

## CHAPTER FIVE

# NATIONALISM, IDEOLOGY AND BALKAN CINEMA: RE-READING KUSTURICA'S *UNDERGROUND*

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Throughout the 1990s Slavoj Žižek advanced an incisive critique of the political turmoil in the former Yugoslavia and the emerging neo-nationalism in the region. Arguing from a position simultaneously critical of NATO and Milosevic's Serbian regime, Žižek's stance held a strong attraction for many sections of a Western European Left, which also harboured no sympathy for either side in this conflict.<sup>1</sup> To quote Žižek:

What if one should reject this double blackmail (if you are against NATO strikes, you are for Milosevic's proto-Fascist regime of ethnic cleansing, and if you are against Milosevic, you support the global capitalist New World Order)? What if this very opposition between enlightened international intervention against ethnic fundamentalists, and the heroic last pockets of resistance against the New World Order, is a false one? What if phenomena like the Milosevic regime are not the opposite to the New World Order, but rather its *symptom*, the place at which the hidden *truth* of the New World Order emerges? (Žižek 1999, 79)

According to Žižek what was required was a "Third Way", not to be confused with the neo-liberal Third Way of Blair and Clinton but a real Third Way breaking "the vicious circle of global capitalism versus nationalist closure" (*ibid.*, 82). It is this question of nationalist closure that I want to take up in my paper today, and what I have described elsewhere as Žižek's anti-Serb nationalism (Homer 2001, 12) but I think should more properly be called anti-Slav nationalism for reasons I will make clear below.

Žižek's critique of Balkan neo-nationalism and the Western response to the break up of the former Yugoslavia was often accompanied with a scathing indictment of Western liberal multiculturalism and leftist fascination with the Bosnian film director Emir Kusturica, in particular his 1995 film *Underground: Once Upon a Time There Was a Country*.<sup>2</sup> Kusturica's epic tale of Yugoslav

history from the 1940s to the 1990s was widely acclaimed by many Western European critics and won the Palm d'Or at Cannes. At the same time, it was greeted by howls of outrage by critics from the non-Serb republics, who attacked the film as simply Serbian propaganda. The French intellectual Alain Finkielkraut brought this debate into the public domain when he wrote in *Le Monde*:

In recognizing *Underground*, the Cannes jury thought it was honouring a creator with a thriving imagination. In fact, it has honoured a servile and flashy illustrator of criminal clichés. The Cannes jury highly praised a version of the most hackneyed and deceitful Serb propaganda. The devil himself could not have conceived so cruel an outrage against Bosnia, nor such a grotesque epilogue to Western incompetence and frivolity (quoted in Iordanova 2001, 117).

A key point of contention in the film was the use of documentary footage portraying Slovenes in Maribor and Croats in Zagreb cheering and welcoming Nazi troops in contrast to the devastation wrought on Belgrade by Nazi bombers, the fairly obvious implication being that the Croats and Slovenes were collaborators while the brave Serbs resisted the occupation. Kusturica defended his use of this documentary footage, arguing that he was trying to counter the selective humanism of the West in showing only the Serbs as the aggressor. He was, he insisted, against ethnic cleansing of all kinds, whether it came from Bosnians, Croats or Serbs.

Žižek's intervention in this debate came in a short article entitled "Underground, or Ethnic Cleansing as a Continuation of Poetry by Other Means" (which also appeared as a section in *The Plague of Fantasies* and his influential essay "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism").<sup>3</sup> He took as his starting point not so much the film itself as the political controversy surrounding it and Kusturica's own, often unfortunate, response to the criticism. The political meaning of *Underground*, argued Žižek, "does not reside primarily in its overt tendentiousness, in the way it takes sides in the post-Yugoslav conflict – heroic Serbs versus the treacherous, pro-Nazi Slovenes and Croats – but, rather, in its very "depoliticized" aestheticist attitude" (Žižek 1997c, 37). Žižek supported this argument with reference to an interview Kusturica gave in which he claimed that the film was not political at all but a "deferred suicide" note for the Yugoslav state. For Žižek:

What we find here [in *Underground*] is an exemplary case of "Balkanism", functioning in a similar way to Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism": the Balkans as the timeless space onto which the West projects its phantasmatic content. Together with Milcho Manchevski's *Before the Rain* (which almost won the Oscar for the best foreign film in 1995), *Underground* is thus the

ultimate ideological product of Western liberal multiculturalism: what these two films offer to the Western liberal gaze is precisely what this gaze wants to see in the Balkan war – the spectacle of a timeless, incomprehensible, mythical cycle of passions, in contrast to decadent and anaemic Western life (ibid., 38).

Žižek, of course, acknowledges that *Underground* is a multilayered and self-referential film but immediately dismisses this as postmodern cynical ideology. What Kusturica unknowingly provides us with, concludes Žižek, is “the libidinal economy of ethnic slaughter in Bosnia: the pseudo-Batailleian trance of excessive expenditure, the continuous mad rhythm of drinking-eating-singing-fornicating” or ethnic cleansing as poetry by other means (ibid., 39-40).<sup>4</sup> The problem with *Underground* then, according to Žižek, is not that it is “political propaganda” but that it is *not* political enough.

Žižek is right, I think, on a number of counts. Kusturica is clearly a film maker who is playing to Western audiences and critics. He is now more popular abroad than at home and his films deliberately exploit an aesthetics of self-exoticization taking up Western European clichés of the Balkans and playing them back to us in exaggerated form. Indeed, one could argue here that, similarly to Žižek's often repeated example of political resistance, Laibach, Kusturica is adopting a strategy of “over-identification,” and thus by completely identifying with Western stereotypes he reverses the western gaze.<sup>5</sup> This, however, only serves to highlight for me the very problematic nature of such a position and political strategy – what one critic (Gocić) can take to be the ironic over-identification with Western stereotypes and myths, another (Žižek) takes to be the unconscious ideological fantasy of the director. How one is to distinguish between the two remains unclear. The cyclical narrative structure of *Underground* – War, Cold War, War Again – is also, as Žižek points out, ideologically loaded, replicating Western European views of the Balkans as an atavistic, barbaric space outside of time and history. I want to argue here though that it is the very multilayered and self-referential aspect of this film, which Žižek so quickly dismisses, that *is* the whole point of the film and not simply some cynical ideological ploy on the director's part. There is clearly a politics to *Underground* but not where Žižek is looking for it. The political aspect of this film lies in its form rather than its content. The problem here, as Sarah Kay highlights, is that Žižek reverts to the kind of ideological interpretation of film that he criticises other theorists for doing (Kay 2003, 71-72). In short, Žižek does not read film as film but merely as an expression of the director's “unconscious” ideological position.

I will offer a critique of Žižek's reading of *Underground*, then, on three counts. First, in order to read the film as an “ideological product,” Žižek has to ignore those aspects of *Underground* that specifically draw attention to its status as film and as a document of historical reconstruction. Second, in his critique of

Western liberal and leftist audiences he does not take into account the reception of the text. Finally, Žižek does not consider the site of production of his own critique, that is to say, the position of Slovene intellectuals in the mid-90s in relation to an emerging Slovene national identity and discourse.

### ***Underground* as historical reconstruction**

*Underground* is a very self-conscious cultural artefact. To borrow the dedication from another controversial film on the Bosnian conflict, it is a film about “a film industry that no longer exists”.<sup>6</sup> Goran Gocić distinguishes five levels of narrative reference in the film: the film diegesis itself, Kusturica's own body of work, Yugoslav cinema history, Yugoslav political mythology and Yugoslav history. I am interested here in these last three levels of meaning. *Underground* constantly draws attention to itself as film and as the production of a specific film industry. I will give just a couple of examples here. First, Kusturica is renowned for his so-called “magic realism” – flying beds, flying characters, telekinetic powers etc. – and *Underground* is no exception. In the central wedding scene of the film, a key motif in Kusturica's movies, we have a scene where the bride flies across the screen with her veil and wedding dress billowing in the wind. It is an extremely romantic and Kusturician image, however, the camera immediately pulls back to reveal a rather crude dolly and wind machine constructed by the partisans in the cellar to create this magic realist effect. Second, one of the two central characters of the film, Marko, a Communist Party functionary who hides the partisans in the cellar in the first place and then keeps them imprisoned there for 50 years, is also a rather atrocious nationalist poet<sup>7</sup> and something of a stage director himself. Marko manipulates the partisans through a complex fabrication of reality. He constructs an elaborate mise-en-scène, through news reels, music, bombing raids and special performances by his actress wife. Third, the central section of the film – Cold War – is all about the making of a film and I will come back to this below. Finally, towards the end of the film, when we move to the present conflicts and wars of succession, Kusturica himself plays a cameo role in the film as an arms dealer and war profiteer. If we do not want to fall into the rather tired postmodern, or post-structuralist, cliché that *Underground* is simply a film about film making, then we would need to say more about the purpose of this self-referentiality.

I will focus here on the central section of the film, “Cold War.” The film within the film is a Second World War partisan movie entitled *Spring Comes on a White Horse*. It concerns the filming of the events we saw in the first part of *Underground* and which led to the partisans hiding in the cellar. There is one obvious difference in the two versions, though. In the remake *Blacky*, now a

national hero and symbol of the Resistance, does not survive but dies in a blaze of glory to ensure that an arms shipment reaches the Resistance. The whole thing, of course, is farce and deteriorates even further when the "real" Blacky emerges onto the film set and starts to kill the cast of German soldiers. The parody of partisan films, though, is more than simply farce. Partisan films were one of the principal genres produced by this film industry "that no longer exists". The classical period of Yugoslav partisan films was between the end of the Second World War and the early 1950s, what is usually referred to as the Red Wave. In the 1960s a new generation of film directors, the most well known in the West being Dušan Makavejev, reworked the genre into more personal and ambiguous visions of the past, much as Hollywood directors of the 1980s have done with the Vietnam War.<sup>8</sup> What is now often referred to as "Black film" or the "Black Wave" was particularly critical of the ultra-realism and kitsch of the Red Wave. After the political clampdown across Yugoslavia in the early 1970s there was a revival of Red Wave films. Partisan films have continued to have a resonance in post-Yugoslav film production and the influence of the Black film can be seen in both *Underground* and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame*. Originally, partisan films served purely propaganda purposes, idealistically glorifying and confirming a revolutionary past and at the same time reinforcing this revolutionary spirit in the heroic struggle to construct a socialist society out of the ruins of the war.<sup>9</sup> Partisan films also represented a particular national aesthetic, "nationalist realism," which Tito's government promoted as an alternative to the "socialist realism" of the Soviet Union. These films were technically crude, stereotypical and simplistic. They were initially directed for a domestic audience and were very popular films. The second Red Wave also tried to break into the international market with big multinational productions and such international stars as Richard Burton in the role of Tito. As Daniel Goulding writes, partisan films were imbued with an intense sense of nationalism and pride as a result of Yugoslavia's unique historical experience:

Yugoslavia was the only European Communist government established after the war whose legitimacy was founded primarily on its own efforts and not the sponsorship and the political and military domination of the Soviet Union (Goulding, 2002, 23).

Partisan films are frequently referred to as Yugoslav Westerns and they share something of the mythic structure of the North American Western, in the sense that they stage a primal "conflict between civilization and wilderness".<sup>10</sup> For the partisan film, this meant "constantly returning to the pioneering days of Tito's Communist party and the founding mythologies of the state during the Nazi occupation in the second world war" (ibid., 48).

*Spring Comes on a White Horse* is a classic partisan film in its low production values, stereotypical characters and over dramatization, and could be read merely as a parody of the genre, except, of course, that the actual "historical" events that it is supposedly based upon, and we saw in the first part of *Underground*, are no less a critique of the genre and the history that it represents. The two central characters of *Underground*, Marko and Blacky, are womanizers, crooks and liars, hardly the material of heroic resistance fighters, and keeping a population in the dark for 50 years is not many leftist's idea of how to construct socialism. *Spring Comes on a White Horse* is surely a nostalgic homage to a film industry that no longer exists and at the same time it foregrounds the complicity of that film industry in the construction of historical memory and national mythology. Without wishing to labour the point, if *Underground* is in any sense a propaganda film, it is because it is a film *about* propaganda films.

This sense of cinema as complicit in the falsification of historical memory is underscored, I think, by the use of "actual" documentary film footage in *Underground*. There are scenes in the film where the documentary footage is simply spliced in, such as the bombing of Belgrade in 1941 or the controversial scenes of cheering grounds in Maribor and Zagreb. The documentary footage is also used very crudely and obviously as back projection, while in other instances Marko is seamlessly edited into sequences with Tito; we see Marko apparently shaking hands with Tito or standing with him on a balcony watching a May 1<sup>st</sup> parade. The overall effect of this use of archival footage and fictional characters, as with the film within the film, is to foreground the way in which film can be used, and has been used, in the reconstruction of Yugoslav history and national mythology. This is all very explicit in the film and hardly a buried subtext. We can read *Underground* as exemplary of Balkanism, as Žižek suggests, but we could also read it as a critique of Balkanism and Yugoslav history.

### **Political agency and film spectatorship**

This brings me to my second critique and the issue of spectatorship and reception. In his general antipathy to Cultural Studies, Žižek has never really accepted one of its central lessons concerning the ideological critique of cultural texts, that is to say, that we must take into account spectator agency and acknowledge the diversity of potential readings of and responses to any given text. In this sense Žižek remains similar to figures from the Frankfurt School, such as Adorno and Marcuse, who he otherwise wishes to distance himself from.<sup>11</sup> Žižek tends to homogenise Western European audiences, for example, not acknowledging the divergence between a liberal academic, which I take to

be humanist, and a leftist reading of *Underground*, which is more properly political. The wars in the former Yugoslavia were deeply divisive for the European Left and there was no unified "Western Gaze" which somehow encompassed the Left, just as there was no unified reception from the Left to *Underground*. For his own polemical purposes against Cultural Studies, multiculturalism and what he sees as an academic Left, Žižek posits a naïve and passive audience and does not allow for the possibility of more negotiated and critical readings. We are all simply dupes of an unconscious Balkanism and unable to read the film for ourselves. One can appreciate, I think, the multilayered complexity of Kusturica's *Underground* and at the same time be critical of it, for instance, of its gender politics, which Žižek tends to ignore.<sup>12</sup> One can see the film as a critique of the myth of Tito's Yugoslavia and at the same time as a product of Yugo-nostalgia. That *Underground* is a fundamentally "contradictory" text is what makes it one of the more interesting productions attempting to come to terms with the break up of the former Yugoslavia and its history.

### **Nesting Orientalism and the return of the repressed**

The issue of reception is crucial, I think, when we come to my final point of criticism regarding Žižek's reading of Kusturica and that is the question of nationalism, more specifically of Žižek's implicit nationalism. Žižek's analysis of the nation state as that elusive *Thing*, the object cause of our desire, and of nationalism as the "theft of enjoyment" has proved to be extremely influential and persuasive. Žižek tends to portray himself as an outsider, a dissident figure aligned to the new social movements and in opposition to nationalism and the Slovene state (see Žižek and Salecl 1996). This position is not as clear cut as it seems. As is well known, in the first free elections of the newly independent state of Slovenia Žižek stood as a candidate for the "nationalist" Liberal Party and as late as 1995 he was claiming that "our" party saved Slovenia.<sup>13</sup> His relationship with the new social movements was also rather ambiguous. As the former Yugoslavia started to unravel in a series of increasingly bloody conflicts, Žižek's political interventions in Slovenia increasingly focused on other people's pathologies (such as the "Western" Gaze and Serbian nationalism) and never broached the darkside of Slovene politics or his own party's role in a deepening nationalism, xenophobia and curtailment of human rights.<sup>14</sup> Žižek was not alone in this and the new social movements were themselves caught in a peculiar, and politically regressive, dialectic. I will take two central issues here, anti-militarism and anti-authoritarianism, to illustrate the dynamic of this dialectic of nationalism and resistance. Both issues pitted the new social movements, for fairly obvious reasons, against the Belgrade government. The

Yugoslav National Army (JNA) was increasingly identified with the Serbian Republic and Milošević's response to the rise in influence of the new social movements was calling for a "recentralisation" of power. The new social movements, therefore, identified the main obstacle to reform and democratisation as "outside" of Slovenia in the form of Serbian nationalism and a specific state formation:

Critique of a particular state form ... cemented itself into a critique of Yugoslav society as inherently nationalist/Serbia and totalitarianist/Stalinist. The only liberation could, therefore, come from sovereignty and independence (Rizman 1995, quoted in Stubbs 1996, 8).

By the time of the first free elections in 1990s the question was not, as one sociologist of the new social movements puts it, whether or not the "soft nationalism" of the new social movements differed from other forms of nationalism but how this soft nationalism had come to dominate the discourse of the new social movements and how opposition to militarism and authoritarianism had become identified with an emerging, independent, sovereign Slovene state (Stubbs 1996).<sup>15</sup>

Let me return here to Žižek by way of the quotation above from his "Multiculturalism" article. In this passage Žižek runs together the criticism of two films and two directors: Kusturica's *Underground* and Milcho Mancheveski's *Before the Rain*. The two films become indistinguishable ideological products for the Western liberal gaze but these films are very different stylistically, in terms of content and in terms of structure. While Kusturica has developed a frantic carnivalesque "aesthetic of chaos" (see Halligan 2000), Mancheveski's cinematography evokes a more mythical timeless landscape and the pace of his film is much slower and more contemplative. In relation to content, *Underground* depicts the course of history over a 50 year period. *Before the Rain*, however, does not address that history or the recent Balkan conflicts directly and is essentially a series of love stories. The narrative structure of the two films is also significantly different: *Underground* suggests a cyclical return of violence, *Before the Rain* does not. Indeed, *Before the Rain* is not a circular narrative at all but rather a Nietzschean "eternal return" which leaves open the possibility of historical change. So why does Žižek run together these two films, when he knows full well that the majority of his readership will not have seen either of them?

That is precisely the point, I think – that the majority of his readers would not know the films and therefore be unable to distinguish between them.<sup>16</sup> The films simply become exemplary of a Western gaze projecting its phantasmatic content on an exotic "Slavic" other. Keith Brown has analysed the reception of

*Before the Rain* in terms of its domestic and international audiences,<sup>17</sup> and this analysis has certain parallels with the reception of *Underground*, especially Žižek's polemic. In brief, while many European and North American critics eulogised over Mancheveski's cinematography and other-worldly "fairytale" landscapes, these landscapes held deep historical resonance for a domestic audience. What was taken internationally to be a transnational hybrid production on universal themes and values was seen locally to be the production of a sovereign national state by a national director and anticipating the emergence of this nation on the international stage. The reception of *Before the Rain*, then, was split between a domestic and an international audience who appeared to be watching very different films. Something similar can be said, I think, for *Underground* and we need to distinguish the reception of this film between a domestic and an international audience.

As Dina Jordanova has pointed out, for an international audience if *Underground* is Serbian propaganda then it is so cryptic that no one noticed it as such (Jordanova 2001, 118). From an international perspective the majority of the audience did not know where, for instance, Maribor was and who the crowds cheering the Nazis were. For a domestic audience, however, this clearly was an issue. Žižek's equalizing of these two films can be seen as part of a wider discourse then taking place at the research institute in Ljubljana, where Žižek is based, and in Slovenia generally. According to Tangersand:

[M]ost of the Slovenian critics view these films as naïve and simplifying, describing the conflict through ethnically and historically tainted stereotypes. However, when they were working out a Slovenian and/or Central European discourse around these two films, also a Slovenian intellectual and/or national identity could be said to have been in the making (Tangerstad 2000).<sup>18</sup>

By running these two films together Žižek is participating in the nascent nationalist rhetoric of Slovenia in the 1990s, which sought to distance and distinguish Slovenes from the Southern Slavs of Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. This has been referred to by Balkan scholars as "nesting orientalism," that is to say, the orientalisng of other ethnic identities within the Balkans themselves (Bakić-Hayden, 1995). Žižek has himself presented a very good analysis of this process in the Balkans.<sup>19</sup> However, by blurring any distinction between Serbs and Macedonians in this case Žižek is doing precisely what he is accusing others, in particular Western liberals and leftists, of doing, that is to say, seeing the other as an undifferentiated mass upon which we, now including Central Europeans, project our phantasmatic content and distinguish ourselves.

In conclusion, my criticism of Žižek's reading and polemical deployment of recent Balkan films such as *Underground* and *Before the Rain* does not

undermine his analysis of the fantasy structure of nationalist ideology or of the nation as *the Thing*. Furthermore, I am not suggesting that Žižek is secretly a raving Slovene nationalist. Rather, what I have tried to show by foregrounding Žižek's partial reading of *Underground*, his lack of attention to the formal detail of the text, his refusal to consider issues of reception and above all his neglect of the site of production of his own discourse is how that "critical" discourse, albeit unwittingly, comes to reproduce the dominant nationalist ideological rhetoric of Slovenia in the 1990s.

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<sup>1</sup> As I argue in "It's the Political Economy, Stupid! On Žižek's Marxism" (Homer 2001), Žižek's position was actually more complicated than this and he now acknowledges that his "half-support of the NATO intervention in ex-Yugoslavia" lost him many friends on the Left, see Geoff Boucher, Jason Glynos and Matthew Sharpe (2005, 223).

<sup>2</sup> See for example *The Fragile Absolute*, where Žižek accuses Kusturica's Western European audiences of "reverse racism" regarding the Balkans (Žižek 2000, 5). In *On Belief* Žižek again returns to Kusturica and indicts him for his "choice" of a Serb identity over a Bosnian one (Žižek 2001, 28). As the editors of the volume *Balkan as Metaphor* point out, the rejection of Kusturica's films is now *de rigeur* for many Balkan intellectuals and it may be time to resignify these films "as cultural sites of genuine resistance and triumphant critique, rather than as an apology for nationalism" (Dušan I. Bjelić and Savić Orad 2005, 15). This paper is very much in the spirit of resignifying Kusturica's *Underground* at least.

<sup>3</sup> Žižek (1997a; 1997b, 60-64; 1997c, 37-40). References in this paper come from the *New Left Review* version.

<sup>4</sup> Žižek continues by drawing a parallel between Kusturica and that other infamous Serbian nationalist poet Radovan Karadžić but, as Dušan I. Bjelić argues, this is rather "a hard sell" and paraphrasing Sartre's comment regarding "lazy Marxists" writes "Yes, Kusturica, like Karadžić, poeticises "the wild Serb man" but not every "wild Serb" is Kusturica; yes, Karadžić is a poet, like Kusturica, but can Karadžić make [*Underground*]?" (Bjelić 2005, 119, ft 29).

<sup>5</sup> See Gocić (2001, 84). For a rather more critical and balanced view of Kusturica's cinema, see Iordanova (2002).

<sup>6</sup> See Srđan Dragojević's *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (Yugoslavia, 1996). This film was also greeted with outcries of Serb propaganda upon release.

<sup>7</sup> Žižek's reference to Karadžić as a poet and ethnic cleansing as a continuation of poetry by other means may well be more relevant here in relation to the character of Marko than Kusturica as director, but this would then point to the film as critique rather than propaganda.

<sup>8</sup> Kusturica explicitly references Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* for example which again suggests a more critical stance towards the war than merely the state propagandist his critics claim.

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<sup>9</sup> This section on partisan films draws extensively on Goulding (2002). I am grateful to Paul Stubbs and Nick Potamitis for correcting a number of misrepresentations in the first draft of this paper.

<sup>10</sup> The opening scene of the film with Blacky and Marko wildly celebrating Blacky's membership of the Communist Party on a horse drawn wagon, a brass band blaring loudly and firing pistols into the air, for instance, could be straight from a Hollywood Western. More explicitly *Underground* reworks shots directly from Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns (see Iordanova 2002, 134-48 for a discussion of Kusturica's "makeovers").

<sup>11</sup> As Kay notes, Žižek shares another affinity with Adorno and Marcuse in terms of his taste in art and culture generally which is very much that of a European intellectual and not at all popular despite the introductions to Lacan through popular culture (Kay 2003, 71).

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the sexual politics of *Underground* see Longinović (2005, esp. 40-43).

<sup>13</sup> See Parker (2004, 34-35) for a discussion of Žižek's position in the newly emerging Slovene state.

<sup>14</sup> Personal correspondence with Slovene activists; it should be noted that in the present context of extreme rightwing politics in Slovenia, Žižek is once again seen as a progressive figure

<sup>15</sup> An extreme example of this can be seen in the case of the *Mladina* journalist Janez Jansa who was arrested and imprisoned in 1988 for writing critically about the JNA. A movement arose for defence of Jansa, who upon his release launched a political career and became the first Defence Minister in the newly independent Slovenia, despite formerly being a pacifist. Jansa was forced to resign following allegations of incitement to violence, corruption and arms dealing and by the mid-90s he was leader of the right wing, nationalist, Social Democratic Party (ibid., 6).

<sup>16</sup> In the "Ethnic Cleansing" version of this article Žižek does distinguish the ethnicity of the directors but he does not do so in the more widely circulated "Multiculturalism" version (Žižek 1997a and 1997c). It is also possible, following on from Žižek's comments in the documentary *Žižek!* (USA/Canada, Astra Taylor, 2005), that he does not watch the films that he discusses because this may spoil the theoretical point he wishes to make that he has not seen either film, although I am not convinced that one should take these comments too seriously.

<sup>17</sup> Brown "Macedonian Culture and Its Audiences: An Analysis of *Before the Rain*", [www.manchevski.com.mk](http://www.manchevski.com.mk).

<sup>18</sup> This discussion of the regional reception of the film can be found in the Internet version of the paper located on Manchevski's website, [www.manchevski.com.mk](http://www.manchevski.com.mk), but is excluded from the shorter printed version in *Rethinking History*, 4:2 (2000, 175-181).

<sup>19</sup> In *Tarrying with the Negative* Žižek writes,

"Every nationality has built its own mythology narrating how other nations deprive it of the vital part of enjoyment the possession of which would allow it to live fully. [...] These fantasies are structured in a complementary, symmetrical way. Slovenes are being deprived of their enjoyment by "Southerners"

(Serbians, Bosnians) because of their proverbial laziness, Balkan corruption, dirty and noisy enjoyment, and because they demand bottomless economic support, stealing from the Slovenes their precious accumulation by means of which Slovenia could already have caught up with Western Europe. The Slovenes themselves, on the other hand, are supposed to rob Serbs because of their unnatural diligence, stiffness and selfish calculation; instead of yielding to the simple life of pleasures, Slovenes perversely enjoy constantly devising means of depriving Serbs of the results of their hard labour, by commercial profiteering, by reselling what they bought cheaply in Serbia. Slovenes are afraid that Serbs will "inundate" them, and that they will thus lose their national identity. Serbs reproach Slovenes with their "separatism", which means simply that Slovenes are not prepared to recognize themselves as a sub-species of Serb. [...] The basic premise of both is of course "We don't want anything foreign, we just want what rightfully belongs to us." In both cases, the root of these fantasies is clearly hatred of one's own enjoyment. Slovenes, for example, repress their own enjoyment by means of obsessional activity, and it is this very enjoyment which returns in the real, in the figure of the dirty and easy-going "Southerners" (Žižek 1993, 204).

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