

## **STRANGE BEDFELLOWS: (NON/MIS) ALLIANCES BETWEEN NATIONALISTS AND QUEERS**

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**Abstract.** *In this paper we analyze activist tactics in two films from the post-Yugoslav region, Ahmed Imamović's film *Go West* (2005) and Srđan Dragojević's film *Parada* (The Parade 2011). Particularly, we focus on the alliances between male dominated society and homosexuality which contain a form of resistance to the dominant discourses of sexual and religious nationalisms in the region. Our claim is that a step-by-step approach but also sometimes really dubious tactics need to be adopted in order to be able to successfully penetrate into the heteronormative environment. We argue that setting up an alliance between the father figure and the gay figure in Bosnia and Herzegovina as presented in *Go West* is one of the tactics of the rhetoric of detournement from a common discourse of no alliances and a constant conflict between them. The idea of such alliance shows solidarity between nationalists and queer community. Similar alliances are addressed also in the case of *Parada* which presents an imaginary opportunity for queer activists who recruit xenophobic and nationalistic veterans to advance its cause. The film is a Trojan horse, adopting and perhaps advocating the use of indirect activist tactics, which are masked and hidden in the scenario and the aesthetics of the film. The stronger the xenophobic nationalist force from the outside, the stronger the resistance in the Trojan horse and the stronger is the feeling of their transnational historical connection embedded in "Brotherhood and Unity".*

**Key words:** *activist tactics, gay-straight alliances, post-YU, queer film, Parada, Go West.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we analyze activist tactics in two films from post-Yugoslav region, Ahmed Imamović's film *Go West* (2005) and Srđan Dragojević's film *Parada* (The Parade 2011). Yet these are rather disguised and not necessarily intentional. Particularly, we focus

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on positive images of *solidarity* and *alliances* between male dominated society and homosexuality as presented in both films. We propose to look beyond homophobia expressed in the films. Rather we suggest to do a detour from homophobia as a dominant discourse expressed in the film and focus on some readings we could find in the scenario that are accidentally or purposely sneaking into the religious and nationalist discourses. In this chapter we ask: What kind of activists tactic tools do these films offer? In this respect, we aim to focus on the alliance between straight and gay men, and analyze the relationship between male dominated society and homosexuality. These alliances contain a form of resistance to the dominant discourses of religion and nationalism that produces heteronormativity in the region.

Why are we interested in this phenomenon of seeking unlikely partners? First, the state is unwilling to offer protection to the queer community; therefore the only solution is to find alternative partners. Second, and definitely more important for us, alliance with the state and queer community is problematic due to the normalizing power of the state, thus this makes the point that bypassing the state and finding alternative ways to protect the queers is not completely useless (Butler 2002).

*Go West* is the first and until now only mainstream feature film from Bosnia and Herzegovina which put a gay couple at the center of the narration. It is a love story between a Bosniac and a Serb set in the 1990s during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most of the Bosnian films from that period focused on the war, but none addressed homosexuality. Thus, this is not only the first gay film but also the first film about gayness during the war. Does that mean the end of the concept of war being male dominated and heterosexual only? However, controversy of the subject, e.g. addressing homosexuality during the war, was tactic to receive publicity. The film received more public attention than any other Bosnian film in almost all the post-Yugoslav countries. It also got twice as much media coverage as any other film with gay or lesbian themes from the area (Moss 2007). Nevertheless, *Go West* presents a relationship between a father and his gay son. Since a father image represents a strong political entity by representing a father of the nation, it is tempting to analyze this alliance.

*Parada* imagines the growth of unexpected post-war alliances between Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Kosovo Albanians and Serbs — the communities that fought on opposite sides in the Balkan war of the 1990s. They make strange bedfellows focusing on solidarity with nationalistic sentiments and sexual preferences. Another potential alliance introduced by the film is a relationship between a father, a war veteran who is about to protect a pride parade and his son, who is joining a group of neo-Nazis about to attack the parade. It is a problematic alliance that emphasizes an unexpected generational regression from a progressive father to a conservative son. It shows that cultural and national memories, identities and practices do not flow simply from one generation to the next, but paradoxically in both directions.

In order to analyze the potential for political critique in the films, we take into account the nationalistic and religious backgrounds in the region, and the interplay between church and nationalism and queer activism. This helps us understand the nature of the alliances between male dominated society and homosexuality, specifically between fathers and sons, war veterans and queers. Thus, we ask ourselves when reading *Go West*: “How can a father as a head of male dominated society be expected to form an alliance with his gay son?” A similar alliance, but rather in the opposite direction is presented in *Parada*, which leads us to the question: “How can a neo-Nazi son be expected to form an alliance with his father, who is protecting the gay parade?” Further, this helps us understand the unexpected proposal made in *Parada* as well as answer our research question: “How can war veterans be

expected to protect a pride parade?” An image of a war veteran usually portrays a tough militarized masculinity within a strict heteronormative and thus homonegative military milieu. The war veterans in *Parada* look just like this stereotypical image and this raises more questions: “Why would war veterans be willing to protect a pride parade? And even more compelling: Why would the queer community be willing to accept their solidarity?” We closely examine the heteronormative attitudes portrayed in the film and discuss the paradoxical nature of a space where war veterans and queer communities form new alliances to counter the nationalistic and religious discourses in post-Yugoslav space.

## 2. RELIGION, NATIONALISM, AND (HOMO)SEXUALITY IN THE POST-YUGOSLAV SPACE

The construction of religion, nationalism and homonegativity in the post-Yugoslav space needs to be understood against the backdrop of social and political confusion, nationalism, anti-Western sentiment and rhetoric. The theoretical framework of our study lies in the focus on the intersection of three conflicting dimensions of constantly evolving identities: religion, (homo)sexuality, and nationalism or what Sremac and Ganzevoort (2015) rather neatly call “religio-sexual nationalism.” Conflicts about religion and homosexuality thus not only show shifts and tensions in changing public perceptions of homosexuality, but also of religion and of national identity (Igrutinović, Sremac & van den Berg 2015; Jovanović 2013). In the post-Yugoslav space, religion is called upon to protect morality and social norms. Sremac and Ganzevoort (2015) argue that religio-sexual nationalisms are organized around erotic discourse, heteronormativity, patriarchal (often militarized) masculinity, heterosexual hegemony and the gendered order of society. Religio-sexual nationalisms, therefore, produce gender norms that are instrumental in political legitimization strategies and played out in the public space. In this context, sexual diversity has become a pivotal issue of contestation and a topic on which strong nationalist and religious identities amalgamate.

Accordingly the debates about religion and homosexuality are produced by much more multifaceted and multidirectional discursive framings on culture, nation, and gender. Thus, the interplay between religion, nationalism and homosexuality is not only defined by specific moral, philosophical, or spiritual presuppositions. These positions emerge from discursive negotiations in a wider public arena, in which cultural and national identities play a crucial role. Thus the discursive negotiations of (homo)sexuality in the post-Yugoslav space not only relied on religious and/or theological arguments, but on a combination of religious, sexual, political and nationalistic discourses.

## 3. FATHER-SON (NON)ALLIANCES IN *GO WEST* AND *PARADA*

The director of *Go West* dedicated this film to his father, thus the role of Milan’s father deserves special attention, specifically his relationship with his gay son. It is important to ask: “How can a father as a symbol of patriarchal structures be expected to form an alliance with a gay son?” He represents an opposite image of the real patriarchic head of the family, which is a very special political category in the region with a role of a leader of the patriarchal structure in a male dominated society (father to the family, father to the nation). His character does not deploy a familiar perspective and is not in the line of actual father figures in Bosnia and Herzegovina and elsewhere, where nationalism excesses in man performing traditional masculinity. Especially the chosen name is very descriptive: Ljubo is a

short form of Ljubomir, which in Slavic languages derives from the elements of “ljubi” (love) and “mir” (peace). The very name suggests that this character is sneaking in love and peace to the story about homonegativity. Actually Ljubo resists attaching his family identity to the nationalist one. When soldiers from the front bring the news about Milan’s death and the priest preaches about “janačka krv” which roughly translates to “hero’s blood,” Ljubo replies with a counter tune: “Čija krv? Čija krv? Moja krv!” which roughly translates to “Whose blood? Whose blood? My blood!”<sup>1</sup> Here we ask, is a bloodline only an illusion in the traditional patriarchal structures of male dominated society? With this scene the director manages to transgress the nationalist bloodline discourse and presents it as a fantasy. In the film Ljubo does not conform to the norms of the patriarchal structure, on the contrary, he is presented as an open-minded and tolerant character showing his affection towards his son and his partner. More, he interferes when the local village Orthodox priest is performing nationalist songs on *gusle* and stops him from singing, saying that he should stop playing political speeches. In fact he deploys a balanced position between Bosniacs and Serbs, transgressing their conservative patriarchal and religious stands. In this regard, Ljubo rejects his traditional identity not just with his reaction to the fact that his son is homosexual but also with his refusal of using Milan’s body as a symbol of ethnic violence by the nationalists.

This is certainly not a common response in the region since coming out to the father is a very problematic issue. Kuhar and Švab (2005) found out that there is a significant difference between coming out to mother and father in Slovenian society, whereas there is still strong existence of patriarchal structures and fear from the father as an authority. Therefore, we argue that the film invalidates the sociological research while it is directly addressing the stereotype of an alliance between father and gay son; however, it is transgressing it from a hateful into a tolerant relationship. Thus, we argue that setting up an alliance between the father figure and the gay figure in Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the tactics of the rhetoric of detournement of a common discourse of no alliances between male dominated society and queer community and the constant conflict between them. The idea of an alliance between a father and his gay son in the film shows solidarity between nationalists and the queer community. For these alliances to succeed straight men need to question the dictates of religion and state. In order to protect his son, Milan’s father resists the religious and nationalist influence and offers help to his son’s partner to escape to the West. The film explains that they have to betray one rule to respect another. In addition, Kenan and Milan form a strong alliance with Milan’s straight friend who deserted the Serbian army and who helps them get a wig and fake passports. By doing this he is breaking the nation-state rules and it seems like this is the only way out to build an alliance between them. As we see, religious and nationalist extremists are opposing the queer community and are in constant conflict. It seems that only by rejecting a religious and traditionalist patriarchal heterosexual position can one cooperate with the queer community. We also ask, what is the “rule” of the alliance between straight men and the queer community. Is it solidarity with loved ones or solidarity with what they represent? As we see in *Go West*, the figure of a son is a very important category, especially in Balkan male dominated society. Thus solidarity is based on love towards loved ones. However, it is represented as schizo solidarity,

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<sup>1</sup>As well Milan rejects to present his (fake) fiancée as a symbol of nationhood, a Serb woman when he is asked at the military check point, “Ali je ona naša?” (Is she ours?), meaning does she belong to the Serbian nation, he answers “Moja, brate. Moja!” (She’s mine, bro).

meaning: I help my son but hate who he is? Nevertheless, after helping his gay son, the father commits suicide. Certainty, the very act of helping had an unbearable effect on the father. This shows us that there is the possibility of an alliance between them but it is problematic and complicated.

Further, *Parada* also introduces problematic relationships and addresses more weird alliances and as well nonalliances and misalliances. The representation of the father-son relationship especially in relation to politics is interestingly original. In the post-Yugoslav space, fathers and sons are not alike. For example, the neo-Nazi movement that was firmly established during and after the Balkan war consists mostly of young skinheads with an extreme nationalist and religious ideology, which is xenophobic and homophobic. In the film, a war veteran Limun has a son, Vuk, a car mechanic and a member of a neo-Nazi right-wing skinhead group in Belgrade. He is planning to attack the participants of the pride parade and therefore his father, who is protecting the queer community. The father-son relationship is interrupted by their different political commitments: whereas a father represents the generation born at the time of Yugoslavia and the common cultural bonds within multiculturalism, his son represents a new generation, born at the time of the separation of Yugoslavia and the birth of nationalism in the region.

This shows that the unhealed collective trauma of “frozen conflicts” can be transmitted and perpetuated into future generations – or what Hirsch (2012) calls “the generation of postmemory” – evoking intolerance and extremism. Thus, in the post-Yugoslav space we have the opposite formula from what happens, for example, in the *Godfather* (1972), where the focus is on the son who cannot avoid becoming his father. One assumption is that sons and fathers are always going to be alike, but also that sons are always more liberal and progressive. For example, *Sasha* (2010) is a film by Dennis Todorović, a second generation German born to parents with post-Yugoslav roots. It is a story about a gay son born in a homonegative family. The film implies that older generations are always more conservative than the younger. But today, another script is slowly becoming more and more plausible. In Kureishi’s novels, particularly in *My Son the Fanatic* (which was adapted in a film directed by Udayan Prasad in 1997), a liberal father is a first generation immigrant from Pakistan and his religiously fundamentalist son was born in England, where he lived his whole life. These examples show that the teleology that predicts the younger generation’s political “progress” is less systematic than before. *Parada* reminds us that we cannot expect generations to give up on homonegativity. The father’s authority might also fail so there is a chance for homonegativity to cut across families and for unexpected alliances to form. *Parada* addresses a potential change and shows the transgression of this (non/mis)alliance between Limun and Vuk. Although Limun tries to prevent his son from attacking the queer community, Vuk refuses and shows up with his neo-Nazi friends on the day of the parade. Vuk is together with hundreds of young and masculine skinheads, while Limun stands in the frontline with his war buddies. But during the fight, when Limun is hurt and needs help, Vuk turns against his buddies and protects his father. He then offers the parade his protection.

### 3.1. Activist tactics in *Go West*

The film exemplifies a rhetoric of detournement: it invites us to also focus on alliances with nationalists and the queer community, rather than on homonegativity as a dominant discourse. Debord and Wolman (1956, 18) argue in *A User’s Guide to Detournement* this is a rhetoric of subversive misappropriation of dominant discourse in which “any sign is susceptible to conversion into something else, its opposite” and as Nedra Reynolds (1998, 60)

argues this tactic can be most effective in “draw[ing] attention to [...] marginalized speakers and writers” as well as to “the ideological workings of discursive exclusion.” Therefore, this theory can prove quite productive in the analysis of activist tactics in both of the films.

Perhaps unexpectedly or precisely as a way of focusing on detournement, we will focus on an element that may seem completely secondary: we have not at all until now talked about the sound of the *cello*. The director uses a cross cutting and parallel editing technique of showing Kenan playing the *cello* at the concert for peace in Sarajevo before the war begins, while Milan is training karate with his fellows at a karate club, where at that time all nationalities that lived together in Sarajevo are present. The karate fight impersonalizes the conflict between Croats, Bosniacs and Serbs – the dominant discourse, while the *cello* performance acts as a counter language, a counter discourse, trying to establish peace. Classical music became a symbol of cultural resistance in Sarajevo during the siege with the help of its initiator Vedran Smajlović, the principal cellist in the Sarajevo Opera and Philharmonic Orchestras. He played the *cello* in public places, where snipers in the surrounded hills were targeting citizens. This was a courageous act for peace that helped to lift the citizens’ dignity and hope during the massacres in the city. When a CNN reporter asked him whether he was crazy to expose himself in the middle of a war zone, he countered, “You ask me am I crazy for playing the cello, why do you not ask if they are not crazy for shelling Sarajevo?” (Green 2005, 119). His genius response is an act of counter rhetoric that we aim to focus on in this section.

Foucault (1978, 95–96) writes: “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” The relation between power and resistance in Foucauldian terms can be translated in the relation between dominant discourse and counter-dominant discourse described by Richard Terdiman (1988). Similarly to Foucault, he explains the nature of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, thus the relation between hegemony – Gramsci’s term for the ruling class – and other social groups with their “counter-hegemonic” tactics. Terdiman (39–40) argues that “for every level at which the discourse of power determines dominant forms of speech and thinking, counter-dominant strains challenge and subvert the appearance of inevitability which is ideology’s primary mechanism for sustaining its own self-reproduction.” This theoretical concepts help us to analyze the resistance portrayed in the film.

As we already mentioned, the sound of the *cello* plays an important role in the film and we argue that it represents the counter discourse. There is a difference between the music in the Serbian village from what Kenan is playing. In the village we hear not only trumpets in the traditional folk music at the wedding and the Serbian folk music instrument *gusle*, on which a local priest plays nationalists songs, but also obscene sounds of chain saws accompanied by two village “idiots” singing. This is clearly a dominant sound. As a counter sound, Kenan is playing his *cello* on numerous occasions, first at the concert for peace in Sarajevo, then several times in the village, when Milan is recruited to the army and after he dies – the closest resemblance with Vedran Smajlović, and during the TV interview, where the French journalist could not hear the sound of an invisible instrument. In this case, art becomes a symbol of resistance, an act of playing the *cello* is used as a weapon in the war of hatred between the nations and toward the homosexuals.

Often there is a sound of the *cello* cross-edited with the sound of church bells or the sound of *gusle*, switching between the dominant discourse of religion and nationalism and the power of resistance incarnated in the *cello*. When there are messengers from the front coming to the village, we hear the church bells and the priest descends from the hill.

Kenan/Milena starts to play his *cello*, which ends up in the montage of the priest playing his *gusle* and singing nationalist songs. Both instruments are trying to commemorate the victims of the war, while *gusle* represents a dominant instrument and the *cello*, a counter instrument, a symbol of resistance. A dominant and counter discourse are in constant conflict. After Milan's death is announced a priest tries to play his *gusle* but Ljubo attacks him and prevents him from preaching at the funeral as well. Furthermore, Ranka is using the religious symbol of the cross when she destroys Kenan's *cello*. In this act as deployed in the film, religion is used to destroy queer activist tools that challenge homonegativity, thus religion and nationalism in the region are intertwined. Therefore, not just nationhood which is pushing all other sexual identities into the masculine/feminine dichotomy that manifests in homonegativity, but also religion is constructed through the concept of heteronormativity. However, as we see at the end of the film, the sound of the *cello* is never destroyed, there is just a problem with the interpretation of this sound, thus resistance is never futile or pointless.

### 3.2. Activist tactics in *Parada*

In *Parada* strange alliances and duplicitous tactics abound, which we see as a counter discourse and as the only way, in film, to challenge homonegativity. Queer activism recruits xenophobic and nationalistic veterans to advance its cause. As a result, homonegative war veterans turn into gay rights activists, and end up protecting the pride parade. The film uses a particular narratological approach: the film is a Trojan horse, adopting and perhaps advocating the use of indirect activist tactics, which are masked and hidden in the scenario and the aesthetics of the film. Like the conflict between the Trojans and the Greeks, which lasted for 10 years, the conflict between the queer community and the heteronormative society in Serbia is a long and messy confrontation. Like the Greeks, the queer community needs to find its way into a fortress that denies them entry: the recognition of political rights. They try to enter the homonegative environment, protected by a thick wall of heteronormative rules and legislation. Their "horse" is the unlikely alliance with heteronormative war veterans. Just as the precious horse is sacred to Trojans (Haviland 2012) the war veteran community is a special political community sacred to the spectator in Serbia and other countries of the post-Yugoslav space. Representing an alliance with the queer community is a form of activism, since war veterans are usually seen as homonegative nationalists, and when they are allying with the queer community they are transgressing. It suggests the possibility of solidarity with the queer community instead of reiterating the obvious assumption of homonegativity and therefore perpetuating it.

A strategy that helps connect the "old" cultural characteristics of the region is also the setting of the film—a road trip through the entire post-Yugoslav space. Limun together with Radmilo, Mirko's partner, start the journey to reunite with other war veterans. Figuratively, the car takes the form of a Trojan horse. On the other side the pink Trojan car / horse and its passengers, who are about to protect the pride parade, are a symbol of resistance. This is complemented with the nationalist force and homophobic environment they are entering. The car undergoes a curious metamorphosis. Before the trip the car is a constant target of homophobic graffiti during the night, for example: "смрт педерима/smrt pederima" (Death to Gays) or "pederske pičke" (Faggot Motherfuckers). As they drive along different post-Yugoslav countries, the car gets progressively covered with nationalist graffiti, sprayed by different local nationalists. Eventually, the graffiti do not add up to a clear slogan anymore, instead the graffiti start to interact and transform themselves.

As soon as the Trojan horse/car crosses the border, the graffiti start to express nationalist discourse. While the passengers are collecting new graffiti there is still a trace of old ones. These discourses take the form of a schizophrenic palimpsest overwriting of graffiti, which are being added layers by layers without eroding the previous ones. The car now looks like an advertisement for homonegativity, xenophobia and nationalism, a slogan, which allows it to “pass” or to sneak into the fortress of homonegativity while entering hostile nationalist environments. Their multiplicity shows how the graffiti become superimposed in a collective production of national liberation movements. This symbolizes the political situations in each country of the post-Yugoslav space, where the new generation claims their territory to belong to their nation only, and clearly expresses their nationalist position. It shows how the interactions of sexuality, religion, and nationalism are multidirectional and multidimensional and cannot be accounted for in oversimplified understanding.

The more the car collects graffiti the more soldiers are inside the Trojan horse. Not only do they resist the labelling but they also empower themselves and bypass sexual nationalism. The stronger the nationalist force from the outside, the stronger the resistance in the Trojan horse and the stronger the feeling of their transnational historical connection embedded in “Brotherhood and Unity.” The film uses this myth to challenge the ethnic divisions along nationalist and religious lines in the post-Yugoslav countries. By doing this, the rhetoric towards other war veterans is appropriated and challenged by the historical bonds of erstwhile Yugoslavia to reunite “brothers” from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, and Kosovo even though they were on opposite sides in the ethnic war of the 1990s. Limun manages to get his war buddies on his side. Their goal is to challenge homophobia, although war veterans are not aware of this. In other words, their “fight” against homophobia which takes the form of a protection against sure violence ends up reuniting communities and protecting them from violence.

These veterans are homophobic nationalists. Clearly, sexual nationalism (Sremac & Ganzevoort 2015) and homonegativity have the same roots and function in the same way as already argued in the introduction. The Trojan horse/car is accidentally transforming homophobic war veterans into gay rights activists on the trip while also not deliberately transforming the nationalistic sentiments among the citizens of the specific post-Yugoslav countries back into brotherhood. They became friends before the war and when they meet after a long time their friendship resembles the meeting between Ben Hur and Mesala in *Ben Hur* (1959), when they see each other after 15 years. They hug in the same way, drink with their hands crossed and throw an arrow at the target. Their close friendship and their cultural bonds are stronger than homophobia and this becomes a recruiting force in the fight against homophobia. This is thus one of the tactics of the actors present in the Trojan horse/car. While the car functions like a Trojan horse for the actors in the film, the idea of war veterans “fighting” and thus challenging homophobia functions as a Trojan horse for the spectator.

War veterans have all been brought up in the multicultural environment of undivided Yugoslavia. Regardless the ethnic war in the 1990s, the previous national cement still holds them together. Queerness is irrelevant to them. *Parada* suggests that the multiculturalism from Yugoslav times is now in opposition to nationalistic practices which find place after the separation of Yugoslavia. Paradoxically it is being used as a Trojan horse against their own rules and ideologies of excluding queerness. The fortress of heteronormativity is tricked into accepting a gift, an idea of nationalism that no longer exists but can be reintroduced. When the queered soldiers jump out of the Trojan horse, the result is that the hybridity of the big cultural nation exceeds its own definition. This is precisely the point that reconciliation can be built on



alternatives identities rather than religious and ethnic identities. However, it is still a fact that violence is the only way to protect queer rights, but the queer community, as the film suggests is not a small minority anymore. They ally with war veterans, which also represent a very small and marginalized community, and become stronger. Because of the solidarity between these communities the film suggests certain changes within the group of nationalists, for example Vuk's transformation from a skinhead homophobe into a gay rights activist.

#### 4. PROBLEMATIC FRAMEWORKS OF GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

The producers of *Go West* got state funding and support from their neighbors and this fact opens up another perspective about homonegativity in the region. The director did not just form an alliance with the state but also with the neighboring country. Yet, what we want to emphasize is the fact that the state supports deployment of homosexual issues in a film for the first time, while religion is in opposition and strictly against the representation of homosexuality in films. The film was severely critiqued, by both right-wing and religious groups and also queer activists. On the one hand, the director received death threats from conservative and religious groups for addressing the issue of homosexuality in a film about the Bosnian war. On the other hand, the queer activist Mima Simić accused the director of using homosexuality to attract a wider audience.

One could think that this film is a publicity stunt designed to recruit hetero audiences but there are more troubling issues behind the scenes. Croatian queer theorist, Mima Simić (2015) accused the director of using homosexuality in a story about war to attract a wider audience from abroad. The director's response was unexpected and rather scarily vulgar, since he addresses her with the third person singular pronoun (gender neutral) ("ono" which translates to "it") and invites her for a "blow job" (Redatelj filma "*Go West*" kritičarki). These are horribly sexist and homophobic remarks. Obviously he just misused homosexuality to attract a wider audience, as Simić states. Nevertheless, Imamović says in the interview with Moss that his attack against Simić was not against her being lesbian but "for her putting words in his mouth" (qtd. in Moss 2012, 365). He continues by admitting that he does not know what it is like for a gay community yet he expected the local queer community to accept and defend the film by saying: "I started things rolling, and you didn't join in. I have the balls to make this film, and you didn't have the strength to join me" (qtd. in Moss 2012, 365). Because this did not happen he was disappointed and angry, so we propose that the only way he knew how to express his anger was to become homophobic and sexist.

The director is not willing to give voice to a community that suspects his motives. Personally we do not care whether his motives are clean or not, as long as they are representative. However, there is a problem because he is not a "native informant" but someone who seems to profit financially and culturally. On the other hand his argument: "I have the balls..." draws a clear line between him and queer community. Does that mean that he has balls and they do not? Or does that mean that only men have the balls to make a revolution and women and queers cannot? We argue that homophobia and sexism are deeply rooted not just in the nationalist and religious discourses but also in collective unconscious of the society, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina which is perceived as the most hostile environment for gays and lesbians in the whole post-Yugoslav region.

Similarly, the alliance between war heroes and the queer community as presented in *Parada* was not positively accepted by queer scholars. Grujić (2012) argues that the film

represents criminals who protect queers only for their publicity. Compared to other queer films from the region, *Parada* is a comedy in which humor as a successful strategy is used to evoke post-Yugoslav nostalgia. Grujić (2012, 183) draws parallels with the representation of bad guys in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) who also fight for justice and become heroes just like the bad guys in the new Serbian cinema.

The bad guys of the new Serbian cinema are not only violent towards other gangsters but also towards ethnic minorities, women, homosexuals, children, etc. Nevertheless, in the context of the Balkans, there is a significant effort in cinematic narrations to represent a bad guy as honorable and with a strong character.

Grujić (184) is critical toward other Dragojević's films as well, for example *Lepa sela lepo gore* (*Pretty Villages Pretty Flames* 1996), *Rane* (*Wounds* 1998) and *Mi nismo anđeli II* (*We are not Angels II* 2005) which suggest that only bad guys, strong Serbian masculine men "from the other side of the law" presented as charismatic characters, can be successful role models in a Serbian environment. She claims that the role of queer characters in *Parada* represents an "efficient motive to glorify the moral values of war criminals" who protect them. By reminding the audience of historical cultural bonds between the nations of the post-Yugoslav space, namely the concept of brotherhood, and naming the main character Limun (Lemon) and his dog Sećer (Sugar), significantly downplay the negative characteristics of war criminals. In addition, Koteska (2012: 118) demonstrates that Limun as a mythical form similar to the character in *Ben Hur* (1959) adds to the idea of "an attempt to reuniversalize the Balkan myth of the indestructible hero." She argues that *Parada* is a stereotypical camp with a dubious ethnic message, and a story that in general moves from one to another nationalist joke. According to Grujić and Koteska, the problem in this film is that a transgression of the Balkan masculinity fails and does not achieve its goal of sending a message of tolerance because the criminals present the key substance of the Balkan masculinity and the gay straight alliance, while the queer perspective of this alliance is ignored and the film itself is less concerned with the gay subjectivity. However, setting a war criminal in the position of a subject is one of the activist tactics to reach a wider audience.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter we explored whether and how the oppositional pairing of religion, nationalism and homosexuality is related to the specific religio-political configurations in different multi-layered cultural and national contexts of the post-Yugoslav space. We therefore examined the cinematic discourses at work and explored the differences in several contexts and the cultural and political role of religion and nationhood in conflicts about sexual diversity in two movies. In *Go West* and *Parada* homosexuality is portrayed as an assault against patriarchal norms of sexual expressions and a danger to the integrity of family, tradition, religious sentiments, and the nation-state. As we argued, a step-by-step approach but also sometimes really dubious tactics need to be adopted to be able to successfully penetrate into this heteronormative environment. For example, the main issue of the analysis of *Go West* was to show that regardless of the fact that the film portrays the tragedy of gay people's lives and shows that no tactic of resistance to the hegemonic discourses succeeds, the film as a whole provides a way out by forming alliances between male dominated society and homosexuality. Even though the film offers a "solution" to double jeopardy, in terms of dual discrimination, in conforming to heteronormativity and dominant ethnicity or migrating to the

West, there are important hidden messages embedded in the film that we suggest queer activists should focus on and therefore counter and detour from the homophobic and heteronormative discourses. The film's plot offers an escape to the West as the only hope, while the *cello* represents the local hope. More, *Parada* goes even further. It is an activist film, which suggests the use of different Trojan horse techniques to communicate broadly in this homophobic region and deploy a positive message regarding protecting queer rights by employing alliances between war heroes and queer activists. These relationships are difficult to define, volatile and unexpected. Although the audience in the post-Yugoslav space might expect their alliance due to the historical backgrounds, in the West this may seem implausible (particularly alliances between the war heroes who are fighting against the Serbian neo-nationalists and therefore against homonegativity in Serbia as well).<sup>2</sup> Such gay straight alliances might have negative connotations within the queer community, especially if they are seen in a superior/inferior positioning of the straight/gay community in terms of idealized heteronormativity and hegemony over secondary queer community. Since the queer discourse is embedded into the discourse of cultural bonding between different countries of the post-Yugoslav space, and the father-son relationships, the homophobic spectator is challenged to accept the film as a whole.

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<sup>2</sup>Nevertheless, there is a trace of such gay-straight alliances in the West as well. For example an alliance of the Welsh coal miners and queers – documented in *Pride* (2014). Also there is a track of gay veterans marching together with war veterans at 2014 St. Patrick Parade in Boston (<http://newsok.com/gay-vets-can-march-in-boston-st.-patricks-parade/article/feed/773878>).

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## NEOBIČNI ORTACI: (NEPOSTOJEĆI) SAVEZ NACIONALISTA I KVIROVA

*U ovom tekstu analiziramo aktivističke taktike u dva filma sa postjugoslovenskog regiona, film Go West (2005) Ahmeda Imamovića i Paradu (2011) Srđana Dragojevića. Posebno se usredsređujemo na saveze između društva kojim vladaju muškarci i homoseksualnosti koji sadrže jedan oblik otpora dominantnih diskursa seksualnog i religijskog nacionalizma u regionu. Naša tvrdnja je da pristup korak-po-korak, ali ponekad i uistinu sumnjiva/upitna taktika treba da bude usvojena, kako bi se uspešno prodrlo u heteronormativno okruženje. Mi smatramo da uspostavljanje saveza između očinske figure i gej figure u Bosni i Hercegovini, kakav je predstavljen u filmu Go West, jeste jedna od taktika retorike skretanja od uobičajenog diskursa koji ne stvara savez, a proizvodi stalni sukob među njima. Ideja takvog saveza pokazuje solidarnost između nacionalista i kvir zajednice. Sličnim savezima se takođe bavila Parada, koja predstavlja imaginarnu mogućnost za kvir aktiviste koji regrutuju ksenofobične i nacionalističke ratne veterane da bi „pogurali“ svoju stvar. Film je trojanski konj, koji usvaja i možda se zalaže za korišćenje indirektnih aktivističkih taktika, koje su maskirane i skrivene u scenariju i estetici filma. Što je jača spoljašnja ksenofobična nacionalistička sila, jači je i otpor u trojanskom konju i jači je osećaj njihove transnacionalne istorijske veze ugrađen u „bratstvo i jedinstvo“.*

Ključne reči: *aktivističke taktike, gej-strejt savez, post-YU, queer film, Parada, Go West.*