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ИЗКУСТВОВЕДСКИ ЧЕТЕНИЯ

Тематичен рецензиран годишник за изкуствознание в два тома 2020. II. – Ново изкуство

ART READINGS

Thematic Peer-reviewed Art Studies Annual, Volumes I–II 2020. II. New Art

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ИЗКУСТВОВЕДСКИ ЧЕТЕНИЯ

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Организаторите на ежегодната научна конференция "Изкуствоведски четения", модул "Ново изкуство", изказват своите специални благодарности на Фонд "Научни изследвания" при Министерството на образованието и науката за финансовата подкрепа в провеждането на конференцията през 2020 година и отпечатването на сборника от нея.

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LABOUR MIGRANTS: TRAVELLERS OF THE COLD WAR ERA. A PORTRAIT OF LABOUR MIGRANTS IN YUGOSLAV AND ITALIAN FEATURE FILMS

Olivera Dragišić¹

Abstract: The paper represents a comparative analysis of perceptions of labour migrants in Yugoslav and Italian feature films after the Second World War. During the Cold War era Italy and socialist Yugoslavia belonged to the major exporters of labour force. Consequently, the film industries of both countries created a set of perception of the Gastarbeiter-travellers. The research compares images of Yugoslav and Italian migrants in Italian and Yugoslav movies during the Cold War.

Keywords: traveller, migrant, movie, Yugoslavia, Italy

The comparison of the images of the "travellers of the Cold War era" i.e. the labour migrants in the Yugoslav and Italian feature casts new light on several farreaching changes, which took place in Europe in the second half of the 20th century. The mass migrations from the southeast to the northwest of the European continent indirectly signaled the transfer of the core of the European culture, from its cradle in southern Europe towards the northwest. Besides, the mass labour migrations in Europe during the Cold War era indicated a gradual change of mentality of Europeans, which was more than ever shaped by materialism and consumerism. Finally, this analysis put in question the rigid Cold War East – West division of Europe, introducing instead the division into the economically underdeveloped South and the prosperous North. The mass post-war labour migration was triggered by the poverty (Italy) and the failed economic reform (Yugoslavia), which artificially closed the labour market in socialist Yugoslavia.

The gastarbeiter comes to the screen

The literature of the 20th century and the new media – movie – being confronted with traumatic experiences and consequences of the two world wars, introduced a

E-mail: nowrunlolarun@gmail.com

¹ Olivera Dragišić is research associate at the Institute for Recent History of Serbia in Belgrade (https://www.inisbgd.co.rs/cir/biografija-i-bibliografija/66/2019/08/17/dr-olivera-dragisic. html). Her field of interest includes political and cultural contemporary history of the Balkans, ideology and history textbooks. She is coauthor of the books: Југославија и Бугарска 1944-1980. Хроника неуспешног пријатељства, Београд 2019 (with Petar Dragišić) апд Тимофеев Алексей Юрьевич, Тасич Димитар, Драгишич Оливера, ВОЙНА ПОСЛЕ ВОЙНЫ. Движение сопротивления на Балкананах 1945—1953. гг, Вече, Москва 2019 (with Алексей Юрьевич Тимофеев апд Димитар Тасич);

new type of traveller – a traveller-migrant. Almost immediately after the Second World War tens of thousands of Italian workers were employed in Belgian mines according to the bilateral Italian – Belgian agreement of 1946. (The fate of Italian Gastarbeiter miners was the subject of the Italian movie *La ragazza in vetrina*.)

A decade later, a similar agreement was concluded with the Federal Republic of Germany. As a consequence, by 1970 round seven million Italians left their homeland in search of better standard of living, despite the rapid economic progress in Italy (*miracolo economico*) (Dragišić 2019 B; The Cinemas of Italian Migration 2013). By 1969 Italians represented the largest community of foreign workers in West Germany, whereupon they were replaced by labour migrants from socialist Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, this trend was bucked as the government in Bonn chose to reduce import of foreign labour force due to oil crisis following the Yom Kippur War in 1973.

In socialist Yugoslavia the mass labour emigration was triggered by failed economic reform in 1965, which represented a futile attempt to merge obsolete Yugoslav socialist structure with certain elements of capitalist i.e. free market economy (Dragišić 2019 B; Ivanović 2012; Dobrivojević 2008; Baučić 1973; Baučić 1975). This fruitless economic experiment had far-reaching consequences for Yugoslav economy and society. The increased pressure on the Yugoslav labour market forced in the following years hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs to leave their homeland. Being confronted with precarious economic and political situation the communist regime in Belgrade had no other choice but to tolerate and even stimulate mass emigration of redundant workers. Consequently, by the beginning of the 1970s, i.e. by the above-mentioned oil crisis, round one million Yugoslav labour migrants migrated into Western Europe. Most of them settled in the German-speaking countries (Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, German-speaking cantons of Switzerland). As a result, Yugoslavia became the second biggest exporter of labour force in Europe (4.2% of total working age population) (Baučić 1975, 33).

Gastarbeiter in the movie: Italian and Yugoslav perceptions

Regardless of different political and economic systems (socialism in Yugoslavia and capitalism in Italy) and their sharply contrasting geopolitical positions (despite Yugoslav pro-Western orientation following the Tito-Stalin split in 1948) in Cold War Europe, both film industries portrayed labour migrants as members of marginalized social groups – workers or peasants. Nevertheless, Yugoslav filmmakers purposely failed to underline the paradox that hundreds of thousands of proletarians emigrated from a socialist country into the capitalist centres in Western Europe, which clearly demonstrated the failure of the peculiar and ambitious Yugoslav experiment (Dragišić 2015).

In Italian movies the labour migrants were as a rule impoverished workers or peasants coming from the underdeveloped provinces of the southern Italy. Prior to the Second World War as well as in the post-war era the Italian Communist Party (PCI) was among the biggest communist parties in Europe. Nevertheless, the Italian geopolitical orientation following the World War II limited the political power of

the Italian communists. The political isolation of the Italian Communist Party was accompanied by high political tensions and terrorism, which severely undermined political stability in the Apennine peninsula. Franco Brusati made clear allusions to the poverty of the Italian working class and the *years of lead* (anni di piombo) in Italy in the 1970s in his masterpiece *Bread and Chocolate (Pane e cioccolata)*.

Both Yugoslav and Italian movies depicted the status symbols of labour migrants. The locus communis of Yugoslav movies on labour migrants was a white *Mercedes*, bought or rented – as a supreme symbol of their successful undertaking. It was purchased for the purpose of impressing their compatriots at home. In almost all Yugoslav feature films and serials on migrant topics (Ljubavni život Budimira Trajkovića, Priče iz radionice, Vruć vetar, Ne naginji se van, Video jela zelen bor, Dom za vešanje, Lude godine, Moj tata na određeno vreme, Jagode u grlu) the gastarbeiters drive white *Mercedes*, particularly when they come back to their homeland. On these occasions gastarbeiters used this luxurious car brand to underline their success in their homeland, which often took the form of grotesque competition. Furthermore, the Yugoslav moviemakers suggest that bragging of gastarbeiters about their material success in the homeland derived from their inferiority complex caused by their marginalisation in the host countries. An extreme example of this kind of inferiority complex was personified by Mate, one of the protagonists of Bogdan Žižić's movie Ne naginji se van. Unlike in the Yugoslav movies, the Italian moviemakers, apart from Francesco Rosi's movie *I magliari*, did not use this kind of cliché (Dragišić 2015).

Like in Yugoslav feature films, the gastarbeiter in Italian movies had a specific object of desire. Nevertheless, unlike in Yugoslav movies, the ultimate status symbol of the Italian labour migrants, as was depicted by Italian filmmakers, was not a white *Mercedes*, but a blond woman. The locus communis of the Italian movies on the migrant topics is love affair between protagonists and blonde women² and fascination of Italian gastarbeiters with frivolity and significant level of emancipation of women in north-western Europe. This infatuation of Italian labour migrants with female population in the countries of destination derived from deeply conservative social context in their homeland. In contrast to socialist Yugoslavia, the female emancipation in Italy was impeded by large and powerful catholic segments of the Italian society (in Italy divorce was introduced only in 1970).

In socialist Yugoslavia, in which sexual freedom was more advanced in comparison to catholic Italy, the moviemakers in Yugoslavia strikingly downgraded the female component of life of labour migrants. The lust for love or sexual affairs with exotic foreigners played only a minor role among the *push factors* in very few Yugoslav feature film (*Ne naginji se van, Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu*), given that the majority of migrant characters in the Yugoslav feature films left their native country for purely materialistic reasons.

Although the purpose of the gastarbeiter's long *journey* anything but introspection, the traumatic collision with the miracles of the capitalist paradise put migrants

² Apart from the movie *Bello onesto emigrato Australia sposerebbe compaesana illibata* in which the Italian immigrant in Australia falls in love with his brunette compatriot (Claudia Cardinale).

in major crisis of identity. Thus, the majority of these movie characters were faced with the difficult choice – to stay abroad or to go back, that is, to choose between money and dignity. They were driven by strong desire to become "someone and something", i.e. to achieve superior financial and social status. Nevertheless, at the final stage of their peculiar and mostly futile journey the majority of them remained "nobody and nothing", which led to their immense sentimental agony. The intention of labour migrants to become "someone and something" abroad, by acquiring better financial status in the countries of destination, indicates the materialistic mindset of the 20th century Europeans.

Both Yugoslav and Italian moviemakers depicted labour migration as futile attempt of *proletarians* to radically improve the standard of living in the host countries. The Yugoslav and Italian feature films suggest rather limited social mobility of Yugoslav and Italian labour migrants. The gastarbeiter-characters in Italian and Yugoslav movies (particularly in *Ragazza in vetrina*, *Ne naginji se van*, *Tamo i natrag*) worked in factories, mines, or on a building sites under dreadful and even dangerous conditions. Sometimes the ruthless exploitation of guest workers had tragic consequences (*Ragazza in vetrina*, *Ne naginji se van*). Moreover, in Bogdan Žižić's movie *Ne naginji se van*, the death of the undeclared worker from Yugoslavia, who died in an accident on a building site in Frankfurt was not even reported to the local police. The living conditions of labour migrants in Yugoslav and Italian feature films are extremely poor. Their apartments are small and uncomfortable, often without bathrooms. The male labour migrant characters often share rooms, decorated either with pictures of their wives or erotic posters.

In comparison to the Italian movies several Yugoslav feature films focused on homesick and nostalgic sentiments of Yugoslav labour migrants. In Bogdan Žižić's movie *Rani snijeg u Minhenu* homesickness was accompanied by ideological connections to the socialist homeland. One of the protagonists, a partisan veteran Mate, was deeply upset by the death of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito, whose picture hangs on the wall of his apartment. The incapability of his son Ivica, who grew up in Germany, to share Mate's patriotic feelings and his refusal to come back to Yugoslavia, resulted in their major conflict and Mate's suicide in the final scene of Žižić's film.

Several Yugoslav and Italian movies deal with dramatic search for identity in the new and unfamiliar environment abroad. Two Yugoslav movies — *Tamo i natrag* and *Rani snijeg u Minhenu* — highlighted the inclination of the second-generation migrants towards assimilation and full integration in the host societies, which widened the gap between the labour migrants and their offspring. Sometimes they literally speak different languages, given the tendency of the second-generation migrants to give priority to the language of the host society. In Bogdan Žižić's movie *Rani snijeg u Minhenu* this deep rift between parents and child had fatal consequences. The identity dilemma of labour migrants and their emotional self-reflections were masterly displayed in Franco Brusati's masterpiece *Pane e cioccolata*. For the purpose of futile seamless integration in the Swiss society Giovanni even bleached his hair blond. Both in *Pane e cioccolata* and *Rani snijeg u Minhenu* several characters

perceived marriage with a citizen of the host country as a means of facilitation of integration.

Those who purposely refused to integrate in the host society often chose to terminate their migrant adventure and come back to the homeland. Having to choose between dignity and wealth a hairdresser Šurda (protagonist of the serial *Vruć vetar*) gave priority to the former value and decided to theatrically conclude his brief migrant career in Frankfurt and come back to Yugoslavia. Prior to his return flight Šurda burned all business cards of his contacts in Germany, thus symbolically burning his bridges with the traumatic migrant experience. Bitterly disappointed about the life abroad (in Germany) Filip, a protagonist of Bogdan Žižić's movie Ne naginji se van, returned to his village. Even the title of movie Ne naginji se van (Don't Lean Out the Window) contains author's advice to all migrant candidates, given its metaphorical meaning. Through this allegorical imperative – Don't Lean Out the Window – Žižić emphatically advised potential labour migrants against emigration. Nevertheless, the Yugoslav and Italian movies depicted also those labour migrants, who chose to continue their lives and careers abroad at all costs. In Franco Brusati's Pane e ciocollata a Gastarbeiter Nino abandon his plan to return to Italy (from Switzerland) getting off from the train to Italy just before the Swiss-Italian border. In Luigi Zampa's movie Bello onesto emigrato Australia sposerebbe compaesana illibata the Italian labour migrant in Australia, Amedeo Battipaglia (Alberto Sordi), was determined to stay in Australia in spite of his inferior status in the host country - Australia. Nevertheless, he is anything but wiling to assimilate into the host community, which is why he was desperately seeking to marry his fellow-countrywoman (Claudia Cardinale).

A common place of all Yugoslav and Italian movies on labour migrants, regardless the genre, was deep psychological struggle in the minds of migrant characters, their permanent introspections and mostly fruitless search of way out. Consequently, the migrant undertaking was depicted as a long and painful journey without happy end. The labour migrant was portrayed as a tragic hero, whose traumatic experiences were a consequence of his divided personality, whose soul was on the no man's land between nostalgia and the materialistic magnetism of the western capitalist paradise. This insurmountable problem produced drastic solutions: return to the homeland, arduous integration (of the second-generation migrants) or even suicide.

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Filmography

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Priče iz radionice (Zdravko Šotra, 1982)

Lude godine (Zoran Čalić, 1977)

Moj tata na određeno vreme (Milan Jelić, 1982)

Grlom u jagode (Srđan Karanović, 1975)

Jagode u grlu (Srđan Karanović, 1985)

Video jela, zelen bor (Goran Gajić, 1991)

Tamo i natrag (Aleksandar Petković, 1978)

Vruć vetar (Aleksandar Đorđević, 1979)

Ne naginji se van (Bogdan Žižić, 1977)

Čuvar plaže u zimskom periodu (Goran Paskaljević, 1976)

Mahovina na asfaltu (Jovan Rančić, 1983)

Poslednji krug u Monci (Aleksandar Bošković, 1989)

Italian movies:

Il cammino della speranza (Pietro Germi, 1950)

La ragazza in vetrina (Luciano Emmer, 1961)

I magliari (Francesco Rosi, 1959)

Bello onesto emigrato Australia sposerebbe compaesana illibata (Luigi Zampa, 1971)

L'emigrante (Pasquale Festa Campanile, 1973)

Pane e cioccolata (Franco Brusati, 1974)

ГАСТАРБАЙТЕРИТЕ МИГРАНТИ КАТО ПЪТЕШЕСТВЕНИЦИ ОТ ЕРАТА НА СТУДЕНАТА ВОЙНА. ПОРТРЕТ НА ГАСТАРБАЙТЕРА СПОРЕД ЮГОСЛАВСКОТО И ИТАЛИАНСКОТО ИГРАЛНО КИНО

Оливера Драгишич

Резюме: Трудовите миграции в Европа по време на Студената война предизвикаха изместване на центъра на европейската култура от класическия за нея Югоизток към нов център, към икономически по-развития Северозапад. Тази динамика постави под съмнение твърдото разделение на Европа от времето на Студената война на "източна" и "западна", защото по това време по-голямата част от гастарбайтерите мигрират от Южна Европа (включително социалистическа Югославия) към северозападната част на Стария континент. В същото време, трудовата миграция след Втората световна война свидетелства и за промяна в мисленето на европейския човек, като на преден план в ценностната му система излизат потребителските нагласи и отчаяният стремеж към материално благополучие.

Статията предлага сравнителен анализ на образите на югославски и италиански трудови мигранти, в италиански и югославски филми от времето на Студената война. Изследването е посветено на определящите фактори на трудовата емиграция от следвоенните Югославия и Италия, гастарбайтерските общности в приемащите страни, както и с болезнените самоанализи и психологически травми на героите от фрагментираната им идентичност, така както са ги представили италианските и югославските кинорежисьори. Обединяващ център на всички италиански и югославски филмови интерпретации на трудовата емиграция е пълното фиаско на амбициозните гастарбайтерски планове. Според разгледаните филми, първоначалното намерение на всички гастарбайтери да станат "някой и нещо" в новата страна, като правило завършва с неуспех. По-голямата част от тези персонажи остават "никой и нищо" в приемащите общества, което ги прави аутсайдери и дори трагични филмови герои.

Ключови думи: пътешественик, мигрант, филм, Югославия, Италия