

Great Expectations

After having observed the architectural violence on both the islands and the coast of “the new Croatia” for ten years, with new rich people and a new generation of the “right” people, all byproducts of the war, I could finally articulate my idea for “Great Expectations”. It happened in Amsterdam in 2004, following my four-month stay in Bol, a small town located on the Island of Brač.

It was in Bol, a town I have always had emotional and geographical connection to, where I spent my summers and that year in particular I had stayed for the whole of September, October and November. I took part in handpicking grapes during the harvest and was caught in the monotony you can always find in small places, so it seemed as though I was not doing anything.

Time was passing slowly, as it always does on islands I suppose, making you aware of every minute of potential boredom. However, becoming one with nature and the rhythm of the island and its steady calm, brings your mind to a state in which measuring time through urban categories such as meetings, the rush, Mondays and Tuesdays doesn't exist. Although I had no “real” reasons to stay there for so long, I just couldn't force myself to leave the island that year. *Zlatni rat* (Golden Horn) is a kilometer and a half long beach on which I read Virginia Wolf. It is located in a small place on a small island of a small country. There, I become closer to being one with nature, standing alone in the endless scenery. I adored the contradictions and sensations I was able to find on the island. The development of new buildings irritated me more and more.

When my partner bought me a plane ticket and sent it with sort of an ultimatum, I flew to Amsterdam and three days after that, I wrote the script for Great Expectations. The dislocation and being in a different context, being surrounded by artists, friends, museums and artworks, together with my experience of observing from Bol, all helped me to articulate the initial idea for the film: “one family, one male blood line”. Through my own experience, as is often the case in my work, I tried to portray a wider social context. Politics, war, geography, and family - it is all in me and around me, so it finds its way to my work as well. The shortest one-sentence summary would look something like this: Great Expectations deals with the subject of violence inherited through the male line in one family, but the kind of violence that changes its form from one generation to the next due to different socio-political contexts.

I) Kroj's (King's) Father

The Past Simple Tense – Socialist Yugoslavia (till the time I was 17). The film talks about my grandfather, that is, about the socialist generation and him as the CEO of a factory at that time. I assign to him the emotional violence - referring to the 1950's and the 1970's in Yugoslavia and the macho world he lived in, in which these two ‘pisulje’ (a derogatory term for girls in the Dalmatian dialect) (one of whom was my mother) precede the birth of his long awaited son: Kroj (meaning “king” in this Croatian dialect).

He's is born! He's is born! Kroj is born!

The King Is Born! – My nana announced when my *barba* (master of the house, my mother's brother) was born in a small village in Dalmatian Zagora, a village in which men and women know their places well.

II) Kroj

Barba, born in the time of great expectations and the change from socialism to wild capitalism, becomes very successful (financially) during and right after the war. It was the time of the second generation, in the second half of the 90's, right after the war, in a different political system and a changed system of values. This new mentality is reflected in the movie with newly built houses which match the tastes and social statuses of their owners. All the new houses being constructed, new neighborhoods and the chaos of this newly arisen landscape in Dalmatia (on the islands and the land) reminded me of a dental cavity that will only become more painful, darker and will spread in time. My uncle, the Kroj, among other things and among other people, builds a house on Bol, in front of his sister's (my mother's) house. A small lodge that little by little become so big it cuts off the view from our house completely. Done! There was approximately 10 to 15 centimeters from our balcony to their

roof. My mother said to me: "Don't worry honey and don't exaggerate, this way we at least get some shade!" Her sister, older than her, also supports this, even though they are both Kroj's seniors. The amount of intentional absurdity that women will embrace in order to justify male aggression is present throughout the movie. Architectural violence is the violence of the second generation of the same male line in a new political system (now capitalism) in a country with a new name (Croatia). Architectural violence represents the central part of the film and is reflected in my modified 'view': from looking at the sky, the sea and the islands to looking into a red tile roof, right there, 10 centimeters away... They tell me not to worry, *it doesn't matter, it is just for those couple of summer months per year ...* But then years accumulate without anyone ever saying anything. *It's not important, we should keep the peace in the family, do not say anything, you will forget about it, you'll get used to it.* I just don't know how to get used to it, when the house creates a constant shadow and it is cold inside because of it and you cannot visit during winter anymore. *So we don't go during winter months, it's not like we used to visit a lot anyway, it was just over the summer, and only you (meaning me) visited for short periods over the winter. Why do you even visit then? You are better off in Split in winter anyway* says my mother and repeats the same story for a while...

Then the postwar time comes and the wild transitional capitalism transforms itself into a neoliberal one. The overall atmosphere in the country, especially among the new generations, is one of new material values; the education is no longer 'in', doing business and making as much money as possible, as quickly as possible, not caring about the consequences is "in", because - intellectuals are poor and no one gets them anyway...

III) Kroj's son

The third generation of the same male line. The firstborn son (there are three sons, until a girl is born the queen) becomes a Skinhead and a fierce supporter of Torcida (fans of Hajduk Split, a Croatian football club). He likes it; it makes him feel strong, powerful and smart. A Croat, a white bald headed nationalist. My mother's sister tells me: "He's not really a Skinhead he doesn't know what that means. He thinks its like Snickers (the candy bar)." Everyone laughs at this, but me. Their absolute negation of the problem is fascinating. In the movie, this third generation incorporates the "physical" violence; during an incident in Dugopolje they lit a man in a car on fire (a group of football supporters from Split fought against the supporters from Zagreb).

And then....

Years go by and we get used to everything. There is a picture of general Gotovina on the Diocletian's Wall; war criminals in Haag are considered protectors and heroes in Croatia. Their pictures are everywhere, smiling and in uniform, standing there, protecting Croatia and the new Croatia and the new mentality that goes with it.

My cousin is no longer a Skinhead. He's 25 years old now and has a nice job in his dad's firm in Zagreb and likes to be right more than anything (after he double-checks everything), so he can go and yell at the employees who are under him and at least twice his age. He checks everything and then checks it once more and then goes on to yell and enjoy himself.

The sound for the movie was done in collaboration with Ramuntcho Matt and represents one of my favorite aspects of the movie. My wish from the beginning was to have a sound that can link the three generations of the same male line together and add another dimension to it. It seemed redundant to me for the sound to just convey the same message as the images and the narration, so I wanted to add an additional aspect. Ramuntcho understood the movie from the start as well as its missing aspect. In the fourteenth minute of the movie there is a scene in which a car is being put on fire (in the third generation i.e. the physical violence). The sound one can hear throughout the movie reveals itself in that one scene. From the first minute of the film, aside from my voice and the ambient sound, there is a fire crackling sound in the background. The scenes of driving around the newly built houses (the

architectural violence) are also accompanied by this uneven fire crackling sound. Fire is used as a conceptual framework for the movie; from being a symbol of family gatherings in prehistoric times it here it symbolizes destruction.

Jean Luis Vilard (cameraman) insisted on carrying his crane from Paris with him, because *it is light and one never knows when they might need it*. We used it to shoot one of my favorite scenes in Great Expectations - the view from the narrator's eyes level (my eyes level) from the balcony to the only thing that can still be seen from it, the red roof. Thanks to the camera on the crane the view reappeared above the roof, showing what used to be seen from the balcony before, the blue sea and the islands on the other side. The crane then descends again, back to my reality- to the violence before my eyes.

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