To love one's own neighbour as oneself is no doubt the shortest route to cutting his throat.1

I. Introduction

In the early 1990's, after more than 40 years of living together peacefully, the peoples of the former Yugoslavia turned on each other in an orgy of ethnic warfare and brutality unseen in Europe since World War II. The images of the horrible wars in Bosnia and Kosovo were perceived by the Western television audience with a sense of perplexity and helplessness, considering the barbarity and cruelty of those conflicts. The flood of recent scientific, historiographic or biographic literature on this topic is perhaps best understood as an effect of this helpless western gaze—numerous attempts of understanding what is hardly graspable, of narrating what is impossible to bring into distinct cause and effect patterns. These discussions seem to center on the questions of "political correctness," which has become one way of taking sides in the conflict. To be "politically correct" in this peculiar context, was during the 1990's a matter of shifting positions, from regarding all sides involved as equally "good" or as equally "bad," to the point of identifying the Serbs as the clear aggressors and Slobodan Milosevic's nationalist politics as the "cause" of the conflict.

My choice here of analyzing films that take more or less clearly the Serbian perspective towards the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia must be seen in this contexts of the political correctness debate. Emir Kusturica's Underground (1995) was heavily criticized for its pro-Serbian perspective and its Yugo-nostalgic tendencies—even condemned as "Serbian propaganda" or as libidinal subtext of the Serbian slaughterers, rapists and racists.2 Kusturica had already become a touch point for debates around issues of political correctness with his earlier films, as he points out in an interview on his third film, Time of the Gypsies (1989):

This is my third film and all that time I have been the target of various groups. Some Muslims claimed that Do You Remember Dolly Bell was an anti-Islam film. Supporters of the Communist regime tried to get When Father was Away on Business banned. And now Gypsies in Paris have started legal proceedings against me.3
With Underground, which was produced between 1993 and 1995 during the war in Bosnia, the international criticism against Kusturica's political incorrectness reached a peak. Srdjan Dragojevic' Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames (1996) narrates a specific event during the Bosnian war from an even more distinct Serbian perspective. The film was shown in 1996, only a few months after the Dayton Peace Accord, across the countries of former Yugoslavia and was regarded as a "provocation" and "incorrect representation" of the war in Bosnia, especially by Croatians and Bosnians. One Croatian reviewer of Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames for instance emphasized:

This film is humiliating for all those people, who know what happened during the last four years in Bosnia. Imagine how the world would have reacted if the Germans would have made a film in 1946 about the Second World War with the subtext: 'We are crazy, fucking right! But we are the strongest anyway'.

Dragojevic's most recent film, Wounds (1998), finally attacks the Milosevic regime outright. Because of Dragojevic' aggressive stance, the Serbian government attempted to limit the exposure of Wounds, forbidding publicity and creating a complete media and PR blackout. Nevertheless, Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames and Wounds were the biggest-grossing Serbian films in Belgrade and the first Serbian films that reached success in the neighbouring countries of Bosnia, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia.

These explicitly "politically incorrect" films are the cultural texts I will analyze in this paper. The emphasis lies on the term cultural texts, or rather discourses from Serbian popular culture of the 1990's—the time of Milosevic's disastrous dictatorship—which emphasize various aspects of what I will describe as a rewriting of the history of the Balkans. The goal is to provide a psychoanalytic reading of Serbian cultural self-reflection during the time of the Milosevic regime. Within this reading the films of Emir Kusturica and Srdjan Dragojevic represent arbitrary concepts of national identity and history. The problematization of the Yugoslavian "Brotherhood and Unity" dogma is one of the central issues, which all three films translate into a "blood brother" friendship that latter falls apart or turns into a "bloody friendship." The films' thematization of the psychological constructs of "Self" and "Other" in the Yugoslavian, Bosnian and Serbian contexts is a particularly sensitive issue for collective ideological or ethnic identification. Furthermore, the generational scope of the films—grandfathers (Underground), fathers (Pretty Villages Pretty Flames) and sons (Wounds) —lends itself to consideration of the failed Oedipal narration and the crisis of male identity in Yugoslavian history since the Second World War. And finally, the metaphoric tropes of all of the three films (undergrounds, tunnels and graveyards) circulate around the a "return of the repressed": they are metaphors for a collective unconscious that will provide for a complex interpretation of a society that fell apart.

II. Collective Identity between Fantasy and Trauma

To begin, I would like to introduce several basic theoretical and historical conceptions of collective identification in regard to discourses in the Serbian public
sphere. The first shall be that of Lacanian theoreticians Slavoj Zizek and Kaja Silverman, and secondly, anthropological accounts centering on psychoanalytic concepts of historical traumas, collective fantasies and national identity.

The anthropologists Clifford Geertz, Edmund Leach and Barbara Babcock have repeatedly emphasized the total dependence of people on narratives that convey meaning and significance which must be kept free of ambiguity, equivocality and arbitrariness. These kinds of fictional realities are crucial for the way an individual understands him- or herself, how he or she is entangled in a society's self-representation, and how a certain cultural or social group determines its collective perception of self and others, its history and its social reality. Cinematic, literary or other cultural representations play a vital role in constructing, reflecting or subverting those narratives, which are usually taken for granted in historically less troubled times and culturally less troubled regions.

This complex notion of a society's historical and cultural "reality," where an individual positions his or her historical and social role and cultural identity, needs to be clarified. Psychoanalytic interpretations of these genuinely anthropological and sociological concepts and issues emphasize the interrelations between individual psychology and society or culture in general. The Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek conceptualizes these interrelations on the thin line between Lacanian concepts of identity formation and Marxist notions of ideology criticism. He examines in The Sublime Object of Ideology how a society's social reality is shaped by what he describes as "ideological fantasies":

...ideology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape the insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself: an 'illusion' which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel (conceptualized by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as 'antagonism': a traumatic social division which cannot be symbolized). The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel.

Zizek differentiates ideology from the notion of Marxist "false consciousness" and from the notion of ideology as a phantasmatic screen of illusions. He derives the notion of fantasy from Lacan's definition of fantasy as a virtual frame that enables and teaches us how and what to desire.

According to Lacan, the human being is entangled in three psychic registers, which Lacan calls the symbolic (the field of language and communication), the imaginary (the domain of images with which we identify) and the real (the "hard," traumatic reality, which resists symbolization). Each of the three registers intersect on various levels and within different contexts or life phases in the formation of a subjects' identity. The most significant phase that structures human identity is symbolized by castration. The crucial moment in the formation of the unconscious is therefore the Oedipus complex. The threat of castration and the Oedipal complex are the symbolic impositions of a culture's rules. The Oedipal situation becomes a conflict between desires (for the mother) and the Law,
which belongs to the realm of language and therefore also to the realm of the social or
cultural symbolic order, which is designated as the Name of the Father. After the moment
in which the world is taken up by language (the symbolic order), primal "enjoyment,"
which Lacan describes as jouissance, remains only as a memory of fulfillment. The
entrance into the symbolic order of language marks for Lacan also the entry into the
unconscious, the realm of desires (symbolic circulation of unconscious wishes through
signs)—which are both produced and made available to us through language. The subject
attempts throughout its life to recapture the fantasy of primordial totality, wholeness and
unity. The presence of an absence is what sets the dynamics of desire in motion. The
memory of experienced pleasure (jouissance) will forever be associated with a traumatic
loss, and the impossibility of this lost unity becomes desire. This absence or lack serves
as a screen onto which we project fantasies of fulfillment in the form of objects or
scenarios of desire. In this way, fantasies of fulfillment mediate between the symbolic
structure and the objects we encounter in reality and therefore provides "...a schema
according to which certain positive objects in reality can function as objects of desire,
filling in the empty places opened up by the formal symbolic structure."6 In fact, Zizek
even suggests that "through fantasy we learn how to desire", that is, it constructs the
frame enabling us to desire.7 The symbolic order is not a closed universe; it is in fact
essentially structured by the desire for the lost object mediated by phantasms.

Fantasy is therefore the structuring agent of a subject's relation to society in general.
Zizek in The Plague of Fantasies provides several characteristics of fantasy. The desire
staged in fantasy is not the subject's own, but the other's desire, and thus one can say that
fantasy is intersubjective or collective. Fantasy is also the primordial form of narrative.
The temporally successive, and closed, unifying nature of narrative resolves fundamental
antagonisms caused by traumatic social divisions. These phantasmatic narratives do not
stage the transgressions of the law, but the very act of its installation: the intervention of
the cut of symbolic castration. One can finally also say that phantasmatic narratives are
Oedipal narratives, eternally re-staging the Oedipal conflict, resolving the installation of
the law of the symbolic order.

In a similar theoretical discussion on group identification and ideology, Kaja
Silverman proposes—with reference to Jacques Ranciere's Marxist concept of ideological
hegemony—that we should consider:

of a society's ideological "reality", as its "dominant fiction." ...the dominant fiction
represents primarily a category for theorizing hegemony, and once again it functions as a
mirror. Ranciere defines it as "the privileged mode of representation by which the image
of the social consensus is offered to the members of a social formation and within which
they are asked to identify themselves." ...dominant fiction consists of the images and
stories through which a society figures consensus; images and stories which cinema,
fiction, popular culture, and other forms of mass representation presumably both draw
upon and help to shape.8

Similar to Zizek's discussion, Silverman's notion of dominant fiction serves as a
society's (ideological) fantasy-reality, one that both presents a mirror for group
identification and collective desires while simultaneously shaping it. Such fantasies play a vital role in the construction of identity through their capacity to engage individual subjects and mediate contradictory cultural or social discourses such as social antagonisms or traumatic disruptions.

Recent psychoanalytic discourses on trauma acknowledge that traumatic symptoms are less symptoms of the unconscious than of history. That is, trauma is less a matter of repression and the effects are less symptoms of an illness or pathology. On the contrary, the experiences of traumatized individuals question the very notion of how to understand what they have experienced or, more generally, it questions the very notion of "history" itself. Cathy Caruth argues:

It is indeed this truth of traumatic experience that forms the center of its pathology or symptoms; it is not a pathology, that is, of falsehood or displacement of meaning, but of history itself. ... Yet what can it mean that history occurs as a symptom? It is indeed this curious phenomenon that makes trauma ... in its definition, and in the impact it has on the lives of those who live it, intimately bound up with a question of truth.9

The "truth" of the traumatic experience lies in the radical disruption of everyday beliefs, a "hidden truth." The extraordinary confrontation with "reality" leaves the traumatized in a very literal sense without words. No story or symbolization can explain what "really" happened. The experience of trauma questions the very notion of history (as narrated story) insofar as the traumatic experience resists any symbolization.

But what can it mean that history occurs as a symptom? Zizek's explanation in his Liebe Dein Symptom wie Dich Selbt points towards the problem of historical teleology and the symbolization process that interprets cause and effect in historical processes/progress. Zizek defines a symptom literally as "an effect of something which constitutes itself, subsequently, only later through its symbolization."10 Notions of historical truth and progress depend on a fundamental misrecognition or displacement, because the past event only becomes meaningful in a significatory process "after the fact" which tries to establish a causal trajectory between the past and the present. The notion of a teleological history becomes disrupted by the notion of trauma. The traumatized subject experienced something beyond symbolization. Silverman provides us at this point with another aspect crucial for the understanding of the unrepresentable nature of history.

History makes itself felt through the crisis it creates and the changes it "inspires" in the dominant fiction and the social formation—crisis and changes which are ultimately mastered through the very articulations which first make them available to thought. In other words, history is accessible only through texts, to whose very organization it is antipathetic. It passes into the cultural domain through the agency of the signifier, i.e. through that very register whose functioning it most threatens.11

In a more general sense, one can say that historical events that are so ungraspable in their impact—not only on individuals but also on social groups—that they will consistently destabilize the very essence of their (national, ethnic, social, etc.) identity
and will become part of repetitive attempts to integrate the horrors of the real (of history) into unambiguous representations. Kaja Silverman argues in her essay Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity, that

"trauma can be best understood as the rupture of an order which aspires to closure and systematic equilibrium by a force directed toward disruption and disintegration. History cannot be bound; it is always both absent and unrepresentable. What can be brought within linguistic control is the trauma it generates within the established systems of representation and signification, a trauma which is experienced by the subjects who depend upon those systems for their sense of identity."

The consequences of a traumatic historical event (like WWII, the Holocaust, Vietnam) lead into social crisis, which reveals itself in significant disruptions of consensus and everyday belief. The "order which aspires closure" can be identified with the symbolic order, framed by a phantasmatic support and structured by desires, which tries to "heal" and conceal the lacks of the symbolic. One can say that established systems of representation incorporate history in order to disavow its extraordinary impact on the fictional reality (dominant fictions or ideological fantasies) of a society, nation or culture. In other words, collective identification functions only if traumatic historical events are disavowed through the constant repitition of the codes of established representations which try to conceal their disruptive force.

III. Historical Traumas, Nationalist Fantasies and Wound Culture

The Trauma of the Second World War and Tito's Propaganda

The case of Yugoslavia raises the question of whether a society and its culture can become captured as an individual can by the burden of too much history. After World War II, the Yugoslavian government, under Communism, imposed peace among the various ethnic-national groups. A fragile moral order was established in Tito's Yugoslavia by pushing aside the survivors' memories of World War II and forcibly implementing a narrow, state-scripted partisan myth about war and its traumas. When Tito died and European Communism fell, Serbian and Croatian nationalist narratives started to emerge, drawing strength from those memories that were pushed aside but not forgotten. Like individuals, nations must confront and understand past traumatic events before they can leave them behind and live normally. Too often, the ways of remembering traumatic memories of war have helped propagate historical cycles of violence instead of countering them.

Mathijs van de Port's Gypsies, Wars & Other Instances of the Wild, an anthropological analysis of Serbian popular fantasies surrounding the figure of the Gypsy in Serbian films, literature, proverbs and oral poetry, outlines the "constant crisis of fictional reality" in Communist Yugoslavia. The artificial "Multiethnic Land of Brotherhood and Unity" constructed by Tito and his party is seen as a large-scale ideological discursive project with an aim to create a collective identity across all South
Slav ethnic and social boundaries. Glen Bowman stresses in his essay on the logic of ethnic violence in former Yugoslavia that:

the traditions which had constituted identities since the Second World War were designed to efface intercommunal antagonisms and to establish Yugoslav bratstvo i jedinstvo (brotherhood and unity) as the only viable means of ensuring the survival and well-being of individuals. ... The partisan war against the Nazi occupation had forged solidarity between individuals from all of Yugoslavia's ethnic groups in defense of the "homeland," and had simultaneously brought Tito and the Communist Party to power.13

The horrible incidents that happened during and after the Second World War (ethnic genocides, mass exterminations and deportations) become taboo subject matter under Communism. Communist propaganda commemorated the Second World War as a glorious fight of the partisans against the evil Germans. Considering the Yugoslavia's post-war instabilities, its ruling party had great interest in keeping the historical enemy of Fascism alive. As anthropologist B. Denich in his essay on nationalist revivals in former Yugoslavia points out:

Communist rule entailed ideological control over the representation of the past, and those horrible events that would disrupt the new inter-ethnic cooperation were not to be mentioned, except in the collective categories 'victims of fascism', on the one side, and 'foreign occupiers and domestic traitors', on the other side.14

History books and school lessons, speeches, newspapers or partisan films were supposed to spread this propagandist view on the events of the Second World War as if there had hardly been any history before 1941. Van de Port points out that Yugoslavian historiography after World War II was marked to a great degree by euphemisms and suppressions, and that the histories produced by Titoist historians or epic poets show that the people were constantly confronted with the inner antagonisms between their traumatic history and the ideological disavowal represented within popular culture (films, music, folklore), education (schools, university) or media (newspapers, television, and radio).

Van de Port explains how the traumatic experience of war damaged the Yugoslav's ability to create meaningful stories about the world they live in. This traumatic disruption of everyday belief calls for an integration of this "unspeakable knowledge" of the horrors of the real into the fictional reality of the people. Van de Port explains this dilemma as follows:

...there is a permanent tension between the social and psychological need to forget the terrors of war, and the impossibility of doing so, of forgetting what war can do.... The main issue is the question of how people incorporate the lessons of war in their lives. How are insights into the beast that lurks in man and the experiences of the war taken into account in their vision of society?15
Van de Port argues that the post-Second World War order was an artificial creation in which the people felt alienated from the true horrors of history. Communism's dominant fictions of brotherhood and unity, glorious anti-fascism resistance, the victory of global socialism and Tito's leading role in the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (the third way during the Cold War) were experienced by the people as empty and idle stories, artificial lies, considering the past horrors and the present instabilities and antagonisms within Yugoslavia.

"Genocide-Ghosts" from the Past: The Discursive Shift towards Nationalism

After Tito's death in 1980, Yugoslavia faced an extraordinary economic and social crisis. Tito's dream of progress—the years of economic wealth during the 1970s—turned out to be based on loans and credits that had not been paid off. The illusion of the third way between capitalism and socialism evaporated with the death of Tito and subsequent confrontation with the realities of global capitalism. The disintegration of socialism in Eastern Europe is described by Zizek as the collapse of Eastern Europe's big Other, the point of reference of the symbolic order:

"...'real socialism" was ultimately a society of "pure appearance"; the system functioned so that nobody "believed in it"—yet it is here that its true enigma emerges. This appearance was what Hegel called an "essential appearance," in which for us, today, it is easy to recognize the contours of the Lacanian big Other: what disintegrated in Eastern Europe was le grande Autre, the ultimate guarantor of the social pact."

The Lacanian big Other can be identified as the ultimate point of reference or legitimization (the Law, God, an unwritten rule) that holds the symbolic order together and thus the entire value system of a society. Zizek designates the shift away from the real existing socialism as a purely symbolic shift where nothing changes in everyday life, except that there occurs a shift in the symbolic texture which constitutes the social bond. That is why one cannot really speak of a historic rupture as such—the changes happen within the discursive field. The disintegration of socialism left a discursive black hole. Zizek describes this as a state or phase of "traumatic disorientation," a loss of "the ground under the feet." The recourse of nationalism emerged in order to protect the people from this traumatic disorientation.

But how and when did this discursive shift occur and how did it manifest itself? Slavoj Zizek explains that "nation" is a fantasy which fills out the void that was leftover after the disintegration of socialism:

"...the tale of the ethnic roots is from the very beginning the "myth of the Origins": what is "national heritage" if not a kind of ideological fossil created retroactively by the ruling ideology in order to blur its present antagonism?"

The "present antagonisms" in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1980s were obviously creating an "ideological" disorientation and the recourse to nationalism. The invention of ethnic traditions and histories were therefore an ideological tool to resolve those
antagonisms in order to redefine the field of sociality and cooperation. As Glen Bowman points out, this redefinition of the social field could be best explained with the discursive shift from "brotherhood and unity" towards "blood and land" rhetoric:

What Milosevic, Tudjman and other nationalist politicians have gained by playing the ethnic card in their quest for power seems clear. By transforming the discursive field of the social from one based on cohabitation and co-operation ("unity and brotherhood") to one based on exclusivity and ethnic warfare ("blood and land") they have been able, first of all, to displace people's self-interest on to a plane where self-interest is defined in essentialist terms as the interest of oneself as a "Serb," a "Croat," a "Slovene," or whatever.19

The transformation of the discursive field, which brought with it new ideological fantasies of "national heritage" or "national self-interest," went hand in hand with the transformation of identities. Bowman20 focuses on a phenomenon in Yugoslavia of the late 1980s which could be best described as the return or revival of uncanny "ghosts from the past" which haunted the memories of the genocidal events during the Second World War. In 1989, Croatian press and television published photographs and video of caves full of stacked bones, pictures of bodies of thousands of Croatian and Slovene victims of the partisan revenge massacres. In order to cleanse the Croat national image of their past Nazi collaboration, this topic remained taboo under Communism. These bones played a substantial role in the creation of national identity when the Serbs of the Krajna region in Croatia invited local and Serbian journalists and photographers into caves where skeletons of Krajna Serbs massacred by "Ustase" during the Nazi occupation had been cached. Contrary to the Krajna Serbs, the inhabitants of Serbia itself had not experienced the Ustase terror, and the wartime suffering had come at the hands of the Germans and other foreign occupiers, especially the 500 years lasting occupation of Serbia by the Ottoman empire. The Serbian nationalist discourse therefore reinvented their "myths of Origins" around the defeat of the Serbian armies under Prince Lazar by the Ottoman invaders on Kosovo Polje in 1389. Again, the bones of the "glorious" victims of the Muslim invasion played a crucial role for the re-definition of history and identity in the Serbian nationalist discourse.

Slavoj Zizek discusses in his Liebe Dein Symptom wie Dich Selbst the motive of the "return of the living dead" as a fundamental phantasm of the present popular culture (in vampire or science fiction films for example), which enables us to re-contextualize the "return of ghosts" in the Yugoslavian public sphere. Zizek explains the phenomenon of why the dead recur, with reference to Lacanian psychoanalysis:

Why do the dead recur? The answer that Lacan gives to us is the same one, we can find in popular culture: because they were not buried correctly, i.e. because something was missing at their funeral. The recurrence of the dead is a sign of a trouble in the symbolic rite, in the process of symbolization; the dead recur as collectors of a not settled symbolic debt.21
As we have seen above, the disavowal of past horrors during Communism demanded a hidden form for survivor memories of trauma. Nevertheless, a different—in this case, violent—examination of this traumatic history could only occur after the disintegration of Communism. After the break-down of the social and symbolic order of Communism, a discursive shift towards nationalism occurred in the public sphere, invoking a spirit of xenophobia, ethnic hatred and revival of past horrors. These public discursive obsessions with historical traumas and the horrors of the past can be explained with what Zizek describes as a failed integration of a symbolic guilt which had yet to be paid off.

The "Own" and the "Other" Nation: The Primal Fantasies of Nationalists

These reemerging traumas played a crucial role for Croats as well as for Serbs in their nationalist redefinition of identity and history, but it also played a crucial role in the definition of "the enemy," the "other" nation or group, which constitutes a threat for the "own" nation, conjured up by images of its past exterminations and victimizations. The Krajna Serbs created their nationalist discourse in antagonism with the Croat Ustase. The articulation of a Serbian discourse—which was grounded on antagonisms towards Muslims, "Nazis" (Germans and Croats) and especially Kosovars—served to reconstitute Serbia as a locus of identity and self-interest.

Zizek explains how a nation or national identification is constituted beyond its public discourses through a specific enjoyment, which designates the specific "way of life" of a group:

The pure discursive effect does not have enough "substance" to compel the attraction proper to a Cause—... the only substance acknowledged by psychoanalysis, is of course enjoyment. ... A nation exists only as long as its specific enjoyment continues to be materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices.22

The individual identifies with the specific myths of a nation's enjoyment, which structure everyday beliefs and practices of the group. Nationalism is, according to Zizek, the eruption of enjoyment into the social field.23 During phases of ethnic tension, the nation becomes the "Thing," the source of our enjoyment. The "other" becomes the one who tries to steal our enjoyment away from us by ruining "our way of life"—but "what really bothers us about the 'other' is the peculiar way he organizes his enjoyment, precisely the surplus, the excess that pertains to this way: the smell of 'their' food, 'their' noisy songs and dances, 'their' strange manners, 'their' attitude to work."24 The hatred of the enjoyment of the "other" is thus rooted in the threat that he permanently tries to steal "our" enjoyment, like a thief who tries to steal the very basis of "our" existence. This psychic construction refers to the scenario (primal fantasy) played out during the Oedipal crisis of an individual, particularly the castration anxiety. The theft of enjoyment by the other equals therefore an imaginary castration, which threatens the very substance (jouissance) of one's own existence.
But how could these rhetorics and discourses of nationalism and xenophobia result in such extreme ethnic violence, genocidal exterminations and incomprehensible obsessions with bloody warfare? Following the lead of Lacanian psychoanalysis, Glen Bowman suggests, that

we must look beyond the rhetoric of social discourses to those primal fantasies mobilized by those rhetorics. These fantasies, generated by the first encounter of the human infant with the symbolic order, resonate with and impel the subject to answer to the call to inflict absolute violence against an absolute enemy.25

The mobilization of primal fantasies by those nationalist discourses demands a psychoanalytic understanding of the individual's breakdown of symbolic reliance and regression into primal fantasies, leading into irrational behavior and violence. After the moment in which the world is taken up by language (the entry into the symbolic order), primal enjoyment (jouissance) remains only as a trace of absence. This moment can be described metaphorically as the moment of a traumatic "amputation"—something very brutal has been done to us to separate us from that part which gave us our pleasure and this brings up the question of "who has done this brutal amputation to us?" This violator is designated in Lacanian terms as the Name of the Father, and it is this instance which confronts the infant with its primal loss and its incursion into signification. Once the child comes to recognize the necessity of operating within the symbolic order, it channels its desires into certain patterns of behavior by learning that certain activities will provide fulfillment and others punishment. If the child continues to desire what is forbidden, it will be deprived of the possibility of any future pleasures, which the child recognizes as castration. Therefore the threat of castration must be internalized by the growing child in the unconscious, in order to learn to abandon and substitute its desires by objects society acknowledges as appropriate. The return to jouissance—which the Oedipal fantasy evokes, before the threat of castration drives it back into the unconscious—must remain an impossible fantasy for a properly socialized person. Nevertheless, this complex construction of identity remains inscribed in the unconscious and people will always encounter frustrations of their strategies of fulfillment. At such frustrating moments, the pre-linguistic Oedipal scenario, where a "demonic" antagonist is perceived as a being which exists only to steal a subject's fantasies of pleasure and fulfillment, can return. Persons are likely to respond with irrational behavior, primal rage and violence when frustration of desire evokes the presence of a demonic antagonist. In the case of certain persons where the internalization of the castration anxiety never occurred, the logic of the psychic structure remains in the pre-linguistic Oedipal fantasy, polarized between desire and antagonism on the full field of their relations with society. They interpret the world in terms of dualisms, dividing all the elements of the social field into friend and enemy. As Bowman argues, certain public discourses can be designated as having those structures of primal fantasies of dualisms—for example, those nationalist discourses in Serbia and Croatia:

Certain discursive structures ... draw upon the psychic opposition of antagonist and ego by establishing as real and normative a world polarized between obdurate enemies and a community threatened by them. The forms of nationalism which have been
mobilized in Serbia and Croatia ... draw upon this unconscious structure, and mobilize the passions caught up in it by setting up the 'real' nation as the part object which covers lack.26

In these nationalist discourses, fulfillment follows from the realization of the "own" Nation, which recuperates jouissance, but also from the destruction of the nation's others, as incarnations of the demonic antagonist threatening this fulfillment. This demonic other nation's only reason for being is the desire to deny, steal and destroy the "own" nation. It is the incorporation of evil: it steals land, rapes women, desecrates holy objects and annihilates the "own" nation. The promise of a liberation from this evil antagonist would restore the true nation and realize authentic identities.

Pathological Identity Politics: Serbia's Wound Culture

In the countries of former Yugoslavia and particularly in Serbia, the propagandist rhetorics of politicians, the media, the orthodox church and others have succeeded in transposing fantasies of ethnic nationalism so effectively onto unconscious structures of antagonism and hatred, that the people passionately took up these ethnic identities and reconstructions of previous neighbours as blood enemies. As mentioned above, Bowman talks about public discourses which can take on this primal fantasies of demonic antagonists threatening the existence of the own nation, and refers to a term introduced by Adorno and Horkheimer in their Dialectics of Enlightenment27: the paranoid public sphere. This paranoid public sphere was produced in Serbia by propaganda, where the leader (Milosevic) and the enemy (Croats, Nazis, Muslims, Albanians) played the crucial and operative elements:

One fights against the enemy under the guidance of the leader in order to "recover" the nation, but since access to the pure enjoyment of being which the nationalist rhetoric claims will be afforded by the defeat of the enemy is always already blocked by the limitations of both social and psychic realities, the destruction of the enemy will always prove inadequate. Implicit in the psychic structure on which nationalist rhetoric draws is a spiral of violence which leads the members of the national community to always, at the moment of victory, seek yet another enemy who can be blamed for the "real" nation's not being in the place they have just recovered from the enemy they have defeated.28

The paranoid spiral of violence led Serbia's people to believe in always new "demonic enemies"—the Croats, the Albanians in Kosovo, the Muslims in Bosnia—which threaten to destroy their impossible jouissance with their nation.

After the Dayton Peace Accord in December 1995, Serbia again faced a heavy economic and social crisis due to the aftermath of United Nations sanctions and to Milosevic's international political isolation. The paranoid spiral of violence against others went in various directions. The Serbian army fought a civil war against the KLA in Kosovo while the Serbian police moved against so-called "homeland traitors" (independent journalists or opposition politicians inside Serbia). Public violence, youth criminality, drug addiction and criminal gangs became an everyday phenomenon in the
Serbian urban centers such as Belgrade, Nis or Novi Sad. Particularly in the urban peripheries and suburban slums a new criminality appeared during the 1990s. The socio-political situation in Serbia during this period could be defined as paranoid and nationalistic. Nevertheless, the Serbian public sphere was not only dominated by these paranoid discourses of xenophobia and ethnic hatred, but also by spectacles of public violence. They became a crossing point, where collective fantasies and private desires melted into each other, becoming a collective gathering and fascination around the spectacles of past and present massacres, bones of dead bodies and violent and criminal behavior. Television talk shows, films, the daily news, boulevard magazines and newspapers were flooded day in and out with these spectacles of past and present public violence.

The protagonists of this public attention and fascination were war criminals and mass murderers. For example, the serial bank robber, burglar and prison escapee Zeljko Raznatovic (better known as "Arkan")—who, after marrying a popular Serbian sex-icon of the so-called pop-folk scene (Ceca) and buying a Belgrade soccer club—became a national "hero" and legend for the upcoming new generation of suburban criminals. Arkan established his own paramilitary unit, called the Serbian Voluntary Squad, and took part in various raids on Croatian and Bosnian territory and became a close friend of president Milosevic and his wife Mirijana Markovic. Arkan became a symbolic figure within this pathological Serbian public sphere.

What constitutes such a sphere of pathological public fascination? American cultural theorist Mark Seltzer takes the figure of the serial killer as exemplary for the constitution of a "pathological public sphere." He shows how compulsive killing is one of the crucial elements of America's public culture at the end of this century, in which addictive violence has become a collective spectacle and a nodal point where private desire and public fantasies cross. According to Seltzer, the figure of the serial killer becomes crucial in such pathologized public spheres when he achieves the status of a "celebrity." He fulfills the "desire to be somebody" through the public attention of mass media. The figure of the serial killer (as embodied in persons like Arkan) became central in Serbia's popular culture—and above that, a crucial figure for identification and public fantasies within popular representations in the Serbian TV, print media and fiction.

The most crucial feature of such pathological public spheres is what Mark Seltzer describes as wound culture: "the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound." The mass media spectacles of violence, destruction and violated bodies was one of the features of the war in Bosnia. Scenes of massacres and interviews with raped women became the most shocking representations of the war. The notion of trauma (Greek for "wound") is also central in understanding first of all the post-war instabilities in Yugoslavia (caused by the Second World War) as well as the reemergence of nationalism (ghosts from the past). The experience, representation and even obsession with historical traumas and wounded bodies continued for the Yugoslav people.
According to Seltzer, the pathological public sphere is defined by vague and shifting lines between the singularity or privacy of the subject and the collective forms of representation (fantasy). In keeping with this, Seltzer argues:

the trauma has surfaced as a sort of crossing point of the "psycho-social". The very uncertainties as to the status of the wound in trauma—as psychical or physical, as private or public, as a matter of representation (fantasy) or as a matter of perception (event) .... The notion of the trauma has thus come to function not merely as a sort of switchpoint between bodily and psychic orders; it has, beyond that, come to function as a switchpoint between individual and collective, private and public orders of things. The wound and its strange attractions have become one way of locating the violence and the erotics at the crossing point of private fantasy and collective space: one way of locating what I have been calling the pathological public sphere.34

The manifestation of trauma is thus inseparable from the breakdown of boundaries between the psychic and the social, representation and perception, subject and world, because trauma is defined itself as a breakdown of the boundaries between inside and outside—as a violent shattering of the autonomy of the subject. Compulsive killing follows as a result of this vague borderline between reality and fantasy.

The serial killer (or "mass" murderer) fails to distance himself from representation—he acts out what others merely think and transforms private desires into public acts. He becomes the cross-point of the collective-subjective, the "mass in person." One has to reinterpret or recontextualize the notion of wound-culture in Serbia by considering the breakdown of the Communist symbolic order and the occurrence of a nationalist culture of narcissism. The figure of the war criminal as serial killer and "mass" murderer can be seen as a cross-point of the Serbian pathological public sphere. He becomes the nationalist mass in person, acting out the primal fantasies of antagonisms against enemies. The mass-murdering and wounding of these national enemies became the site of a new folkloristic Serbian "sociality."35

As I have tried to outline above, Serbia's paranoid public sphere relies on pre-Oedipal fantasies—an eruption of inside into outside, of jouissance into social reality. Public violence in Serbia has become a shared social space, which is essentially pathological—or as one might say, psychotic. What happened in Serbia in the phase of transition from socialism to capitalism was the emergence of nationalism and fascism as a shock absorber for the sudden exposure of capitalist alienation and deterritorialization—a desire to recuperate the lost sense of community and shared sociality qua identification with the nation as the source of stable identities.36

IV. Identity, Trauma and Fantasy in the Films of Emir Kusturica and Srdjan Dragojevic

Blood Brothers and "Brotherhood and Unity"
What lends continuity throughout the films of Kusturica and Dragojevic, despite the change of genres, contexts and generations, is an obsession with the theme of the "blood brother" friendship that turns into a "bloody friendship." There is constant reference to the "Brotherhood and Unity" dogma, the most repetitive and dominant slogan or formula of Tito's Yugoslavia. Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames even sets its stage in the "Brotherhood and Unity" tunnel. This recurring theme points toward problems of identity on both the individual and collective level: the problem of the Self and the (Br)Other and that of an imaginary community with its ideologies of "Brotherhood" kinship as official social bond.

The problem of the split subject, divided into Self and Other, is a prominent theme of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Under threat of the disunity, the subject takes on primal fantasies of castration. In the case of psychosis, unconscious repressed desires erupt onto the outside. The unconscious in this sense, threatens our sense of unity. The other becomes in such cases both a loved and hated mirror or self-image. Thomas Elsaesser discovered the constellation of the "Double" as one of the predominant themes in the New German Cinema of Wim Wenders, Fassbinder and Werner Herzog, as well as German expressionist cinema and in film noir.

The situation where a character seeks or encounters an Other, only to put himself in their place ... turn them into an idealized, loved, and hated self-image, is of course the constellation of the Double, analyzed by Freud in terms of castration anxiety and secondary narcissism. If one can agree that, especially in the light of Metz's and Baudry's use of Lacan's mirror phase, the problematic of Other and Double has emerged as the cinematic structure par excellence, then its predominance as the cinematic theme par excellence of German films seems to demand further exploration. In classical narrative, the double and the split subject make up the repressed structure of primary identification. It appears that in the German films, because this structure is actually represented on screen, it points to a repression elsewhere, which in turn might serve to "deconstruct" primary identification.

One can say that for these Serbian films, the structure of the Other and the Double is represented through the "blood brother" plot, emerging, as with the New German cinema, as a predominant theme. This structure points towards fears of losing identity and self-annihilation through resemblance to the Other.

Underground

In Underground, the structure of the double and the Other is set within a metaphorical story of power relations, deceptions and betrayals in the history of Communist Yugoslavia. Marco puts himself into the place of Blacky, as he desires the same women and as he takes on Blacky's role as a leader of the anti-Nazi resistance. The double is loved because Marco loves himself in him, which is also why Blacky provokes hatred and hostility, inasmuch as he is too close to him. Marco's simulation scenario becomes an obsessive narcissistic scenario, because his over-identification with Blacky turns into a pathological over-differentiation, an obsessive exploitation and deceiving of his "other."
The Other as a loved and hated self-image takes on almost manic expressions: Marco fictionalizes his friend as a hero and ideal in film, poetry and even as a statue, but sleeps with his beloved women and exploits him shamelessly. Blacky therefore becomes a figure of Marco's narcissistic self-image, a fantasy product (a legend of the resistance), but annihilates his existence because of his strong projective resemblance with him. The film translates the subtext of the brotherhood and unity formula into narcissistic over-identification and resemblance that turns into annihilation. One can say that the film portrays, on a metaphoric level, the psychological dynamics of the fake folkloristic bond between leaders and people in Communist Yugoslavia—Communist deceptions of unity between the classes, the leaders as proletariat and the proletariat as leaders: a pathological resemblance and over-identification that turns into exploitation and annihilation by those who had the power to create those ideological fantasies.

Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames

Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames focuses on the ethnical conflict between Self and Other in the context of Bosnia. The Serb Milan seems to share a similar obsession with his "Other," the Muslim Halil, as loved and hated self-image. In fact, the entrapment in the tunnel metaphorizes Milan's and the Serb's entrapment in their unconscious. The Muslims outside of the tunnel become, in this narrative, the voices and shadows of the "Other," former neighbours now blood enemies. The over-identification of the Serbs, and particularly of Milan with their Muslim neighbours before the war broke out, is best symbolized in the childhood flashback: when Halil warns Milan not to enter the tunnel, because there is a dangerous ogre living inside of it and when it comes out, it will burn all the villages. Dragan Bjelogrlic, the producer and protagonist of the film, explained in an interview: "The ogre stands in for the fear of difference, which the people of Bosnia never have been able to accept. ... Communism and Brotherhood and Unity has tried to hide this ogre and to lock him up into a cave." The "fear of difference" is maybe best described as a pathological over-identification with the Other as described above. The narcissistic idealizing of the Other as a projection of one's own beloved self-image turns, when it comes too close, into a desire to exterminate the Other in the fear of losing one's own identity. This too-closeness of neighbours provokes violence, or as Borch-Jacobsen explains: "To love one's own neighbour as oneself is no doubt the shortest route to cutting his throat."39

Wounds

In Wounds, Pinki's Other is already with his very name paradoxically designated as the Serbian Other par excellence: Svaba means German in Serbo-Croatian. Nevertheless, this name does not necessarily signify Svaba as a German, but it is merely a symbolic signifier for Pinki's other. It was even the wish of Stojan—Pinki's father—to name his son after Tito, because Pinki was born on the day of Tito's death. Pinki's over-identification with Svaba is underlined throughout Wounds in various scenes, but most significantly in one where Pinki calls Svaba on the phone to tell him that he wants to meet him for their final encounter on the graveyard. The screen is split into two images, both showing Pinki and Svaba in a mirror. In the middle foreground of the image there is
an unidentifiable shadow of a body, that belongs, one can say, to both characters. The mise en scene of this short scene perhaps best illustrates the extreme resemblance between both of the characters or their narcissistic mirroring of each other. It is no coincidence that immediately after this scene Pinki and Svaba kill each other in the graveyard by inflicting the exactly same number of wounds to each other. The wounds become in this case the only identificatory resemblance that remains for the two protagonists, which signifies both the breakdown of the difference between self and other and the collapse of the determinacy of the subject. Wounds makes in this sense a final metaphorization of the collapse of Serbia's self-image, as it illustrates the self-destructive drive of the protagonists.

The Breakdown of the Oedipal Narrative

Reappearing throughout the films of Kusturica and Dragojevic is the Oedipal conflict between father, or father substitutes, and sons. In none of the films does the Oedipal conflict find resolution, although they portray an almost desperate obsession with the Oedipal theme. Instead, the father figures are either deceived and lose their sense of reality (Underground), are accused of living a life based on lies and worn out ideas (Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames), or are simply found to be failures (Wounds).

The Oedipal trajectory constitutes the conventional structure of the classic narrative film by allowing the male protagonist to successfully (or unsuccessfully, as for example in film noir) fulfill the trajectory through the resolution of a crisis, and subsequent movement towards social stability. If he fails to achieve this trajectory, then it is possible to speak of a "masculinity in crisis."40 Kaja Silverman explains in this context:

Not only does a loss of belief in the dominant fiction generally lead to a loss of belief in male adequacy, but the spectacle of male castration may very well result in a destructive questioning of the dominant fiction. Male subjectivity is a kind of stress point, the juncture at which social crisis and turmoil frequently find most dramatic expression.41

Two aspects are of crucial importance here: the loss of belief in the dominant fiction in times of social crisis, and through that, a crisis in the representation of male subjectivity. As the representation and resolution of the Oedipal trajectory is the crucial factor for the establishment of male subjectivity in narrative films, the failure to achieve this Oedipal trajectory becomes evidence or a sign of a crisis of subjectivity within a specific historical and cultural context. The stress point of male subjectivity in crisis is indeed thematically central in the films of Kusturica and Dragojevic. The three generations these films portray—the grandfathers who fought for the partisans during the Second World War in Underground, their sons who were caught up in nationalistic fantasies and an ethnic warfare against their neighbours in Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames, and the generation that was born after Tito's death in Wounds—restage the theme of the Oedipal conflict.

Underground
Marco and Blacky represent the founding fathers of the Yugoslavian nation. They stand in for two types of leaders that liberated Yugoslavia from the Nazi occupation: Blacky, the underground resistance fighter for Tito, and Marco the Communist functionary which existed from the first days of the foundation of the state. Blacky’s son, Jovan, is born on the same day that his father and other resistance fighters enter the underground. This ironic illustration of the birth of the nation marks the beginning of the Nazi resistance fight as simultaneous with the birth of Yugoslavia as a nation. The father-son conflict between Blacky and Jovan becomes a metaphoric relation between the founding fathers and their sons. When Blacky and Jovan escape from the underground, Blacky loses his son in the Danube and continues to search for him for the rest of his life. This loss must also be seen metaphorically, since it is the idea of Yugoslavia itself that gets lost after exiting the underground. It can be seen as the loss of the belief in the dominant fiction that provided the phantasmatic support for the ideology. The Oedipal trajectory fails and the (grand-)fathers remain without sons—they simply disappear. The narrative does not succeed in resolving a crisis but ends up in a new one—the Bosnian war. In the terms of a family epic that symbolizes the fate of a nation, Underground narrates a story of repetitions or of the return of the historically repressed, rather than a story of progressions through Oedipal trajectories. This is maybe why the motif of the circle, with both its folkloristic and its nostalgic connotations, stands at the core of Underground's mise en scene.

Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames

In Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames, the sons are trapped with their fathers in an underground again. The "Brotherhood and Unity" tunnel appears as a continuation of the Communist underground. At the same time, the theme of failed Oedipal trajectory finds a distinct articulation in Dragojevic's film. The generational conflict between Veljo and the former JNA officer Gvozden is the most crucial thematization of the father-son conflict in Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames. It expresses the sons' loss of belief and respect for the anti-Nazi resistance and the old Communist ideals of brotherhood and unity. Another character, Speedy, unable to identify with his militaristic father, becomes a drug addict, thus representing the "failed" son. The regression into primal fantasies of self and other can be seen as an effect of this non-identification with the symbolic Name of the Father, the failed attempt to enter the symbolic order of the Father's law. The tunnel is a metaphor for this regression to the mirror stage. The invisible Muslim voices echoing outside represent the unconscious voices of the hated other, the life threatening antagonist, who is in fact a product of this regression into primal fantasy, which again, can be seen as a direct result of the rejection of the identification with the father's generation.

Wounds

In Wounds, there is a different loss of belief in the father generation. Wounds' narrative focuses on the Oedipal conflicts more than either Underground or Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames because the film depicts the difficult stage of puberty within the
lives of the two protagonists. They are twelve years old when the war and the nationalist
euphoria starts and seventeen when they die during the anti-Milosevic demonstrations.
The film centers on the father-son conflicts between Pinki and Stojan on the one side and
Svaba and Kure on the other. Stojan, Pinki's father (a retired JNA officer), is played by
Miki Manojlović (who played Marko in Underground) while Kure (the small local
gangster) is portrayed by Dragan Bjelogrlic, who performed the role of Milan in Pretty
Villages, Pretty Flames. Both actors represent father figures, and through resonance with
their previous roles discussed above, they stand as well the continuing theme of the failed
Oedipal trajectory. Pinki as well as Svaba can not identify with their weak fathers or
father substitutes, because they observe their slow decay and ruin, mirroring their failed
lives. Stojan was retired from his job as a JNA officer and is doomed to stay passively at
home when the war starts. Following the economic ruin of his country, he commits
suicide. Kure teaches Svaba to become a tough guy after his own image, but when he
starts to take drugs excessively out of despair, the glorious stories of his life as gangster
in the "good old days" of bank robberies and decadence in Frankfurt become revealed as
empty and idle; Svaba himself kills him during night in a dark corner of a suburban
staircase. The violent rejection of paternal identification drives the teenagers to copy
fictional heroes from television. This narcissistic form of roleplaying as mimetic
identification turns them to killing and wounding, because it is exactly this which
authenticates their identity within the social sphere. Mark Seltzer explains with regard to
the identity of the serial killer:

The identification with others, in this fashion, makes for the destruction of others—
that is, destruction for fuller possession. The stakes of the murder are thus not finally the
possession of an object of love or pleasure but self-possession: the repeated, and
repeatedly failed attempt, to pass through identification to identity.42

In this sense, the breakdown of the symbolic order and the recourse to psychosis
(taking representation as reality) results in identification through possessing and killing
the other. At the end there only remains to kill the self in the other as a final attempt to
pass through identification to identity.

Undergrounds, Tunnels and Graveyards: "The Return of the Repressed"

All three films provide a narrative of "dark spaces" which lead to a proliferation of
meaning that I want to outline in this final section. These "dark spaces" refer either to
specifically cinematic discourses or make a distinct interpretation of Serbian history. It is
crucial to point out that these metaphors have to be interpreted by means of their sub-
contexts, especially the relationship between historical trauma and fantasy. These
relations are metaphors for the breakdown of Yugoslavia—or as one might say, images of
the crisis and breakdown of the symbolic order. The underground, the tunnel and the
graveyard are all metaphors for the unconscious, for something that was or is disavowed
and hidden in the Serbian public sphere. They thematize in cinematic images something
that could be best described as the return of the repressed or the return of the real.
One can therefore draw specific connections between the return of the repressed, fantasy and cinema. Fantasy is inextricably linked with desire, which is located in the Imaginary—that is, the unconscious. Fantasy, then, is the conscious articulation of desire, through either images or stories—it is the mise en scene of desire. In this context, film puts desire up on screen. The cinematic apparatus and the cinematic screen function in this respect to position us as voyeurs to our own fantasies. Storytelling creates fantasies that emerge from our unconscious desires and fears; cinematic narrative places these fantasies before our eyes. Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis explain in their New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics:

The spectator of the cinema is a desiring spectator, and within the psychoanalytic framework, both the viewing state that "constructs" this spectator and the film-text itself are seen to mobilize the structures of unconscious fantasy. More than any other form, the cinema is capable of actually reproducing or approximating the structure and logic of dreams and the unconscious. In fact, all three films I have discussed offer several mise en abyme devices and references to those metaphors as being both metaphors of the unconscious and of cinema itself. The underground and the tunnel refer to Plato's cave metaphor, which served 1970s psychoanalytic film theory (especially Baudry and Metz) as a metaphor for the unconscious structures of cinema as a projection of the fantasies of the pre-Oedipal mirror stage. The graveyard refers to another explicit film historical issue, namely the figure of the undead or the vampire films, which have at the core of their spatial iconography the graveyard with undead bodies. The vampire stands for the eternal return of the Real in popular culture and cinema, as Slavoj Zizek describes: "The recurrence of the living dead embodies a certain symbolic debt, which survives over its physical annulment." If something gets excluded from the symbolic, it appears in the real—it is like a hole in the Symbolic order.

Yugoslavia's Unconscious: "Hunting Nazi's and Losing Reality"

When Blacky and his son Jovan escape out of their underground world and face the film set of the anti-fascist propaganda movie, they believe that what they see is real and not just a film: Yugoslavia is still occupied by the Nazis and there are still partisans who fight against the oppression. Years later, Blacky has become the leader of a paramilitary unit, destroying villages in the Bosnian war. When a British UN officer questions him about his loyalties (Cetnik, Ustase or partisan) Blacky does not waste time on explaining his ethnicity or ideology. He says: "I'm fighting for my country. Fuck off, you fascist!" The Communist deceptions lead into a pathological loss of reality and finally into a fictitious hunt for fascists in the Bosnian war—this is what Underground suggests.

It is to my opinion that the insights of Jean Baudrillard's 1989 essay, Hunting Nazi's and Losing Reality should be extended to the post-Communist developments in the Balkans. Baudrillard emphasizes that nostalgia for Fascism is not dangerous, but
what is dangerous is this pathological revival of the past, which everyone ... is currently participating (indeed virtually conniving) in, this collective hallucination which transfers the power of imagination that is lacking from our own period, and all the burden of violence and reality, which has today become merely illusory, back to that earlier period in a sort of compulsion to re-live its history, a compulsion accompanied by a profound sense of guilt at not having been there.48

Baudrillard suggests that this pathological revival of the past has to be understood psychoanalytically as a collective hallucination, a compulsion neurosis which emerged out of a merely virtual relation to the horrors of the past. A guilt complex emerges out of the absence of those realities of violence and war in the present and imaginary fantasies that create a desire to relive those past experiences. The collective character of these post-traumatic reenactments of past horrors is therefore a phantasmatic one, mirrored in films, literature or other popular fictions.

For Baudrillard, the concept of representation has become an empty signifier, as he describes in his influential essay Simulacra and Simulations.49 Representations are more a means to conceal the anxiety of the absence of reality: that the representation has nothing behind it; it is a simulacrum, hyperreal without origin.50 Since the rational-scientific world of modernity distances us from reality, and even makes our access to it abstract, fictions and fantasy replace reality, affirming "truths" and the "real" by proclaiming themselves as non-real. This is why our relation to past events is a genuinely virtual one. The guilt complex of "not having been there" emerges out of the feeling that all those past events are merely simulacras. This vicious circle results in a "dangerous" or pathological desire to relive those (non-real) fantasies. These dangerous tendencies sensed in 1989 by Baudrillard became bitter reality in post-Communist Yugoslavia. In a way, representations (fantasies) have been taken too literally. They act out what others merely thought—Serbs hunted fascist Croats because their separatist tendencies were connected to the atrocities of the fascist Ustase regime during the Second World War. The Serbs were considered fascists, because their nationalist policy of ethnic cleansing was reminescent of Hitler's policy of ethnic extermination.

Blacky was not "there." He was kept for over twenty years in a passive and phantasmatic relation to "reality." When he comes out in another "reality," he acts like a hallucinating psychopath with a pathological desire to relive his non-real past. He literally loses his sense of reality, but what he really loses is his ideological fantasy, his phantasmatic frame: the fight against fascism. Slavoj Zizek explains:

When the phantasmatic frame disintegrates, the subject undergoes a 'loss of reality' and starts to perceive reality as an 'irreal' nightmarish universe with no firm ontological foundation; this nightmarish universe is not 'pure fantasy' but, on the contrary, that which remains of reality after reality is deprived of its support in fantasy.51

The film offers a "meta-narrative" of the history of Yugoslavia that is genuinely psychoanalytic—an image of collective unconscious fantasies, a cinematic underground so to say, revealing both repressed Nazi paranoia (mirrored in so many partisan films)
and disavowed historical traumas (of Nazi atrocities). The underground stands for this phantasmatic Yugoslavia of collective repressions.

**Bosnia's Heart of Darkness: Regression into Primal Fantasies**

The "Brotherhood and Unity" tunnel stands for another disavowal, namely, as mentioned above, the disavowal of (ethnic) difference. The tunnel serves as a metaphor for the collective regression into the mirror stage and for the phantasmatic nationalist construction of primal antagonists, of the life-threatening other. The Muslim voices symbolize perfectly what Zizek described as the "neighbours' ugly voice", which stands for the hated jouissance of the neighbour-"other," his "ugly jouissance". The invisible Muslim "voice-over" in Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames sing songs that are "theirs" and the Serbs respond with their "own" songs. These voices are a literal and figurative embodiment of Serbian unconscious voices. They hear "their" hated manners, jokes and songs, and thus their peculiar enjoyment, which threatens to steal the very "own" essential enjoyment from the Serbs.

This fear can be translated as a phantasmatic "theft of enjoyment," an imaginary castration. The film introduces the topic of castration at its very beginning when the "Brotherhood and Unity" tunnel is opened: a newsreel from 1971 shows a high Yugoslav functionary cutting his finger while officially opening the tunnel. The bloody finger is superimposed with the dark entrance of the tunnel and foreshadows the coming breakdown of brotherhood and unity. Nevertheless, the same cut finger stands also for the fear of castration which is a central threat of primal fantasies.

The Real therefore is symbolized in the film through various images or metaphors: the cut finger or the neighbours' "ugly jouissance" (their voices), but most centrally by the tunnel itself, which can be seen as a hole in the Symbolic order ("Brotherhood and Unity"). The Real is an ambiguous traumatic-excessive enjoyment and is always linked with death and sexuality. The tunnel metaphorizes this ambiguity: as a metaphor for the unconscious it connotes the male fear of the vagina—a primal castration anxiety and life-threatening excessive enjoyment.

Considering the film's various references to partisan films or other combat movies, the connotations of the tunnel as a cave and the Muslims as shadows at the end of the tunnel also suggest an interpretation that includes a double bind: on the one side the tunnel symbolizes the Real (castration, death and sexuality) and on the other the Imaginary (fantasies of the other, Plato's cave metaphor). Film theory repeatedly emphasized that the experience of film viewing can be equated with a reenactment of desires and unconscious fantasies. Pretty Villages Pretty Flames exposes these features as a reenactment for both viewer and the film's characters. Entrapment in the tunnel becomes a reenactment of primal fantasies and, as it is narrated through Milan's subjective flashbacks, also a reenactment of trauma. The tunnel therefore can be seen as a complex mise en abyme device, revealing both the phantasmatic or imaginary character of the film viewing experience and the Bosnian war. The film recontextualizes Conrad's Heart of Darkness (through its explicit reference to Apocalypse Now) within the Bosnian
experience. It is not the imperial traumatic confrontation with the other, the dark side of the colonial self, but the confrontation with Serbia's primal fantasies of castration and life-threatening antagonists which are merely voices of the "own" unconscious—the heart of darkness ("the horror") in the (Serbian) self.

Serbia's Ghosts from the Past: Wounds in the Symbolic Order

Given that the graveyard and the crucifix lie at the core of Wounds' iconography and mise en scene, the film partakes in the traditional iconography of vampire films. Ken Gelder draws an interesting parallel between cinema and the figure of the vampire as an essentially cinematic creature:

Accounts of early forms of modern cinema ... likewise focus on its ability to make 'images come to life', to overcome death itself and to appear more alive than we imagine ourselves to be .... Moreover, cinema 'recruits' its audience, calling them back again and again: the 'dream industry' was, from its very beginning, driven by the need for profitability, successfully combining ... commerce and the imaginary. This is certainly a place which the vampire might inevitably inhabit—as a seductive, fascinating creature of the night, tied to the reproductive technologies of the modern age and to the accumulation of capital—a creature who, like cinema itself, throws the usual polarity of the real and the illusory, belief and disbelief, into question.54

The figure of the vampire connotes certain relays—for example, that between the imaginary and commerce or between reproduction (simulation) and the living dead. The theme of repetition, cliché and reworking applies to both the vampire myth and to cinema and popular culture itself. The vampire can be seen as an archetypal movie motif, because the theme of the undead and its reappearances, recyclings and "eternal return" is central to cinema's power of simulation and constant reworking of genres, motifs or cinematic figures and heroes.

Wounds practices this (postmodern) aesthetic of reference and pastiche, but the film also connotes through its imagery of death that there is a close proximity between a culture of simulations and death. More concretely, the theme of the living dead is represented in Wounds by the figure of the gangster in cinema and television. Pinki, Svaba and Kure are all copies of their (living dead) gangster heroes. For them, these fictional figures are far more real then themselves, because they are far more alive than themselves. This is simultaneously the definition Zizek gives for the vampire. "The paradox of the vampires is that, precisely as 'living dead', they are far more alive than us, mortified by the symbolic network ... the real 'living dead' are we, common mortals, condemned to vegetate in the Symbolic."55 The vampire is, in effect, the return of the Real, as he represents the traumatic-excessive enjoyment as a figure of pure drive.

It is no coincidence that Svaba's father substitute, Kure, is buried in exactly the graveyard where Svaba and Pinki finally kill each other. One of the grotesque burying rituals in this scene is that Kure's former gangster friend, Biber, opens a bottle of Sljivovic and turns it upside down into Kure's grave. Kure, in a way, represents the "pure
Balkanian drive" of drinking, eating, copulating, singing and killing—the typical Serbian male chauvinist—and even after he is dead, he remains alive as pure drive, drinking his Sljivovic.

If one considers the role of graveyards, bones of dead bodies, and whole skeletons in the return of Serbian nationalism and genocidal exterminations in Bosnia and in Kosovo, the eternal return of historical traumas and their reenactments, the graveyard in Wounds becomes an uncanny metaphor for the return of the repressed—the eternal return of those Serbian "ghosts from the past." The wounds, representing most literally the Real as raw, skinless, red flesh, stand in for this hole in the Serbian symbolic order—they are the traumatic historical wounds that eternally return, because they were not buried properly.

V. Conclusion

The use of Lacanian categories of the subject throughout this paper has been to show the implicit psychological themes and structures the films provide, but more crucially, the implicit cultural conflicts within the Serbian phantasmatic reality the films reflect upon. The crisis of (male) subjectivity and ideological fantasies that the films reveal both on a microscopic and individual, as well as a metaphorical and collective level, represent in popular culture what one might call the breakdown of the symbolic order and its aftermaths, the regression into primary fantasies, the loss of reality (or its phantasmatic support) and of identity. Underground shows clearly how a phantasmatic reality, created by Communist ideology, falls apart, resulting in a pathological and hallucinatory hunt for fascists/ghosts. Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames is set at the "heart" of unconscious primal fantasies, hallucinations and castration anxieties which embody the unconscious voices of the hated "other." Wounds portrays the aftermath of this loss of reality and ideological fantasies, a world where the boundaries between inside and outside, self and other, the private and the collective, and representation and event/act disappear totally. Through these vissisitudes, the "return of the repressed," the return of the wounds of the past become a pre-dominant theme, reflecting the final self-destruction of the subject through an excessive fixation on trauma and wounding, whereby the proper distance towards the real, mediated through the symbolic, fell apart.

Underground and Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames provide Serbian perspectives (speaking positions) for highly controversial issues. They position the viewer unconsciously to identify with the perspective of those who raped women, burned villages and mass-executed Muslims and Croats in Bosnia and in Kosovo. The films promote viewer identification with the libidinal economy of the "aggressors": an identification with "Balkanian drives," excesses, addictions with violence and abuse of women, perversities and criminal behavior. These unconscious structures precipitated ambivalent public responses towards the films, which in turn caused the critics to regard these films as "politically incorrect" considering what (really) happened in Bosnia and Kosovo. This paper has sought out the background of those addictions, perversities and criminal behaviors mirrored in those films.
One has to emphasize that all the films are above all genuinely cinematic popular texts, and it is exactly this characteristic that creates controversial responses and debates surrounding the subject matter and political tendencies of the films. I would like to recall at this point what Thomas Elsaesser described as genuinely cinematic experience.

The film experience is, par excellence, a site of mimetic emotions. Its ambiguous, libidinally charged play of identifications is therefore responding to a melodramatic interpretation more obviously than a 'modernist' hermeneutics. Cinema, in this respect, is on the side of the excessive, perverse, or compulsive, rather than ruled by aesthetics of detachment and distance.58

Detachment and distance is perhaps an "adequate" approach for a subject matter that is highly controversial. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that cinema always operates at the site of the excessive, perverse and compulsive, and not at the site of any kind of "political correctness." Perhaps that is why all the three films are filled with mise en abyme devices and the characters merely copies of other fictional characters. They represent Yugoslavian history, the war in Bosnia and the brutal realities of everyday life in Milosevic's Serbia by utilizing the strategies of popular culture, and thus perhaps provide (fictional) realities and stories that elude historical repressions, political censorship and a one-dimensional view of political correctness.

VI. Appendix

Film Synopsis

Underground:

Underground tells the history of former Yugoslavia through a melodramatic story of a love triangle. Blacky and Marko, two lifelong friends and weapon dealers for the partisan underground during the Nazi occupation, are falling for the same woman, Natalija, who is an actor at the Belgrade state theatre during the German occupation. She is befriended by a high-ranking Nazi, who supports her acting career and tries to capture the two Communist bandits. When Blacky is arrested by the SS, Marko wastes no time in betraying his best friend and making Natalija the object of his affections. Still, he rescues Blacky and hides him in his cellar, while he marries Natalija and becomes a high-ranking Communist official, when the Nazis leave. Marco keeps the cellar closed during the next twenty years, deceiving Blacky, his son, his own brother Ivan along with a host of others, whom he puts to work making munitions for his own profit. The illusion works, aided and abetted by recordings of air raid sirens, bombs, Hitler speeches and Lale Anderson's German song "Lili Marleen."

Pretty Villages, Pretty Flames

The film tells the story of the Serb Milan (Dragan Bjelogrlic) and the Muslim Halil (Nikola Pejakovic)—childhood friends from a Bosnian village—from Milan's point of view. Beginning with Milan lying wounded and traumatized in a Belgrade military
hospital in 1994, the film flits back to various time frames, recalling Milan's childhood memories with Halil around 1980 (Tito's death), the time before the war in the early 1990s when the two friends built up their own car repair shop, and to events during the spring of 1992 when Milan fought in a Serbian paramilitary platoon, burning Muslim villages and destroying houses. Milan's Serbian paramilitary squad is loosely connected to the "official" army of the Bosnian Serbs. The main narrative of the film centers on the siege of Milan's platoon inside the "Brotherhood and Unity" tunnel near his village, surrounded by a Muslim unit. The film's first scene is a Communist propaganda newsreel from 1971 when this tunnel was opened for a never-to-be-finished highway between Zagreb and Belgrade. The tunnel remains unused and is a forbidden place for Milan and Halil as children who fear that if they enter, "the ogre who lives in it will come out and burn all the villages." The film employs long scenes of dialogue and flashbacks to reveal the motives, conflicts and backgrounds of the characters entrapped in the tunnel. The besieging Muslims remain mere voices floating in from outside the tunnel, mocking the Serbs by parroting Serbian songs, jokes and insults. The lifelong friends become sworn enemies; Milan's unit has burned Halil's car repair shop and Halil's unit has killed Milan's mother. At the end, almost all of the protagonists are dead except Milan, who survives with his traumatic memories. The film finishes ironically with a Bosnian newsreel, showing the newly rebuilt "Peace" tunnel officially reopened.

Wounds

The film tells the story of two teenagers, Pinki and Svaba ("Kraut"), growing up in Belgrade between 1991 and 1996, from Pinki's perspective. In the opening scene, we see the two sitting in their BMW in the middle of the "100 days" (of anti-Milosevic demonstrations in the winter of 1997 in Belgrade). Pinki's voice-over narration introduces his best friend Svaba, and he proceeds to relate in a series of flashbacks how the two friends first became teenage criminals. At this point, the story reverts to the high period of Serbian ultra-nationalism and militarism at the beginning of the war in Bosnia (Fall 1991), showing the Serbs' enthusiasm for the war, and then follows the gradual breakdown of the country, devastated by militarism, economic decay and UN sanctions. Pinki's father, a retired JNA officer, is forced to stay at home and watch the events on television. We see Pinki growing up in his parents' home, playing with his friend Svaba in a graveyard in a Belgrade suburb called Novi Beograd. They soon make contact with their neighbourhood hero Kure ("Dick"), a local gangster who introduces the boys to Belgrade's criminal underground. The biggest impression on the youngsters, however, is made by a cynical Serbian television talk show, Puls Asfalta ("The Pulse of the Asphalt"), a showcase for well known Serbian gangsters who become living idols for the young pair. Guided by Kure, they quickly rise to fame as teenage killers and finally appear on the show themselves. Lidija, the femme fatale talk show host, plays a crucial role as the friends both fall in love with her and become rivals. Pinki's father kills himself soon after his son appears on Puls Asfalta, and the two youngsters begin a spree of violent shootings, killing Lidija's husband as well as their former father-figure Kure and other local gangsters. But Lidija herself decides their fate, when Svaba, believing that Pinki has betrayed him and taken her, shoots his best friend. Pinki survives, heavily wounded, and after spending some time in a hospital, calls Svaba to meet and drive in the
BMW to "their" graveyard. During the ride to the graveyard they get caught in the anti-Milosevic demonstration (a return to the opening scene). Finally arriving at the graveyard, an unwritten pact between the youngsters drives Pinki to wound Svaba four times, inflicting the same number of wounds that Svaba had inflicted upon him.

Endnotes:


2. Slavoj Zizek for instance writes in The Plague of Fantasies. London & New York 1997, p. 64: "Kusturica unknowingly provides the libidinal economy of the Serbian ethnic slaughter in Bosnia: the pseudo-Batailleain trance of excessive expenditure, the continuous mad rhythm of drinking-eating-singing-fornicating, and that is the stuff of the 'dream' of the ethnic cleansers; therin lies the answer to the question 'How were they able to do it?'"

3. Interview with Kusturica in the Dutch daily De Volkskrant 06/14/1990.


7. Ibid.


15. Van de Port, p. 133/134.


17. Ibid., p. 232.

18. Ibid., p. 232.


20. Ibid., p. 152-156.


23. Ibid., p. 202

24. Ibid., p. 203


26. Ibid., p. 165


29. Due to the Serbian government withholding information about this subject, I had to rely on a documentary made by the independent radio-station B92 in 1996 (Vidimo se u Citulji), where several war and other criminals have been interviewed about their criminal lifes and activities. The documentary shows how the phenomenon arised during the 1990's in Serbia and how some criminals achieved a status of "living legends" within the Serbian public sphere. Several fiction films had been made about this subject, among them S. Dragojevic's Wounds but also films like Do Koske in 1996 (promoted as the first Serbian "action movie" and sponsored by state controlled media).


32. Seltzer, p. 135.

33. Ibid., p. 1.

34. Ibid., p. 254.

35. One can find many crossovers between Serbian folklore as a nostalgic revival of a lost sociality and the mass murder committed by Serbian war criminals. Maybe this is best illustrated by the "symbolic" marriage between Arkan and the Serbian folk star Ceca.

36. See Slavoj Zizek, Tarrying with the Negative, p. 211, where he underlines that what fascist societies demand is "...the establishment of a stable and clearly defined social body which will restrain capitalism's destructive potential by cutting off the excessive element."

37. Thomas Elsaesser, Primary Identification and the Historical Subject, p. 541.


41. Kaja Silverman, Historical Trauma and Male Subjectivity, p. 114.

42. Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics. Chapter IV.


46. In the Serbian or Yugoslavian context this topic of the return of the Real (or of unconscious repressed fantasies) was described above in the section about the return of "ghosts from the past", traumatic events from the national past, which were not integrated properly into the symbolic order.

47. I am referring here to the film within a film sequence.
48. Stjepan G. Mestrovic, Balkanisation of the West. New York 1994. p. 29. Unfortunately the essay was not available in English, so I have had to rely on Mestrovic's account.


50. Ibid, p.166.


52. Ibid., in the chapter Love Thy Neighbour? No Thanks!, p. 45-85.

53. Susan Hayward explains the image of the cut finger in her Key Concepts of Cinema Studies as follows: "Fear of castration cannot be symbolized by the child, so it gets expelled into the Real Order, hallucinated say as a cut finger." p. 285.


56. As Zizek describes: "One of the definitions of the Lacanian real is, that it is the flayed body, the palpitation of the raw, skinless red flesh." Slavoj Zizek, Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality. London 1994, p. 116.

57. Zizek explains that in the case of an excessive fixation with trauma (real), the (realization of the) subject is essentialy impossible. Whereas an excessive obsession with the mirror image (imaginary) or with signifiers (symbolic), the subject becomes either real or possible. The Plague of Fantasies, p. 94-95.

58. Thomas Elsaesser, Subject Positions, Speaking Positions, p. 150.