ones, Toda's engagement in provoking his beating is here still in the function of his subcultural group identification. This can be read in the light of the scene

somewhere close to the end of the movie, when Toda refuses to revenge and attack the karaoke man whom the group spots on the street. As Toda gradually recognizes throughout the movie, due to his utterly marginal position in the society his masculine identity changes in a way that he does not rely exclusively upon subcultural identification anymore. As if he needed in this scene to completely move away from the group, and primarily from Stefan who lead the attack on the karaoke man, so that he could assert his marginality in its entirety. In this way, Toda once again indicates his disassociation from Stefan and friends, and his slow embracement of marginality closer to his father's, for like his father, Toda receives (symbolic) violence rather than producing it.

Klip presents us with scenes of group violence based on the similar logic of mobilization, but with opposite motivations. As indicated earlier, Đole's sexist and, sometimes, fascist statements transform into physical violence against girls and gay boys. Đole's friends, unsurprisingly, engage in violence the same way he does, attacking gay boys, or those who 'seem gay'. One of the bullying scenes is very indicative of both group violence and oppressive heterosexuality omnipresent in gender/social relations represented in *Klip*. During a lunch break in the school, Đole starts verbally molesting a boy in the school yard, in front of everyone. He insistently asks absurd questions which cannot be answered, so that he could 'accuse' the boy of not answering him. Gradually, other boys join the public spectacle, helping Đole by pushing the boy. At one point, Đole demands the boy to go on his knees, and imitate a girl in the porno movie who pleasures a man orally. Đole insists: "Move your tongue! Like that," while others laugh, contributing to the boy's humiliation. In the end, Đole and friends throw a boy in a container. Evidently, a demand for imitating a girl who pleasures (Đole) orally, once again, points to deeply oppressive heterosexual relations as means of the hierarchical ordering of teenage world in *Klip*.

In this way, Đole practices his (heterosexist masculine) domination not only over Jasna, as previous chapter illustrated, but also other boys who are not 'manly enough', implying that they deserve to be treated like 'girls'.

Jasna participates in such actions exclusively as a viewer, and, consequently, a supporter. Moreover, in two scenes audience witnesses Jasna and her girlfriends screaming supportive while Đole and other boys demolish school classrooms. By video recording such events, Jasna symbolically creates space for violence in her 'intimate diary'. It could be said, then, how Jasna understands such violence as an 'expected' part of Đole's masculinity, which, in the end, she appropriates as his victim and by 'becoming his girlfriend'; thus, by 'becoming a woman'. Going back to the film's last scene when Jasna gets up from the floor, covered in blood, and confronts Đole first by hitting him weakly, and then kissing him; Jasna illustrates the way she understands violence: as an act of (submissive) belonging to 'her man', an act of *complete surrendering in love*. In this way, group violence scenes in *Klip* serve a form of Jasna's initiation into violent gender/social relations where, as a viewer, she recognizes Đole's ultimately dominant position which she is there to 'nurture', for *she loves him so much that she would do anything for him*.

4.2. SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

Symbolic violence is closely related to protagonists' urge to provoke (physical) violence. In *Klip*, Jasna constantly provokes tensions between Đole and her, through insisting on their meetings, confrontations, sexual relations. With persisting on engaging with Đole in any sort of relationship, even when he rejects her, Jasna repeatedly situates herself in symbolically violent relations. Almost all the way throughout the movie, Đole verbally molests Jasna, by posing abusive questions which she cannot answer without being mocked, or humiliated. Also, as the previous chapter illustrated, Đole's video recording of Jasna and their sexual activity indicates

yet another level of Jasna's passive reception of symbolic, and often psychological, violence. These symbolic forms of Đole's dominance, finally, epitomize in Jasna's acceptance of Đole's physical violence as a form of functioning of the heteronormative love relationship. Ironically, the primary structural model for a fundamental hetero-pathos comes from the relationship of Jasna's parents, who in the movie represent a romantic, *unbreakable love,* staying together 'in sickness and good'. It could be said how such a dramatic contrasting of the parent and youth generation serves as another way of criticizing the youth for being deeply violent. This, however, inevitably constructs Jasna as a young dupe, fooled by the idea of romantic love her parents embody.

Toda, on the contrary, provokes mainly physical violence from other people – the karaoke man, and his father. This is followed by his trick performances, in which audience sees only Toda getting hurt; and, later on, Toda's carrying out of self-harm practices. Given Toda's gradual understanding of his marginality, which assumes continuous suffering from the symbolic forms of violence, Toda engages in physical violence so that he could test his limits of the pain tolerance, as much as his possibilities of accepting the world of grown-ups, in which he realizes his father is suffering as well. Symbolic violence in *Tilva Roš*'s social environment can be interpreted as a product of the dramatic change from state's command to market economy, which generated elements of the 'wild capitalism', followed by corruption, and massive unemployment. In this way, neoliberal market rule of 'the stronger' becomes a main way of social hierarchical organizing of the 'grown-up world', inducing symbolic violence over people whose social positions do not offer possibilities of presumed 'equal competing' for their *social marketability*. Toda's intimate rituals of self-mutilation, in that sense, can be analyzed as symbolic protests against his livelihood, in which he is *forced* to grow up, lose his best friend and the girl he likes,

due to his ultimate marginal position in Serbian transitional society. On the other hand, his self-mutilation can be seen as a way of appropriating violence of the grown-up world, and therefore as a symbol of Toda's coming-of-age in transitional culture.

4.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Both films illustrate the way (teenage) group gets mobilized for violence. As analyzed examples in this chapter showed, whether the group attacks, or defends, the principle is same: group belonging and/or common enemy are adequate reasons for engaging in massive violence. This, on the one hand, brings into attention the link between the youth and violence, strongly present in global media culture – via youth films, but also TV programs such as *Jackass*, which becomes appropriated as a certain lifestyle among the youth around the world. On the other hand, group violence can also be very telling of Serbian society's conflictuos past, and accordingly, still deeply conflictuos present of 'transitional culture'.

Nevertheless, this chapter indicated the ways group violence in these films serves as a form of initiating protagonists into the grown-up world, shaped by everyday practices of symbolic and physical violence. In this way, violence in *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* becomes a way of appropriating 'suitable' and 'expected' patterns of behavior in the world of adults, deeply marked with class and gender inequalities. Such a way of representing violence and youth in Serbian cinema indicates certain disassociations from the previous (post)Yugoslav cinematographic tradition, in relation to what these films are posited as *new* and *different*.

Having in mind the potential in speaking about generational films, it could be asked whether, and how, these films and their (young) authors question the older generations' past. Given the films' social engagement, it could also be asked if the authors, who belong to the

'second generation' after post-Yugoslav wars, employ in 'solving', criticizing or problematizing the post-conflict aspect of transitional culture. The youth in both films represents this 'second generation', born and growing up in transition, embodying different subcultural identities which are supposed to symbolically *challenge* the contradictions/problems of their parents' generation. Importantly, protagonists do not succeed in challenging the past they inherited. Toda and Jasna symbolize rather desperate social positioning in the hierarchical and heteronormative transitional society. Their subcultural belonging challenges neither class differences, nor heteronormative societal organization. Quite the opposite, both skate and turbo-folk subcultures seem to be in coherence with neo-liberal and national ideologies, in which Serbian transitional society is genuinely embedded in. Such a representation of Serbian transition, in fact, introduces a *new generational voice* which tries to speak of currently more burning social problems, such as growing-up in utterly unstable economic conditions that deepen gender and class inequalities even more. Essentially, this generation of young authors decides to move away from the narrative of war as the dominant perspective for interpreting Serbian transitional society, and embraces other problematic aspects of transition. This, at the same time, brings them closer to film practices of other East European countries.

CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the case of two recent Serbian films, *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*, by analyzing them as examples of coming-of-age genre. Aside from employing conventions of this globally popular cinematic genre, these films also include documentary elements which, on the one hand, differentiate them from most of the famous international coming-of-age films, and link them to previous Yugoslav tradition, on the other. Given the national framework of the category 'New Serbian film' that these films in current Serbian film criticism are usually interpreted in, my intention was to question such a framing, and present the intersection of post-Yugoslav and East European frameworks instead. The introduced framework investigated complexities of the current state of affairs in Serbian culture, and, more importantly, allowed for the mapping of the fundamental influence of Yugoslav 'Black film' on these films, without employing ideological moves of nationalizing the Yugoslav tradition.

I argued that through employing documentary aesthetic, these films transform coming-of-age story into a socially responsible genre that is engaged with transitional culture. With discovering that most of the so-called East European cinematographies present examples of coming-of-age movies – or at best youth films – in the early phases of their post-socialist transitions, I recognized the symbolic suitability of coming-of-age genre for speaking about transitional problems. This, further on, led to my interpretation of transitional processes as a political coming-of-age story. Because coming-of-age genre is, among other things, based on representing youth culture and their conflicts/relations with the parent culture, my reading of respected films and transitional processes as coming-of-age narratives allowed for analyzing

youth culture in transition: the ways youth identities are constructed/represented in *Tilva Roš* and *Klip*. Through intersections of identity categories of gender, class and sexuality – as well as generic norms of heteronormativity, oppressive heterosexuality, and nationalism – the analytical part of the thesis illustrated the way protagonists' process of growing up in Serbian transitional society affected their identities, shaped in a deeply gendered and classed social environment. *Tilva Roš*, in that respect, presented a young boy whose masculine identity has been re-shaping throughout the film, and according to his painful, unwanted experiences of growing up. *Klip*, on the other hand, introduced a young girl whose growing-up story is based on her falling in love with a violent boy, which revealed profoundly heteronormative relations of domination and submission on which her identity, eventually, got to be grounded. Finally, both films engage with violence as an important part of protagonists' coming-of-age. Because violence is represented as closely related to protagonists' subcultural belonging, the thesis also analyzed different forms of violence represented, and what it meant for shaping of their subcultural identities in transitional Serbia.

Given the possibility of speaking about 'generational films', my intention was also to question young(er) generation's understanding of post-socialist times and, accordingly, their society's socialist past. What I found could best be described in the following several notions. First, 'transitional Serbia' constructed in both films is primarily represented via stories about low/working-class social environments. This tells us how authors' generation understands class inequalities and poverty as one of the fundamental, or at best most indicative, questions in 'transitional culture'. Second, authors recognize the importance of various youth subcultures, (trans)formed due to the ultimate global influence of media cultures. However, subcultures are constructed as symbolic spaces which, instead of challenging the parents' generation, serve as the

means of reproducing gender and class inequalities of the grown-up world. Lastly, the way authors represent the relation between the youth and violence points to a strong disassociation from the previous narratives about violence in Serbian cinema: Toda and Jasna provoke in order to show the capacity for accepting/receiving violence, whereas other young people in both films seek for trouble. Instead of "glorious", violent and dominant masculine protagonists, these new films present us with self-aware desperate boys, and all the more, girls, from the hinges of Serbian transitional society.

In general, the thesis contributed to the still scarce discussion on 'transitional culture' as an essential space for re-creating cultural values and re-thinking concepts of gender, masculinity, heterosexuality and violence in Serbia. More specifically, my research contributed to debates around the coming-of-age genre, for it showed how in the case of 'new Serbian cinema', coming-of-age film transforms into a socially responsible genre, which posits the youth not only as an important representational tool, but also a valuable instrument for the socially engaged criticism. In this way, the youth and the 'transitional context' mutually constitute each other as 'problematic', forming a dialectic relation between protagonists and their social environment. On the other hand, by arguing for the new cinema that Serbian coming-of-age film here stands for, the thesis first and foremost contributed to the regional film criticism. Although the history of (post)Yugoslav cinematographies presents us with some examples of youth films, the interpretation of *Tilva Roš* and *Klip* as *socially engaged generational coming-of-age dramas* pinpoints the status of the 'new' in the category of 'new Serbian cinema'. Such interpretation, at the same time, disrupts the national(ist) framework of the category 'New Serbian film' in which films are primarily deemed 'new' in regards to "old Serbian" films of Yugoslav tradition. The 'new' in Serbian cinema, is in my thesis recognized as 'new' in the tradition of post-Yugoslav

coming-of-age films. This, finally, added to yet another circle of debates, because with recognizing the influence of Yugoslav 'Black film' on new Serbian film practices, the thesis also challenged the dominant anti-Yugoslav backlash, omnipresent in contemporary post-Yugoslav culture.

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