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POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL FOCUS OF CROATIAN FEATURE FILMS IN THE 1990s

Abstract

In the early 1990s, Croatian film faced a challenging situation similar to the country itself. During Croatia's struggle for survival and against aggressors attacking its borders, the film industry also had to undergo its own rebirth. The Homeland War as an artistic theme, of course, could not be avoided. Therefore, it was exploited beyond measure by filmmakers for whom the themes of patriotism ––no matter how vain, uninspired, or manipulative––brought a certain social and/or financial satisfaction. Film and politics have always been connected in Croatian cinematography and used for direct manipulation. The frequent division of directors into suitable and unsuitable was also maintained by the newly enthroned regime, only according to other criteria. The paper provides an overview of glaring examples of the political and ideological focus of Croatian feature films from the beginning to the end of the 1990s, especially regarding their contextual, thematic, and stylistic features. It is shown that the response of Croatian film art from that period to the active aggression that suppressed fundamental human rights––the right to life, freedom, and security ––was also (passive) aggressive, in the form of discrimination, intolerance, and exclusivity, which resulted mainly in the low qualitative range of Croatian filmography in that period.

Keywords: political suitability, manifest patriotism, political and propagandist approach to the theme of war, polarization of characters into good and evil

Introduction

Croatia's film production has been threatened with destruction since its inception, just like the country's newly established borders, whose bombardment from the beginning to the mid-1990s almost unconditionally imposed only one theme of artistic expression: the Homeland War as the main theme or at least as a subtext. Although it was (mis)used by other arts as well, only two, those with the highest level of explicit expression, used it until it was almost completely exhausted as a theme: film and literature (in this sense, it can be noted that in the last fifteen to twenty years, the film has largely moved away from the war and turned to urban, unworn, and even controversial themes, while in literature it was still possible to see a book whose infantile and mediocre content wholeheartedly tried to replace it with marketing support because it was still a sufficient recommendation that it dealt with the memory of the "sacred topic" of the Homeland War). Although the war theme in war-torn Croatia was expected to be dominant, Ivo Škrabalo (1999: 21) notes that the first films of this genre, made by directors from earlier periods, left the impression of replicas of former partisan films. It would not be wrong to claim that Croatian films were then directed by "directors from the shadows", that is, by the party elite from Pantovčak, "instead of being defiant, apolitical, critical, created as a direct reaction to the constraints of the ruling ideology and social transitional changes in general, such as the most dominant Serbian film in the region at one time" (Njegić, 2011).

Political and war dramas charged with propaganda (those by Branko Schmidt, Oja Kodar, Jakov Sedlar, Eduard Galić, Bogdan Žižić, Tomislav Radić and others) became the new mainstream in Croatian film in the 1990s (Pavičić, 1997: 4). They prevailed numerically, the most money was invested in them, the most effort was put into their distribution, and they had the highest frequency of politicians at premiers; in short, they were almost an exemplary example of the mainstream in an ideologized society and state cinema.

> "Of course, in order to be mainstream, those films needed '*five to make six*', as they say in the south of Croatia. First of all, they were mostly disgusting to the audience. Then they didn't have any media support––not even from 'orthodox'––critics. Their commercial and propaganda response was even worse than the rather ominous predictions. They, last but not least, did not have the property that every serious mainstream should have: shaping a craft, professional and design standard. They were often so dilettante in terms of dramaturgy, direction and genre that any

> serious film design meant a revision of the canon according to them" (Pavičić, 1997: 4).

With the bursting of the seams that divided the newly established borders of two once so close and then so far worlds, even the slightest stimulating conditions for maintaining many levels of cinematography––film production, distribution, screening, technical equipment, and more––began to disappear. The national film space had to be redefined, but the lack of money, the absence of legal regulations, and general ideological confusion did not make the journey any easier. As Jurica Pavičić (1996: 4) recalls, ideologized and state cinema, even in the 1990s, continued to behave like a beggar offering intellectual services of publicity and ideological advocacy for state charity. At the same time, Pavičić vividly describes the filmmakers as those who courteously offered their profession to the authorities in exchange for Juda's gold coins and that the authorities did not even care about this service.

The stumbling state cinematography of that period increasingly confirmed the thesis that the 1990s were the worst decade of Croatian cinema (Polimac, 2010), and thanks to its mostly weak artistic achievements or, at best, mediocrity, the disparaging phrase "Croatian film" was created as a label for something that is despised by both the audience and critics, and is almost unwatchable and unworthy of international resonance (Njegić, 2011). Josip Visković sums up that film era effectively:

> "It is the dream of every artist and follower of art to be a participant, or at least present, during the creation of a new style, movement or event that will have a significant impact on the art they practice. And although our generation experienced something similar, because in 1991 an entire national cinema started from a new beginning, today it is difficult to find a person in Croatia who would feel particularly satisfied that he was an eyewitness to that beginning" (Visković, 1995: 19).

Only the youngest generation of filmmakers (who had just finished their studies or were still studying at the Academy of Dramatic Art of the University of Zagreb) brought a new cinematic view of the reality of war, and who themselves were in the war, thanks to which they were able to film the first credible and high-quality film accounts about it (Škrabalo, 1999: 21). In doing so, Škrabalo evokes Lukas Nola's often-quoted statement that he "belongs to the generation which they stole the war from", explaining that he was alluding to the fact that the Croatian war theme was dealt with in Croatian films by those who did not even

feel the war, as well as to the fact that in a broader social sense, the statements and experiences of younger people who went through the war came to the fore the least: "while some fought in positions, others occupied positions in Croatian post-war society" (Škrabalo, 1999: 21).

The paper provides an overview of the first film decade in independent Croatia, primarily by locating the places of its political and ideological coloring, while not all filmed works that would correspond to this theme are taken into account, but only its most glaring examples.

Film Projects that Began during the Old Political System

During the Homeland War, there was neither a regulated system nor sufficient funds to finance film production. As a result, only projects that had already begun before the onset of political destabilization were completed, or television works were adapted for film format, such as Dejan Šorak's film "Vrijeme ratnika" ("The Time of Warriors," 1991) (Škrabalo, 1998: 454).

A similar situation occurred with Zrinko Ogresta's film "Krhotine – kronika jednog nestajanja" ("Fragments: Chronicle of a Disappearance," 1991), which was approved and began filming before the change of government, and was finalized in the new socio-political climate. In his debut film, Ogresta deals with people who were traumatized for several generations by accusations that someone from their family tree was Ustasha. Speaking through the chronicle of the Livaja family––successfully balancing it on three timelines––Ogresta received a solid number of panegyrics, but this does not obscure the fact that the entire dramaturgy is based on stereotypes "(the present––an intellectual in search of his roots encounters a misunderstanding of the environment and neglects his wife and child; the past––young, pregnant Croatian mothers cry out to Croatian fathers who are being taken to the execution ground to name their children after them) in the service of larger-than-life goals and ideals" (Visković, 1995: 20). Also, as in every ideologized film, in *Fragments: Chronicle of a Disappearance*––which is actually a reaction to communist atrocities and their silence––the canons require that the audience be given an optimistic epilogue at the end; therefore, behind the unfortunately killed Ivan "a child remains!", as is pathetically written in the advertising material (Škrabalo, 1998: 454).

Filming for "Priča iz Hrvatske" ("Story from Croatia," 1991) by Krsto Papić began before the change in regime. The new circumstances enabled the director to introduce some more explicit elements of condemnation of the

police repression, thanks to which many Croats ended up in unwanted political emigration into the film. Although there are quite a few fascinating moments in his filmography, that Papić's film, in Škrabalo's opinion, is not one of them.

> "By confronting two young people and their politically opposed parents over a span of twenty years, Papić tried to connect them in the film's final act, suggesting a tolerable reconciliation within the same family but without much sincere desire for it on the part of the key characters. However, all this did not seem too convincing because it too visibly fit into some officially preached stereotypes of the new government in the historical reconciliation of 'Partisans' and 'Ustashas', i.e., their descendants" (Škrabalo, 1998: 456).

Likewise, Tomislav Kurelec (2004: 35) notes that the characters in that film are only representatives of some political ideas or illusions, and as such, the *Story from Croatia* shares the same problem with many films from former socialist countries where the suddenly realized freedom of expression allowed the authors to express their criticism of inhumane regimes in their countries publicly. However, explicit viewpoints expressed in art, including cinematography, are not always convincing. The paradoxical conclusion is that these authors produced better films when they had to navigate censorship by using allegory, symbolism, or stylization.

The first and most expressive example of an ideologized film that did not even try to hide its propaganda intent and purpose was *Vrijeme za…* (*Time for...*, 1993) by Oja Kodar, for which she wrote the script herself and found an Italian co-producer (Škrabalo, 1998: 481). Trying to spread the story of Chetnik horrors in the Homeland War to the world with that film, she did not combine noble patriotic intentions with satisfactory aesthetic results (if she set them as a goal at all). Created on the matrix of a partisan film, with a combination of pyrotechnics and emotional pathos, this film stumbled on the cliché of polarizing characters into ours (good) and yours (evil), as well as being overloaded with the desire to tell and show everything there is to know about that war. Conceived as a kind of propaganda and ideological weapon in order to win the sympathy from foreign audiences, the film failed to impress critics and viewers alike. The author seemed to overlook that the world tends to distrust overt propaganda, particularly when it lacks artistic credibility. Therefore, the planned publicity effect was logically absent, and the Croatian war film faced a worrying *déjà vu* effect (*ibid*.).

Films Financed by the New Government

In the film "Sedma kronika" ("The Seventh Chronicle," 1996) by Bruno Gamulin, based on the novel "Sedma knjiga ljetopisa" ("The Seventh Book of Chronicles") by the director's father, Grga Gamulin, the author tackled the topic of Goli otok, otherwise a taboo subject in Yugoslavia. However, Škrabalo (1998: 468) suggests that the film suffered from poor timing, considering that after the fresh experiences of the survivors of the horrors of the Croatian veterans in the Serbian camps, the film about Goli otok and the intra-party confrontations of the Yugoslav communists––and from the long-ended historical period––sparked interest in no one.

> "Given that there was no sympathy for the victims of Goli otok, the author could hardly achieve in his goal that the film would grow into a moral allegory, especially because, instead of a continuous story that would bring the circumstances and moods of the early 1950s closer to new generations, he decided on a complex structure of fabulist discontinuity (with numerous flashbacks that that mess with the times and spaces), and in addition he made the film so complex that the events in it are actually told through three dramatic plots" (Škrabalo, 1998: 468).

In the 1990s, Tomislav Radić first turned to a critical approach to the communist government, expressed through the story of arbitrary construction megalomania in the film adaptation of Šoljan›s novel *Luka* (*The Harbor*, 1992). However, as Škrabalo (1998: 479) points out, Šoljan›s bold critical voice in the "leaden" 1970s seemed anachronistic in the 1990s because such political investments had already become a thing of the past, and as it was recorded in 1991, the ferocity of criticism––due to the already fiercely galloping Homeland War––it seemed, to put it mildly, out of date. If you add to that the correct but uninspired realization, that film did not differ much from the feuilleton films that feigned social engagement in the years after Karađorđevo.

This is why Radić's subsequent film, "Anđele moj dragi" ("My Dear Angel," 1995), aligns with the mainstream of films featuring patriotic themes. Using a child's perspective to express his experience of the war, Škrabalo notes that the author tried to build on the pathetic sentimentality of partisan films and the discontinuous dramaturgy promoted by Vatroslav Mimica (clumsy interweaving of temporal events, literalization, several almost independent side stories). Therefore, it can be said that *My Dear Angel* is a film that not only follows the established fashion of auteur films but also takes over some of the conventions

of partisan melodrama (certainly, not in an ideological sense) from the period when the model of socialist realism was an aesthetic canon (*ibid*. 479–480).

The film *Vukovar se vraća kući* (*Vukovar: The Way Home*, 1994) by Branko Schmidt was made according to the script of Pavao Pavličić, a native of Vukovar and does not deal with the controversial aspects of the war operations in Vukovar, but tries to ignite emotions through the presentation of the situation of the exiled people of Vukovar placed in wagons at a side railway station. Although it was intended to be an emotional and not directly propaganda film, it hardly succeeds because, as observed by Škrabalo (1998: 473–484), the characters' moderate indignation as they comment in an almost conciliatory tone about state leaders not helping at the right time and in the right way to break the siege of Vukovar, seems lukewarm and unconvincing. That was also the general impression of the audience and critics about the film.

Schmidt's subsequent film, *Božić u Beču* (*Christmas in Vienna*, 1997), is a lavishly produced patriotic drama that explores dilemma between the safety of exile and the patriotic feeling of sharing the fate of war with fellow citizens. Despite some interesting details and an effort to present more layered characters, in Škrabalo›s (1998: 484) opinion, *Christmas in Vienna* was too late if it wanted to achieve a mobilizing effect in its promotional purpose (it appeared a full two years after the victorious end of military operations). However, it was much better accepted by the official political circles than by the audience and critics, which is why, again, it should not be immediately stated that the Croatian film does not need the genre of patriotic melodrama. One should not imitate that example, in which the surplus of manifest patriotism caused a deficit of essential ingredients of a credible and impressive melodrama, and it can evoke tears or sympathy only if it takes into account today's sensibility, intolerant of any form of clichéd situations (*ibid*. 484–485).

Moreover, Bogdan Žižić›s film *Cijena života* (*The Price of Life*, 1994), which follows a fugitive from a Serbian camp as he saves his bare life by serving as a slave to a rich Serbian peasant, according to Škrabalo (1998: 485), is nothing more than general war propaganda shaped into the form of a melodrama, poorly directed and with apparently an inescapable problem of Croatian war films, the division of characters into good and evil. This division is also ethnically determined because the main character gets close to the owner's daughter-in-law, a Croatian woman, who is running away with him from her thug husband, a local Chetnik.

Gospa (*Virgin Mary*, 1995), a film by Jakov Sedlar, overloaded with politics for which the religious theme is only a cover, shows that film and politics in Croatian cinematography are often connected, not only in the service of direct manipulation, but also in the motives for filming, themes, or content of the films (Škrabalo, 1998: 473). In a film whose plot revolves primarily around the mystery of the spiritual phenomenon of the apparition of the *Virgin Mary* to a group of children in Herzegovina, Sedlar completely bypassed the religious aspect of the story and replaced it with a political one. The insensitivity and failed approach rejected those for whom the film should primarily be interesting––believers––and the real Jozo Zovko, the priest and main hero of the film, was also disappointed. As reported by Škrabalo (1998: 475), Zovko believed that "the film approached Međugorje exclusively from a political aspect" and diplomatically added that "it doesn't have to be bad, but it does not cover the fullness of Međugorje", because it "transcends politics". But that's why the second main character, the real Milan Vuković, otherwise Zovko's lawyer, thought that *Virgin Mary* was "the most Croatian film he had seen so far, the most anti-communist and the most religious film in general". In Croatia, the film was a disaster for the critics and went largely unnoticed by the audience, despite the fact that Sedlar's well-known marketing skills were not missing even then, which is often inversely proportional to his directorial potential. The film had strong support from the official media, and the timing of the premiere (Zagreb on Holy Friday, Split on Holy Saturday, Herzegovina on Easter itself), as well as an episode from the festival in Pula in the summer of 1995, when local films were shown in front of a half-empty Arena, with the only exception of *Virgin Mary*, during whose performance the amphitheater was filled with exiles and refugees brought in by free buses from other places in Istria, shows all manipulativeness, superficiality, misunderstanding, and even disrespect for both religion and believers. After all, perhaps nothing speaks more eloquently about that film than the fact that the Catholic Church itself bypassed it, and the religious magazine *Glas Koncila* kept silent without publishing any criticism or review of it (*ibid*. 475–476).

However, the culmination of Sedlar's political and calculating filmography is represented by *Četverored* (*In Four Rows*, 1999) which Škrabalo (2008: 202–203) calls a one-sided epic-mythomaniac evocation of the Bleiberg calvary and an openly political film in the wake of Tuđman's state-building ideology, which due to poor characterization and incoherent realization remained remembered as the most expensive, grandest, and most expressive cinematic failure of the Tuđman era in both artistic and ideological-publicity terms. Tomislav Jagec (2000: 99)

believes that it is good in principle that this subject has finally been publicly discussed but that it is an incredible shame that a subject of such importance and such an emotional charge––with superb production conditions––was approached so superficially that it offends those in whose name, supposedly, speaks. Jagec observes that the general repulsion towards the *In Four Rows*, therefore a topic with the burden of many personal tragedies, is primarily contributed by the down-to-earth daily-political approach. The film employs a simplistic black-and-white technique, creating shallow characters from both the partisans and victims, who serve merely as extras for the director's ambitions. However, as the film had pragmatic rather than artistic goals, it probably did not disappoint at least the one who made it and those for whom it was made. According to Diana Nenadić (2000: 93), the premiere which took place at the beginning of the campaign for the parliamentary elections was perceived as a striking HDZ party's propaganda trump card, financed with "phantom" money, while the almost simultaneous television premiere, unprecedented in the history of cinema, prompted even the Croatian judiciary to take action, and director Tomislav Fiket, referring to the Constitution, filed a private lawsuit against Sedlar for inciting racial hatred and intolerance.

Zoran Tadić, the pioneer of genre orientation in Croatian film, shot *Treća žena* (*The Third Woman*, 1996) as his own paraphrase of *Treći čovjek* (*The Third Man*, 1949) by Carol Reed, based on the novel by Graham Greene, thus connecting the moral imperative of dealing with themes from the Homeland War with his aesthetic postulates and filmophile inspiration. At the same time, as Damir Radić (1998: 60) notes, he did not resist the temptation to openly state his political beliefs for the first time in his film career. Dragan Antulov (1998) also notes that the film could not or did not want to escape from the state-building ideology, which at times turns the film into a full-length video of political propaganda.

> "Thus, for example, the villain (played, nota bene, by the Belgrade actress Gordana Gadžić) describes her organization as a group of 'former communists', and the humanitarian organization is not only international but also 'religious'. Allegedly, due to the 'extraterritoriality' of her premises, the Croatian police are powerless to conduct a simple search, so Tadić and Pavličić have to invent a cretinous way to convince Hela to become live 'bait' for catching criminals. If someone were to try to take the premise of this film seriously, they would conclude that Croatia is in constant danger from lurking communists, that is, from all those who are not Croats and Catholics. The chauvinist-paranoid message is to some extent softened

> by Tadić's deft pandering to Zagreb's local patriotic racism so that the role of the Russians from THE THIRD MAN went to Herzegovinians, i.e., members of the SIS, whose accent gives away their origins" (Antulov, 1998).

Bogorodica (*Madonna*, 1999) by Neven Hitrec, based on the screenplay of Hitrec Sr., is also a film with an undeniable state-building orientation. As he talks about the tragic events at the dawn of the war in a Slavonian village with an ethnically mixed population, it suffers from a typical disease of Croatian new war films: an excess of patriotism that he thinks leaves the strongest impression when, instead of reconciliation, he *de facto* calls for hatred. Nikica Gilić (1999: 30) precisely notes the evidence in support of this: "don't trust the one called Rade"; "don't trust a Serb even when he claims to be loyal"; "Croats are a picturesque, pastoral Christian people without a trace of hatred towards other peoples––except when they rape and kill their families"; "hooligans and drunkards who beat women are actually sensitive and good guys, which they proved in the war". If it can be any consolation, *Madonna* was one of the last films whose guiding thread is that love for one's own people can best be shown through the intensity of hatred for others.

Indications of New Directions

The film *Zlatne godine* (*The Golden Years*, 1993) by Davor Žmegač was one of the first projects financed by the new government through an improvised Competition Commission formed at the Culture Fund. In it, Žmegač resorts to the frequently used dramaturgical form of confronting events from two time periods while talking about the main character who returns from Australia in May 1990 after spending nineteen years in emigration and wanting to finally clarify the suspicious circumstances of the death of his then-girlfriend while was under police questioning. Although one can object to the film's oscillating rhythm, the too frequent and sometimes unmotivated use of flashbacks and some other things, it is still, first and foremost, a film, not a pamphlet or a gift package (Visković, 1995: 20). On the political level, Žmegač does not prioritize presenting or revealing political dimensions; instead, politics is only as present as necessary to underscore its impact on the characters' unfortunate past, greatly disabling them from living normally. Although the ending of the film––"settling scores" between enemies––is formally similar to the endings of typical war films of that era, Žmegač reached it through the extremely intimate (and somewhat

irrational) motivation of his characters, as observed by Josip Visković, and not through the usual path of Ideology, Truth and similar capital concepts.

Lukas Nola's film *Svaki put kad se rastajemo* (*Each Time We Part Away*, 1994) was a welcome refreshment to Croatian films in the 1990s. It is a story about the fate of a father-soldier who comes to Zagreb to seek shelter for his daughter after his wife was slaughtered and set on fire in a Slavonian village. At the same time, as observed by Škrabalo (1998: 490), the characters escape stereotypes, the atmosphere of wartime Zagreb is well affected and believable, and the image of the war is interwoven with humor and bizarre situations in the ideal ratio to make a departure from the pathos and at the same time not offend the war victims.

Snježana Tribuson's film *Prepoznavanje* (*Recognition*, 1996) is imbued with a new spirit, recognizable in the works of Zagreb academics. Through the story of a girl called Ana who tries to suppress from her memory the images of the horrors of war when a terrorist killed her grandmother and raped her, Škrabalo (1998: 491–492) notes that the author does not follow the line of least resistance, resorting, like many others, to poster patriotism, but the portrayal of evil only serves her as a starting point for the genre transition towards crime and thriller.

The pinnacle of the new current in film thematization of war and patriotism is certainly Brešan's film *Kako je počeo rat na mom otoku* (*How the War Started on My Island*, 1996), otherwise a rare example of contemporary Mediterranean-type comedy at that time. Told through a humorous approach about the conflict between the local population and the garrison of the Yugoslav People's Army in a small island town, and having received the greatest worldwide response among films about the Homeland War, this film is perceived as authentically Croatian precisely because its best features are both Mediterranean and Central European (Škrabalo, 1998: 496). Although it is superficial to take the viewership of the film as an undeniable criterion of its value, the figures of 350,000 viewers speak of something that, in our specific situation, is perhaps more important than the quality itself. However, there were, of course, those who thought that Brešan made a little too much fun of the Homeland War, so the expected Oscar candidacy was missed; although in the tragically intoned finale of his feature debut, Brešan really redeemed himself for his humorous "sin" (Nenadić, 1999: 83). But what is perhaps more important than anything else is that Brešan, with the film *How the War Started on My Island*, restored the lost interest and trust in the value of Croatian films in general, and war-themed ones in particular, to the local audience.

Brešan's next film, *Maršal* (*Marshal*, 1999), failed to reach the success of its predecessor. However, it also surpassed many Hollywood hits with 100,000 viewers (Kurelec, 2004: 61). But the story of the ghost of Josip Broz Tito appearing to a few former partisans and communists on a Dalmatian island, which the local neo-capitalist will use to launch "Titoist tourism", was not warmly received by the authorities. His casual wit and political ineptitude were reason enough to ban him from advertising on Croatian Television, even though it was his co-producer. However, a black-and-white point of view about unfair marketing neglect, given the shortcomings of the film noted by Nikica Gilić (1999a: 31), would not be entirely correct. Namely, the screenwriting duo Brešan, by not allowing their partisans to believe in the afterlife of their commander-in-chief, showed a superficial understanding of the nature of communism, which would not matter if the theological dimension of each ideology was not in line with the potential of the great initial idea. At the same time, Gilić continues, the mysterious impressiveness of Tito, whose character would have left a more effective impression if he had remained an enticing secret until the very end, was unnecessarily interrupted.

Conclusion

Croatian cinematography in the 1990s was, just like other aspects of the social and cultural life of the time, mostly low-brow. Despite producing about six films per year, which was consistent with pre-war levels, their artistic impact often fell below average.[1] The Homeland War, of course, imposed itself as a dominant theme in that period, but its artistic realization––in a country where the symbiosis of film and politics was nurtured for decades––often took on almost caricature characteristics. Trying to win the sympathy of political structures and sometimes the foreign public, the films more often had a promotional and ideological role than aesthetic value. Being on the "right" side in the 1990s, that is, in the mainstream of patriotic films, mostly meant nurturing a clichéd, stereotypical, and pathetic approach to the war theme, or "reckoning" with inadmissible themes from the past, such as criticism of the communist regime. At the same time, the characters were almost regularly polarized into good and evil, that is, into "ours" and "yours", while manifest patriotism very rarely called

1 This is also supported by the fact that some of the films mentioned here (*Christmas in Vienna*, *In Four Rows*, *My Dear Angel*) are not even mentioned in Gilić's *Uvod u povijest hrvatskog igranog filma* (*An Introduction to the History of Croatian Feature Film*); perhaps because Gilić, unlike Škrabalo, revalues them primarily for their artistic scope.

for reconciliation, and much more often, it fueled racial hatred and intolerance, thereby causing the content unreliability and genre unconvincingness of films. It was therefore shown that the response of Croatian film art from that period to the active aggression that suppressed fundamental human rights––the right to life, freedom, and security––was also aggressive, only passively: in the form of discrimination, intolerance, and exclusivity, which resulted in mainly low-quality filmography in that period. In this sense, the film *How the War Started on My Island* is significant, which marked a kind of turning point in that period, so––despite the slightly overrated humor for which it is mostly remembered––it was a more than praiseworthy attempt to bring viewers to Croatian cinemas again to watch Croatian films.

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POLITIČKO-IDEOLOŠKA ORIJENTIRANOST HRVATSKOGA IGRANOG FILMA 1990-IH

Sažetak

Hrvatski se film početkom 1990-ih našao u jednako nezavidnoj situaciji kao i država u kojoj je tada otežano egzistirao; uslijed ponovnoga rođenja zemlje te agresorskoga napada na nju i borbe za očuvanje granica, film se i sam na neki način morao ponovo roditi. Domovinski rat se kao umjetnička tema, dakako, nije mogao izbjeći, pa su ga preko svake mjere eksploatirali i filmaši, kojima je već samo tematiziranje rodoljublja – ma kako isprazno, nenadahnuto ili manipulativno bilo – donosilo određenu društvenu i/ili financijsku satisfakciju. Film i politika često su u hrvatskoj kinematografiji bili povezani i u službi izravne manipulacije, te je čestu podjelu redatelja na podobne i nepodobne zadržao i novoustoličeni režim, samo po drugim kriterijima. U radu se daje pregled eklatantnih primjera političko-ideološke orijentiranosti hrvatskoga igranog filma od početka do kraja 1990-ih, napose njegovih kontekstualnih, tematskih i stilskih obilježja. Pokazuje se kako je odgovor hrvatske filmske umjetnosti iz toga razdoblja na aktivnu agresiju koja je zatirala temeljna ljudska prava – pravo na život, slobodu i sigurnost – također bio (pasivno) agresivan, u vidu diskriminacije, netolerancije i isključivosti, što je za posljedicu imalo uglavnom niske kvalitativne domete hrvatske filmografije u tom razdoblju.

Ključne riječi: politička podobnost, manifestno rodoljublje, političko-propagandistički pristup ratnoj temi, polarizacija likova na dobre i zle