

“Anarchy all over Bašcaršija”: Yugoslavia’s new socialist culture and the New Primitives poetics of the local

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Abstract The paper analyses Sarajevo’s music movement of *New Primitives* and its “poetics of the local” as a struggle against the cultural hypocrisy of Yugoslavia’s “new socialist culture” and its privileging of “external-cosmopolitan” as apotheosis of cultured refinement and sophistication while denigrating “local-parochial” as epitome of uncultured primitiveness. I argue that the movement’s *praxis* is best understood as a call to reject externally-imposed frames of reference as the basis for self-understanding, and to embrace a socio-cultural awareness that the only way to be in the world is to be authentically “primitive” – i.e. to exist as a distinct and autochthon socio-cultural self.

At bottom, the project of building the post-World War II socialist Yugoslavia was the process of making a new type of ideological national community. Its essence was the creation of a new national cultural framework that would, at the same time, be Yugoslav in scope and socialist in its ideological intent and thus function to both create a new type of socialist citizen and inculcate that citizen into the values of new socialist political ideology (see, for example, Wachtel, 1998). The process of cultural building went through different shifts and phases, but from the very beginning its fundamental assumption was to create the new national cultural foundation – i.e. “new socialist culture” – that would not only ease the transition from pre-socialist to socialist Yugoslavia but would also prop up the new socialist ideology and enable its interweaving with the existing socio-cultural realities of the Balkans.

From the very beginning, the genesis of new socialist culture was animated by three foundational postulates: (1) philosophical, (2) pragmatic-developmental, and (3) personal-cultural. The first one was grounded in the leadership’s ideological commitment to socialist humanism and one of its foundational assumptions that true society is *human* society, i.e. the form of social life and organization that provides the political, economic and cultural resources conducive to the full realization of one’s freedom and, therefore, humanity (see Fromm, 1966). In this context, the ultimate vision of

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Yugoslavia was a vision of fundamentally *human* society and a community of voluntarily associated free nations and nationalities, organized by the principle of socialist democracy, that would enable the full realization of one's humanity and provide the necessary social and cultural resources for its continuous development. Correspondingly, the country's new socialist culture was reflective of the humanist ethos and framed as a form of *praxis* fully integrated into essential human processes and, thus, both a means of establishing full unity between life-needs, labour-needs and cultural needs, and of merging them into a single life-process that is as creative as it is cultural and as it is material, all at the same time (see Kremer, 1985, p. 17; unsigned, 1984, p. 13).

The second postulate – pragmatic-developmental – reflected the country's "evolutionary predicament" of making the "great leap forward" into socialism without ever passing through its evolutionary prerequisite, the *industrial* revolution. This resulted in the country's leadership fully embracing the philosophy of developmentalism and modernization that posited the measurement of social progress as a degree of the overall economic development and the improvement of industrial means and forces of production. In practical terms, this translated into a commitment to a parallel project of both industrial *and* socialist revolution and, moreover, into understanding and measuring the degree of success of the latter in terms of the degree of success of the former (see Korać, 1966, p. 11). In terms of the country's new socialist culture, this coupling of socialism and developmentalism/modernism meant adoption of a forward-looking cultural principle which sought to prioritize future-oriented forms of cultural thought and to advocate, implicitly or explicitly, new ways of cultural being-in-the-world. In this context, to be cultured and/or to have culture, both as a national community and an individual partaking in the life of that community, meant embracing the new and modern (i.e. progressive) cultural forms, norms, and values – or, in terms of pragmatic-developmental postulate, transplanting the philosophy of developmentalism and modernism into the cultural realm of social life.

Drawing upon the application of the philosophy of developmentalism and modernism to the cultural realm of society's life, the third personal-cultural postulate prioritized the belief that to be culturally modern meant embracing the "higher" (i.e. more developed) forms of cultural expression and abandoning "primitive" and "regressive" forms of personal-cultural being. In other words, it meant acculturating oneself into the forwardly oriented forms of culture that elevated one's cultural, and thus human, being from the retrograde world of un(der)developed (cultural) conditions of life. In this context, new socialist culture came to be posited as the

culture of the urban-industrial (i.e. the culture of the progressive social forces of industrially developed Western societies), and construed as the culture of sophistication and heightened cultural sensibilities. Its strategic function was to free the Yugoslav citizenry from the shackles of its own "primitiveness" and cultural un(der-)development and, in doing so, open up venues for transcending cultural limitations incongruent with the overall orientation of industrial-economic – and thus general social – development and modernization. This, in turn, translated into a favoring of progressive cultural forms (i.e. high Western culture) as the new cultural standards of Yugoslav society and as the criteria for assessing both individual and overall societal cultural wellbeing and advancement.

Ultimately, Yugoslavia's new socialist culture came to reflect the basic framework of the three postulates on which it was built. Its overall purpose was to advocate "socialist-in-content/progressive-in-outlook" cultural experience(s) as the *de facto* official and officially sanctioned cultural model for the country, and as the cultural prism through which the Yugoslav nation and its citizens would come to understand and define themselves. In a practical sense, this translated into the establishment and development of the country's "cultural infrastructure" as both the carrier and protector of the prioritized forms of new socialist culture and the institutional means through which the (official) culture of Yugoslavia was (re)presented as such.¹

As I have argued elsewhere, the rise of "music of commitment" (i.e. rock-music as a meaningful and purposeful socio-cultural *praxis*) in the later half of the 1970s represented the first official popular-cultural response to Yugoslavia's new socialist culture (see Mišina, 2010). The nature of this response was to engage with the problematic aspects of the country's official cultural platform and to critically interrogate what were, from the youth's viewpoint, recognized to be the shortcomings of its socialist-in-content/progressive-in-outlook normative framework. Through their unique variants of "poetics of the present", the three incarnations of music of commitment – the music movements of *New Wave*, *New Primitives* and *New Partisans* – addressed the sources of disconnect between the idea(l) and the reality of Yugoslav socialist community in terms of intended and "actually existing" outcomes of its new socialist culture. While each movement focused on different dimensions of the disconnect, all three shared the belief that their critical socio-cultural engagements were, ultimately, not only a means of addressing but also an aid in closing the gap between the socio-cultural idea(l) and reality of socialist Yugoslavia and, as such, affirmative contributions in the struggle for realizing a genuine Yugoslav socialist-humanist community "in the true measure of man".

The purpose of the paper is to provide an analysis of Sarajevo's music movement of *New Primitives* and its unique "poetics of the local" as a struggle against the cultural hypocrisy of Yugoslavia's new socialist culture. The argument of the paper is that the movement's poetics of the local is best understood as a call to reject externally-imposed frames of reference and understanding as the basis for self-regard and self-cognition, and to embrace local consciousness as the beginning- and end-point of one's relationship to oneself and to the "world out there". Grounded in the fringe realities of Sarajevo's socio-cultural *milieu*, the *New Primitives'* celebration of the local was thus a powerful critique of the hypocrisy of the Yugoslav cultural establishment and its privileging of "external-cosmopolitan" as apotheosis of cultured refinement and sophistication while denigrating "local-parochial" as epitome of uncultured primitiveness. The paper will demonstrate that, fundamentally, the struggle of *New Primitives* was a struggle for socio-cultural awareness of the reality that the only way to be in and of the world was to be authentically "primitive" – i.e. to exist as a distinct, authentic and autochthon socio-cultural self.

The *New Primitives*² and its poetics of the local will be examined in light of what Zildžo (in n/a, 1990, p. 4) identifies as the movement's two essential aspects: reexamination of local identity through an attempt to explain one's being with one's own language and through one's own, unimposed, frames of reference; and radical demystification and demythologization of one's immediate socio-cultural *milieu* through the use of local iconographic and lexicographic elements. These will be explored by (1) addressing the importance of the "Sarajevo factor" in the rise of the *New Primitives*, (2) examining the impact of Emir Kusturica on the shaping of the movement's poetic of the local, (3) identifying the general principles of the *New Primitives'* philosophical and normative foundations, and (4) offering a detailed analysis of the most important exemplar of the movement's socio-cultural *praxis* – the rock-band *Zabranjeno pušenje*. Through this, the paper will demonstrate the movement's importance not only in terms of radically reorienting the local socio-cultural dynamic of the Sarajevo *milieu* but also in terms of challenging, and of having an indispensable impact on, the normative foundation of Yugoslavia's social and cultural life in the mid-to-late 1980s.

Sarajevo: The Spirit of "Dark Vilayet"³

In many respects, the origin of *New Primitives* is tied to the nature of the socio-cultural climate of Sarajevo – the capital of Bosnia & Herzegovina and the movement's place of birth. Most of the *New*

Primitives' "philosophical postulates" were to a significant degree informed by the spirit of Sarajevo and by a particular understanding of the city's socio-cultural relationship to the rest of the country. To a great extent, Sarajevo's spirit is reflective of the city's geography and the region's history (see Donia, 2006). Wedged within the Dinaric Alps mountain range in the heart of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the city was established in 1461 as an administrative center of the Ottoman Empire's Bosnia Province. For the next five centuries Sarajevo would mature into an ever-more important cultural and political center of the Empire's Western corner and a place whose socio-cultural formation grew out of the confluence of the civilizational traditions of the East and the West, the encounters of diverse spiritual forces and religious communities, and the convergence of peoples' multiplex ethnic, cultural, and national distinctions. Together, the *mélange* of the richly diverse but, ultimately, concordantly complementary historical influences and concrete realities of daily life would give the city a unique spirit of intermingled "mysticism and magic of the Orient, gentlemanliness and aesthetic of the West, the Slavic feel of cheerfulness, and the temperament of the South" (Lošić in Stevanović, 1990, p. 49).⁴ Its practical essence was informed by the attitudes of openness, acceptance and tolerance, and the practices of pragmatic accommodation and balanced and harmonious coexistence. These constituted the very foundation of Sarajevo's *mentalité* and, more broadly, the *Weltanschauung* of its peoples. The statements by the *New Primitives'* Elvis J. Kurtović and *Bijelo dugme's* Goran Bregović are effective illustrations here:

As a multinational environment, Sarajevo represents the highest possible degree of integration to be expected from the people. The relationships between different nations are balanced out naturally, without too many of any group, which would allow it to harass others. (Kurtović in Jalovčić, 1990, p. 39)

Besides, when one grows up in Sarajevo one cannot have exclusionist tendencies possible in other places; to grow up among Serbs, Croats, and Muslims prevents you from going astray. I even believe that it is the same way in Yugoslavia: [a]ll of us have been intermixed for quite some time – especially in Sarajevo! (Bregović in Loza, 1990, p. 36)

Despite the uniqueness of its socio-cultural spirit, however, the cultural *milieu* of Sarajevo was, for all practical purposes, the great unknown within in the socio-cultural fabric of Yugoslav society. While Belgrade and Zagreb, as the two principal socio-cultural centers, had their "cultural stamps" firmly imprinted in just about any region of the country, Sarajevo's image was that of a "dark vilayet" – i.e. the place from which, save a few notable exceptions, nothing culturally significant ever came about. If Sarajevo was

known to the “outside world” it was primarily through, as Todorović (1985, p. 26) puts it, “the jokes about Mujo and Haso, the aroma of *čevapi*⁵, and the sound of *Bijelo dugme*”. These stood for the general socio-cultural markers of Sarajevo’s relationship to the rest of the country, or – perhaps more accurately – of the country’s relationship to, and perception of, Sarajevo.

At the root of the city’s “cultural invisibility” was a center/periphery relationship that Sarajevo had with the country’s principal cultural metropolises, the source of which was the cultural-inferiority complex ingrained in the collective mind of the local cultural authorities. Simply put, Sarajevo was different from the other major and culturally relevant urban centers of the country, and that difference did not sit well with the city’s cultural scene and its understanding of what true/genuine culture was supposed to be. Compared to the cultural parameters of Zagreb and Belgrade, Sarajevo’s cultural offerings were perceived as insufficiently sophisticated and as lacking the luster of “veritable culture”. In other words, they were seen as “primitive” and therefore as something that ought to be either hidden from Yugoslav cultural eyes or respecified so as to conform to the officially accepted and recognized cultural mould. Not only were Sarajevo’s cultural realities taken as the sources of uncomfortable cultural inferiority, but the language itself (i.e. the way the city and its people communicated in their daily lives) was considered a cultural anomaly to be rectified through aggressive linguistic interventionism by the local cultural authorities. As Zildžo puts it:

Sarajevo, i.e. Sarajevo’s cultural scene, despised and characterized as primitive any attempt to incorporate linguistic realities of the city into the media, or even to use it in the spoken arts. . . . It was the case of some sort of shame before the fact of one’s own distinctiveness, often so obvious that it could be negated only by a sort of militant spirit. The writers were using “pure” literary language, or some form of the numerous home-grown variations . . . , dialogues in prose were dry and empty as if they were conversations of idle native-language teachers rather than of literary heroes; simply, the language of the city was exiled from the public scene and, with it, its cultural specificities with their (rather rough) features anathematized.⁶ (Zildžo in n/a, 1990, p. 24)

The consequence of linguistic and – more broadly – cultural “purges” within the Sarajevo *milieu* was a cultural “double life” which relegated the authentic in the local socio-cultural universe to the sphere of “dark peripherality” while elevating the inauthentic(ally forced) to the realm of “illuminating grotesque”. Its ultimate message was that the way one is is not the way one ought to be, and that, in order to change, one needs to alter who (and where) one is. Hence the image of Sarajevo as the “dark vilayet” – the place that, because of its “cultural peculiarity”, could not offer anything substantial to the

wider cultural community, and whose contributions were therefore possible only in the form of either ironed-out cultural ruggedness or sympathetically inconsequential pseudo-culture. Not only was this the image through which the country – if it was noticing it at all – framed its regard for Sarajevo's socio-cultural *milieu*, but also the prism that filtered Sarajevo's regard of itself.

Emir Kusturica: "A Drama in Socialist Society"

At the root of the *New Primitives'* distinct poetics was an active relationship with Sarajevo and a turn to one's own socio-cultural essence as the source of artistic inspiration and the foundation of artistic expressiveness. In many important respects, Emir Kusturica's 1981 film *Sjećaj li se, Dolly Bell* (*Do You Remember, Dolly Bell?*) was the first, and perhaps most important, indication of the awakening of Sarajevo's new socio-cultural conscience, encapsulated by the *New Primitives'* poetics of the local. Kusturica's 1981 directorial debut was an announcement of the shifting socio-cultural dynamic in Sarajevo's *milieu* and a key precursor to the ensuing cultural fermentation and everything that would come to full fruition with the affirmation of the *New Primitives*. Centered around the themes of coming of age, life in a working-class family, and the realities of a young socialist society, Kusturica's film offered a radically new picture of Sarajevo's socio-cultural universe, its protagonists, and their individual (and collective) destinies within a larger historical-political moment. The central characters of *Sjećaj li se, Dolly Bell* were people on the margins of society whose lives unraveled in a universe hidden from the eyes and ears of "society proper", and whose fates were informed by the marginality of their individual and collective existences. For all of them, the immediate and larger socio-cultural *milieu* was a self-contained universe with its own rules, values, principles and norms, and a place which, although clearly defined through its relationship with the "real society", regarded the realities of the "real world" of Sarajevo valley as a distant light flickering atop the newly erected high-rises (one of the crucial scenes that reoccurs throughout the film at all key points of the narrative). The marginality of their existence, thus, was informed by their invisibility and peripherality in relation to society proper, and by their position outside of "circles of influence" that crucially shaped and, in the end, determined the destinies of everyday ordinary people.

The new moment that Kusturica introduces with *Sjećaj li se, Dolly Bell* is a new artistic aesthetic whose essential ingredients are a clear focus of the local, and a direct and unembellished treatment of the real and specific aspects of life on Sarajevo's periphery. Central to

this is the principle of “not running away from oneself”, predicated on two fundamentals: (1) building one’s artistic universe by starting from one’s most immediate social setting – a home – and broadening it to neighborhood, community, and society at large; and (2) defining yourself from the viewpoint of your own socio-cultural *milieu*, with all its characteristics and specificities, and building that into your sense of consciousness and identity as an individual, social, cultural and historical being (in Aleksić, 1985, p. 21). Thus, the characters in *Sjecaš li se, Dolly Bell* are unequivocally local in that they live and exist in the particular and explicitly defined socio-cultural locale, use its “living language” in all of its unsophisticated coarseness, and exhibit all the flaws, shortcomings, and charms ascribed to them by their “actually existing” living *milieu* (Kusturica shot the film on real locations and used many non-actors who, through their characters, essentially played themselves and spoke the way they ordinarily do). The parameters of their consciousness are one way or another filtered through the family as a social setting, in which they not only get to understand themselves and their relationship to others but also define their connection to the “world out there”. Thus, the point of Kusturica’s aesthetic of “not running away from oneself” is to reveal that, ultimately, it is only through acknowledging the local and facing it with “clear and sober senses” that one gains the ability to authenticate oneself as a true and actually existing self (i.e. as a social subject) devoid of the falsehoods of externally imposed frames of references.

On a broader plane, Kusturica’s “artistic localism” is grounded in his general philosophical stance that a true art (i.e. a meaningful artistic endeavor) ought to be a form of socio-cultural engagement whose relevance is derived from its reflexive examinations of the daily realities of life in a socialist society. In Kusturica’s view, art ought not be a “beautification mirror” that reflects its object in a “dolled up” (that is, distorted and unrealistic) fashion, but an honest and unabashedly realistic capturing of what he calls the “drama in socialist society”. For Kusturica, essential to faithfully reflecting and capturing the essence of that drama is the artist turning to what he is most intimately familiar with – his immediate everyday surrounding, at the center of which is family life. As he puts it:

We who are not in the underground mines and do not mine – where do we see and feel [the drama in socialist society]? We see it in the family, in human beings, in a relationship between the family and society. . . . It is on these margins that the drama in socialist societies – our own included – actually takes place. (Kusturica in Aleksić, 1985, p. 21)

For Kusturica, therefore, art’s central preoccupation ought to be exploring the peripheral segments of society and the ways in which

their relationship to the "world out there" reflects, and affects, the dynamic of their everyday realities and the ultimate course of both individual and collective human destinies. At its most immediate, the centrality of the marginal within "artistic localism" figures as a strategic device for demystifying the local by debunking stereotypes through depictions of truth and, through this, authenticating the forms of experience and identity inferiorized by mainstream culture. More broadly, the artistic objective of "bringing the periphery to the center" operates as a method of (re)examining and thus challenging the official cultural model of Yugoslav society by exposing its fundamental contradictions and revealing the contradictory effects that its particular cultural parameters generate within the microcosms and macrocosms of the "actually existing" society. Ultimately, it is this kind of probing of the drama of the periphery in socialist society that, as far as Kusturica is concerned, makes art a useful, socially relevant, and meaningful cultural endeavor.

The importance of Kusturica's *Sjećaš li se, Dolly Bell* and the new artistic aesthetic it ushered in cannot be overstated. In many respects both are the catalyst for Sarajevo's socio-cultural renaissance and at the root of much, if not all, cultural fermentation that would culminate in the *New Primitives*. According to Nele Karajlić, the frontman of *Zabranjeno pušenje (No Smoking)*, Kusturica's main influence on the *New Primitives* rests in introducing a new aesthetic for the grounding of a "new-primitive" form of thinking (Karajlić in D. Popović, 1989, p. 7), and in validating and "publicising" the kind of thinking that fermented in the early days of the movement. As he puts it:

Kusturica came in as someone who showed us that there were more people who thought like us. That was stimulating for further work. . . . It's like, you are working on a thing and digging in anonymity, and all of a sudden you see a film that projects everything you are doing in rock'n'roll. (Karajlić in Janjatović, 1984, p. 15)

A few years after Kusturica's film put Sarajevo on the Yugoslav and international cultural map⁷, the city would enter its "golden cultural age" and experience an unprecedented outburst of artistic creativity anchored in the *New Primitives* poetics of the local. Its overall socio-cultural effect and its lasting cultural legacy would, in the final score, be the tearing asunder of Sarajevo's image as the "dark vilayet" and the forging of a new identity of the city's socio-cultural *milieu* as an autochthonous and now inalienable "brick in Yugoslav's cultural wall".

New Primitives: The "Punks" of Sarajevo

As with Kusturica's new artistic sensibility, the essence of the *New Primitives* unique poetic was in turning to oneself and one's most

immediate socio-cultural universe as the foundation for coming to terms with one's individual and collective "being in the world". The centrality of the local had two strategic functions: authentication of one's own identity in light of one's everyday reality and experiences; and affirmation of one's own *milieu* as the basis for one's socio-cultural purviews and the foundation of one's attitude towards the "world out there". For the *New Primitives*, therefore, the local was important because it defined who one is, where one fits in the world, and how one relates to that world – i.e. because it delimited one's individual and collective *mentalité* (in Brezarić, 1985a, p. 27). On a broader plane, focus on the local was strategically important for gauging the nature of a larger socio-cultural universe and forming an attitude regarding its essential normative principles. Thus, the *New Primitives'* poetics of the local was a way to (re)examine not only one's own character but also the character of general culture that dictated the frameworks for understanding the personal (and collective) self. Its aim, therefore, was the demystification of oneself, one's environment, and one's overall socio-cultural universe.

The initial impetus for the *New Primitives'* poetics of the local was to make ironical a variety of Western popular-cultural trends (such as New Romanticism, New Collectivism, etc.) accepted uncritically by the local cultural public. Obsession with Western cultural fads by people whose personal and socio-cultural disposition had nothing in common with these was seen as an indication of socio-cultural *malaise* and a manifestation of acute cultural aberration. "Primitivism", in this context, was employed as a means of socio-cultural critique of the Western cultural encroachment and, on a larger cultural plane, a platform for an advocacy of authentic local values and a return to what is indigenous to one's socio-cultural being. As Elvis J. Kurtović explains it, "new primitivism" was not a new form of estrangement – i.e. yet another cultural fad – but "a grand return to the statements from our birth certificates where it says that we are descendents of a particular person who lived in a specific place" (in Lalović, 1984, p. 68). Its very essence, therefore, was a return to an authentic local tradition, however without a denial of the values of modern life. What "new primitivism" saw as fundamentally problematic with the "contemporary human condition" was the alienating effect of modern life rather than modern life in and of itself. In this context, its ultimate aim was de-alienation through re-invocation of the more humane relationships to oneself and to others – essential to authentic local traditionalism – and their re-insertion into everyday ways of "being in the world". As Kurtović puts it:

new primitives, of course, do not wish to denigrate today's life – tramways and buses which we have to speed us up and get us to our work places as fast as possible – but they wish to point out that the best camaraderie is still at the parties where the tables are full of burek⁸ and booze. If you don't believe me, let me ask you something: you, who live in a 20-floor high-rise, please tell me the name of your neighbor who lives on the floor above you? (in Lalović, 1984, p. 68)

To be "primitive", thus, meant not to be anti-modern but to be modern in an authentically local way. For Kurtović, the latter's essence was the development of a proper consciousness which prioritizes the autochthonous as the basis for affirming oneself, one's relationship to others, and one's place (with)in the larger socio-cultural *milieu*. Hence "new primitivism" as a form of conscientised primitivism, and the *New Primitives*⁹ as its most vocal proponent.

If ironic disposition towards Western fads was the starting premise for the *New Primitives'* philosophical and normative framework, a critical appropriation of "old (that is, original) primitivism" was the grounding point for the movement's distinct poetics expression. The guiding assumption was the notion that the most efficient way to accentuate the centrality of the local would be to appropriate the mannerisms and "Weltanschauung" of the segments of population whose "spiritual and material being" was "untainted" by the Western cultural encroachment, and who existed and operated unequivocally outside of it. Their 'primitivism' – that is, the fact that, according to the normativity of the dominant cultural understanding, they have not adopted the ways of the civilized world – would thus, in the context of the *New Primitives'* poetics of the local, be respecified as a sort of socio-cultural avant-garde, while their unawareness of the "narrowness of their being" would be turned into the ultimate expression of a new progressive socio-cultural consciousness. In this context, the process of critical appropriation operated as a means of affirming (rather than deriding) the essence of "old primitivism" and "authentically primitive man".

For the *New Primitives*, the most authentic embodiment of "old primitivism" was to be found among the most marginal categories of people – local hoodlums, thieves and shady characters on the fringes of society. Their (under)world and their "codex of living" encapsulated everything local and were, in terms of the movement's strategy and intent, the platform for modeling the "new-primitive man" – a new conscientised primitive. As Elvis J. Kurtović, the father of new primitivism, made it plain, "the movement has emerged out of pure sociological analysis of the Jalijaš¹⁰ [Sarajevo's 'felons without a cause']" (in Petrović, 1984, p. 59). In his view, the *New Primitives* was "something people themselves started and we thought it through and gave it the name" (in Gajić, 1983, p. 55). The

New Primitives' “new-primitive man” was thus a “sociological ideal-type construct” modeled on the realities of the existence of people “who gather on the corners of Sarajevo streets, are always in the groups of ten or so, always walk together, and are not afraid of anyone” (Kurtović in Palameta, 1985, p. 31) – the “real-existing Jališaš-primitives”. The physiology of the former was, ultimately, a constructive transposition of the peculiarities of the latter.¹¹

Intellectually, the new-primitive man's *Weltanschauung* is delineated by new-primitive ethics – the “normative compass” for navigating through one's “moral-ethical and socio-cultural universe”:

[new-primitives] call each other friend and shout slogans like “long live electrification of the village” and “Pape¹², our dearest”, not being embarrassed by their primitive roots. They have neighborly warmth, deep humanness and immediacy in communicating with others. They detest the West except for their *gastarbeiter*¹³ brothers, hate Western singers, actors, politicians. (Karajlić in Lalović, 1983, p. 70)

In a socio-cultural sense, the new-primitive man is as outlandish and brutish socially as he is unrefined and unpolished culturally. His defining features (effectively captured in the *Manual for the New-Primitives*, published as part of *Zabranjeno pušenje's* 1985 LP release “Dok čekaš sabah sa šejtanom” (“While Awaiting the Dawn with the Devil”)) are “visual and behavioral crudeness” and lack of sophistication in whatever shape, form or fashion. Stylistically, the fashion sense of the new-primitive man is informed by the standards of the so-called “Bosnian urban folklore” (i.e. half-way unbuttoned multicolor acrylic shirts with a wide collar, bell-bottom cloth pants, and pointy shoes with metal heels). According to Karajlić (in Lalović, 1983, p. 71), insistence on the “Bosnian urban folklore” fashion style has a strategic purpose of affirming and authenticating the local, since “the way of dressing marks the locale”; as such, it is but a “general normative expression” of a more particular understanding that, as far as Sarajevo's fashion is concerned, the “bastion of textile imperialism is crumbling and the Paris-London-New York fashion triangle is being replaced by the Vratnik-Sedrenik-Koševo-Malta¹⁴ square”. In Karajlić's view, the horizons of new-primitive “fashion – and, by extension, cultural – mind” are delineated by a consciousness which posits that “if Americans have t-shirts with ‘enjoy Coca-Cola’ logos, why can't we have the same t-shirt with a picture of *burek* and the logo ‘enjoy *burek*’ below” (in Lalović, 1983, p. 71).

Zabranjeno pušenje: “Anarchy All over Bašćaršija”¹⁵

The most complete expression of the *New Primitives'* poetic of the local is undoubtedly offered by the movement's alpha-and-omega,

Sarajevo's *Zabranjeno pušenje*. In many respects, *Zabranjeno pušenje* can be thought of as the rock'n'roll rendering of Emir Kusturica – that is, as the application to music of the same artistic and philosophical principles that underlie Kusturica's *Sječaš li se, Dolly Bell*. As with Kusturica's understanding of film as an art form, *Zabranjeno pušenje's* artistic vision starts from the premise that, at its best (i.e. most substantive), music is a form of socio-cultural engagement grounded in an unabashed exploration of one's essence and one's most immediate social surroundings, at the center of which is the "mining" of ordinary realities of everyday life within one's most immediate socio-cultural *milieu*.¹⁶ The ultimate objective, in this context, is to mine one's *milieu* in as documentary a fashion as possible and, in doing so, capture the essence of life as it really is and as it really happens. An additional assumption is that the reality of the local is in what is invisible to the eye of society proper (i.e. what is marginal and peripheral to its normative purviews) and in what, therefore, remains hidden from it. Thus, the exploration of the local is oriented towards bringing out the invisible and the most autochthonous in one's socio-cultural *milieu*, and "unmasking" – or de-peripheralizing – its very nature. For Kusturica, the key to this process is in "directing life as it happens"; for *Zabranjeno pušenje* it is in "reporting on the events directed by life". In both cases, authenticity – be it in directing and/or in reporting – and authentic regard of life is pivotal and indispensable. Or as Karajlić puts it, situating his band within the *New Primitives* context, "[t]he historical role of the *New Primitives* lies in [projecting] the whole truth, the entire authenticity of events about things very important to our lives" (in Brezarić, 1985a, p. 27).

Delving into the peripheral (with)in the local socio-cultural *milieu* has two essential purposes: demystifying the real-existing by way of revealing its true essence; and exploring the marginality of the local by problematizing the impact that society proper exercises over the lives and destinies of ordinary people – i.e. people existing outside "power circles" and "zones of influence". For *Zabranjeno pušenje*, demystifying the reality of the local is ultimately about accentuating all that society proper considers "primitive" about it, and reclaiming it as the ultimate source of the autochthonous and as the foundation of one's individual and collective self-regard. In addition, it is also about interpreting the essence of the local from the viewpoint of its own socio-cultural presumptions and values, and rejecting any externally-imposed frameworks of reference as problematic and oppressive. Exploring the power-effect of society proper, on the other hand, is premised on revealing the inner lives of people on the margins in light of the larger socio-cultural, political, and economic forces that either completely escape them or are

perceived as something distant and out of reach. Thus, the outside sources of impact are seldom, if ever, problematized in their own right (meaning that exploration of political ideology as such, for example, is never a subject of *Zabranjeno pušenje's* contemplations) but only insofar as they register in the consciousness of marginal (ized) (group(s) of) individuals: they are, in other words, considered as externalities. As Karajlić puts it:

The essence in *Zabranjeno pušenje* is that . . . the song does not speak about some political events, some – I don't know – great figures, but that it speaks about the people who are, in a way, on the receiving end of it all. The goal in all of that, in that whole atmosphere, is to depict an ordinary man. (Karajlić in P. Popović, 1990, p. 50)

For *Zabranjeno pušenje*, it is through exploration of the “mystique” and peripheral nature of an ordinary subject within his most immediate socio-cultural *milieu* that the essence of the “drama of the local” is ultimately revealed.

On a larger cultural plane, revealing the “drama of the local” through documentary reportage has the task of exploring the tension between the “primitive values” of the marginal(ized) segments of society and the normativity of the officially sanctioned culture that renders them such, and, in doing so, offering a critique of the latter's onerous character. For *Zabranjeno pušenje* – and the *New Primitives* – the only valid form of culture and cultural expression is the one that is autochthonous; that is what makes culture organic and, ultimately, meaningful. Everything else – that is, any form of culture that is grounded in external realities foreign to the local *milieu* – is a form of “cultural oppression” (or colonization) for it seeks to impose the non-local and, therefore, alien cultural frameworks as the primary, if not the only, basis of cultural expression and experience. For *Zabranjeno pušenje*, maintaining the integrity of the local and, in the end, of oneself depends on resisting the oppressive force of external cultural encroachment(s). In this context, the *New Primitives'* affirmation of “conscientised primitivism” as the highest form of authentic localism figures as a platform for strategic socio-cultural resistance.

It is important to note that the notion of “local” in the overall poetic of *Zabranjeno pušenje* is used in two distinct senses: as the immediate-local (that is, one's daily *milieu*), and as the national-local (that is, one's homeland *milieu*). Thus, exploring the “drama of the local” has two distinct, although inter-related, aspects to it: dealing with the problems of the immediate-local, i.e. the tensions between one's immediate socio-cultural purviews and the socio-cultural dimensions of a larger society; and dealing with the tension between the homeland socio-cultural values and foreign socio-

cultural penetrations, i.e. the problem of Westernization of national culture. On both planes, *Zabranjeno pušenje's praxis* emanates from the grounding premise which posits that if one is to maintain individual and collective dignity and integrity (i.e. if one is to be a true new-primitive), one has to strive to remain authentically local and resist any form of "cultural colonialism". In practical terms, this translates into an understanding that, at the level of the immediate-local, the principal struggle for one's dignity and integrity is a struggle to assert oneself as authentically Sarajevo and use that as the grounding point of one's identity in the face of larger society's "socio-cultural grip". At the level of the national-local, the primary struggle is a struggle to remain authentically Yugoslav and, by maintaining all socio-cultural particularities of one's homeland locale, preserve the dignity and integrity of one's identity in the face of foreign cultural intrusions. As far as *Zabranjeno pušenje* is concerned there is no contradiction in being, at the same time, "militantly Sarajevo" and "militantly Yugoslav": both forms of authentic localism are, in the final consequence, of crucial importance for one's true personal and collective subjectivity.

Zabranjeno pušenje's debut record, *Das ist Walter (This is Walter)*, is, in many respects, the band's manifesto on the *New Primitives's* poetic of the local. Its title (the last line from a 1972 classic World War II film *Valter brani Sarajevo (Walter Defends Sarajevo)*) and its opening track (the closing dialogue from the film) are very explicit statements on the two-fold notion of authentic localism expounded by the band. The last scene in the film has two German military officers overlooking Sarajevo and trying to solve the puzzle of the identity of Walter, a Sarajevo resistance fighter and the ultimate savior of the city and defender of the homeland:

Officer One: 'Strange. Since I've been in Sarajevo, I have been looking for Walter and cannot find him. Now, that I have to leave, I know who he is.'

Officer Two: 'You know who Walter is? Tell me his name, immediately.'

Officer One: 'I will show him to you. Do you see this city? That is Walter.'¹⁷

The symbolism embedded in the last line of the dialogue is powerfully revealing: Walter, as the force of resistance and an incarnation of the struggle for explicitly political (but implicitly also socio-cultural) autonomy, is ultimately the spirit of the whole city and its resilience in the face of occupying power. Thus Walter, at its most immediate, is a symbolic expression of a definite local authenticity, and, at the same time, an affirmation of the authenticity of a broader national locale. The duality of signification embedded is

taken by *Zabranjeno pušenje* as the foundation for their new-primitive reanimation of the centrality of the local in grounding an understanding of one's socio-cultural and normative essence. Hence, the record's title "Das ist Walter"¹⁸, and the record's cover – a panoramic view of the heart of Sarajevo with all of its distinct socio-cultural markers.¹⁹

The theme of intersectionality of "militant Sarajevism" and "militant Yugoslavism" as the bedrock for authentic localism is further explored in one of the key songs on "Das Ist Walter", "Neću da budem Švabo u dotiranom filmu" ("I Don't Want to be a German in a Subsidized Film"):

A famous director is in our city
shooting a new movie, 'a very good one' they say
the big stars, the parties, and the money
there's no doubt, an Oscar is in sight

He is going to need a lot of extras
for the big and grandiose scenes
although they say that he's paying quite well
I will not be there

I don't want to be a German
in a subsidized movie
I don't want to be an extra
in life, or in cinema

I don't want to be an occupier
there's something about it in my psyche
I don't want to be a German
if I can't be Prle or Tihi²⁰

The stars would all like
to be on the right side
me to play a German
and them the partisans

I don't want to be a German
I don't want to be a German – there's no way!

The principal character in the song is constructed as the modern-day Walter of a sort – the person with a firm and unyielding "normative compass" and unwavering commitment to the right (i.e. local) values and principles. Despite all the allure of a lavish World-War II film production and the potential monetary benefits from playing an extra, the "new-primitive" refuses to betray himself and his principles, and cross to the "other side", if only

symbolically. All he is willing to accept is to be on the right side and play a local hero – a partisan patriot. Any other option is simply unacceptable. In this sense, his militant Yugoslavism is the anchorage for his self-regard and an understanding of his authentic personal essence.

Despite his militant Yugoslavism, however, the character in the song is not oblivious to larger national-local socio-cultural realities which, ultimately, relegate him to the role of an "extra in life". His window into the "world out there" and the ways of its working is the star-system casting principle which prioritizes real actors from the cultural centers while peripheralizing the locals from "cultural hinterlands", and which, in doing so, both generates and reinforces the social and cultural chasm by way of erecting the hierarchy of importance. Thus, the new-primitive's resolve not to play a German is at the same time a stand against an "external assault" on the dignity and integrity of his essence as an authentic Yugoslav, but it is also an act of resistance against the internal encroachment on his autochthonous Sarajevan self. In his mind, the end effect of both power-effects is identical, with the latter peripheralizing him in real life and the former doing the very same thing on the silver screen. Asserting his "primitiveness" in the face of both, therefore, is the only way to remain true to oneself. Hence, the most important lines in the song: "I don't want to be an extra – in life, or in cinema".

Although militant in the face of foreign encroachment, the new-primitive man's authentic Yugoslavism is by no means a blinder preventing a sober understanding of larger homeland dynamics that potentially jeopardize the integrity of his "Yugoslav primitivism". On the contrary, it is precisely a desire to remain authentically Yugoslav that makes the new-primitive man rather sensitive towards the duplicities of his own society that – intentionally or not – undermine the true foundation of his, and others', sovereign Yugoslav self. *Zabranjeno pušenje's* song "Uncle Sam", released on the follow-up to "Das ist Walter", "Dok čekaš sabah sa šejtanom" ("While Awaiting the Dawn with the Devil"), is highly revealing in this regard:

8.30 AM , a door bell
I'm getting up, and I'm stunned
a man in a top hat and tails says:
'hello boy, I'm Uncle Sam'

'Maybe the guy's collecting for electricity
TV subscription, or heating'
he puffs cigar smoke into my face
'no, my boy, I'm owed much more'

I thought, 'for sure the guy's been drinking some weird stuff
or he's been unlucky in love
why do you drink when you can't take it
see what a woman can do to a man'

But he pulls out an old, yellow paper
'a \$6,000 you must pay to Uncle Sam'
and there it was, my signature
the date and the year

I tried to explain, 'you see
we are still a developing country
our trade balance is not that great
but our wealth is brotherhood and unity
our wealth is the legacy of the revolution'

'Oh? No problem, my boy
Uncle Sam is buying everything
Oh? No problem my boy'
Uncle Sam is buying me!

It was a stormy morning
I fell from bed and awoke
I heard my wife's voice from the kitchen
'you'll be late for work again'

A politician on the radio was talking about some jubilees
I guess that's his way to win us over
but in my mind, Uncle Sam was smiling
In my eyes, dollars were dancing

I ran to work, and said to my colleagues
'hey guys, I understand it all now
brotherhood and unity are not defended by the radio
brotherhood and unity can be defended only by work'

*Bang, bang, bang boogie-woogie-honey
give me my money
bang, bang, bang.
I am boogie-woogie-man
give all the money to Uncle Sam!
Uncle Sam! Uncle Sam!*

Easy . . .

Crucial to the song is interrogation of an interplay between the external and internal threats to individual selfhood, and the ways in which they are not only experienced and contextualized by an ordinary new-primitive but also re-contextualized as crucially anti-

thetical to his understanding of himself and his immediate-local and national-local *milieux*. Both "Uncle Sam" (i.e. the West and its financial institutions) and the "radio" (i.e. the homeland ideological apparatus) are examined as the forces that bear upon the destiny of an everyday person existing within his own microcosm, and that the person becomes aware of most strongly through the power of their immediate impact – i.e. in direct confrontation. Two key moments in the song are the realizations that Western repatriation comes not only in the form of monetary recompense but that it also exacts the payment "in kind" (i.e. surrendering one's authentic self and giving up on what is held sacred to one's personal and collective essence), and that the preservation of one's authenticity cannot be helped by empty rhetoric and lofty phraseology: rather, it can only be realized by relying on oneself and one's individual and societal talents. Thus, the crucial line in the song: "brotherhood and unity are not defended by the radio; brotherhood and unity can only be defended by work". The ultimate realization that the new-primitive man comes to, in the face of Uncle Sam and the radio as two distinct but interrelated realities that, each in its own way, jeopardize his integrity in the most immediate sense, is that the only way to deal with the problem(s) of one's sovereign "being in the world" is to turn to oneself and the normativity of one's own socio-cultural universe.

In addition to interrogating the intersectionality of militant Sarajevisism and militant Yugoslavism as the bedrock for authentic (that is, new-primitive) localism, and exploring the latter's peripherality in relation to the power-effects of externally-imposed socio-cultural frameworks, on the one hand, and the normativity of "society proper", on the other, the central aspect of *Zabranjeno pušenje's* poetics of the local was the demystification of Sarajevo's socio-cultural locale through a documentary approach to the realities of everyday life as it really happens. The process was grounded in the premise that unmasking the truth of the local has to do with remaining faithful to its essence and, simply, "documenting the events directed by the life" through music. In addition, it was premised on an understanding that offering an unabashedly honest reporting on life as it really happens enables one to gain a new perspective on the realities of one's individual and collective existence, and opens up the possibility for comprehending life in a different light. Thus the aim of *Zabranjeno pušenje's* new-primitive realism, projected through their brand of poetics of the local was conscientization of oneself as the local subject, and conscientization of others in relation to one's local self – in other words, double awareness.

The song that would chart out the nature of *Zabranjeno pušenje's* new-primitive realism was the band's debut single "Zenica²¹ Blues":

When I leave for Zenica
I'll be guarded by five or six cops
the county judge sentenced me to twelve years
twelve years in a maximum-security prison

My fate is really sad
my wife was assaulted by Hakija
he assaulted, and I cut him up
You don't understand that, the honorable judge

Zenica, I detest every inch of you
because of you I hate my life
who ever lives to survive twelve years in Zenica jail
he is a tough one

I'm glad about one thing, though
I'll be back from Zenica
but Hakija, he'll never come back from Bara
because no one ever comes back from the cemetery

The song's importance lies in the fact that it deals with the themes previously unknown in Yugoslav rock-music – murder and the fate of a murderer – in a manner stripped of any form of circumlocution. The language used is that of ordinary, everyday folk – simple, honest, and direct; the story-telling is straightforward and to the point; and the narrator recounts his tale honestly, without “ornamentalizing” or skewing the events or his thoughts about them. The song simply presents the truth and, in documenting life as it really happens, offers a “new take” on the familiar. Its power, according to Nele Karajlić (in D. Popović, 1989, p. 5) is precisely in this “new take” – that is, in “look[ing] at a man sentenced to twelve-year imprisonment from an aspect different from that of the law”, and, in doing so, offering a perspective completely different from the official. What Karajlić is getting at is that the official understanding of the event would brand the narrator as a criminal who, because of his heinous crime and lack of “moral compass”, deserves to be in prison, and who is, as far as the law is concerned, a menace to society. The new-primitive reportage of the very same event, however, is told from the character's perspective and his moral codex (rather than official-legal), and it reveals that, within the normativity of his local socio-cultural *milieu*, his action is perfectly understandable and justifiable, as is his glee over Hakija's ultimate destiny: it is Hakija, rather than him, who is the true villain, and it is Hakija's rather than the narrator's behavior and actions that are truly reprehensible. Hakija was therefore handled according to the normativity of his own socio-cultural environment (that is, according to the laws stronger than the ones legally prescribed by society proper) and, in the end, he

got what he deserved. And while the narrator may not be a hero, he is certainly not a villain. Thus, the capital-'t' truth revealed by the song – and fundamentally different from the official one – is that true justice prevailed. And this, in Karajlić's view, is the principal reason why "Zenica Blues" resonated so strongly with the audience: "[the song] became a hit mostly because it spoke about things that are true and, in doing so, broke an idealized vision of life, projected to people mostly by the TV" (in Brezarić, 1985a, p. 27).

For *Zabranjeno pušenje*, the best way to demystify the local (that is, to reveal its true essence) is to document it from the viewpoint of its authentic characters, their unique "ways of being", and their own personal "inner drama". As Karajlić puts it:

Zabranjeno pušenje is a band that sings about events and persons from its living milieu. Those are the people who live on the margins: taxi-drivers, black-marketeers from Sarajevo's urban part, workers, ditch-diggers. They all have their inner life, inner experiences and a specific way of reasoning. My band's motto is that one Abid [a character in the song by the same name] is living through an inner drama as equally strong and true as the one of a Danish king called Hamlet. (Karajlić in Miletić, 1987, p. 33)

According to Karajlić one can differentiate two types of characters in the songs of *Zabranjeno pušenje*. Common to both is that they are on the margins of "officially sanctioned" form of life and that their marginality grounds their identity and their sense of the world. The first type of character – the protagonists whose personal dramas are documented on *Zabranjeno pušenje's* first two albums "Das ist Walter" and "Dok čekaš sabah sa šejtanom" – are individuals conscious of their situation and position but who make no visible effort to "go beyond it". They simply operate within the context and within the sphere of their marginality and all of their existence is one way or another tied to, and reflected in, that peripheral nature. The second type of character, however, is different in that they not only fully understand their situation and position of peripheralness but that they use that understanding as a jumping-off point for an attempt to transcend the marginality of their existence. As Karajlić puts it:

These new heroes are tough and mature individuals who are not only aware of their condition but who also know how to evade that condition through an alternative of imagination. It is that imagination that enables them to project the dream land – the land of Safari. (Karajlić in Misirlić, 1987, p. 17)

Thus the possibility of transcendence is a two-stage process which starts with the ability to fully comprehend the nature of "peripheralness" (and, based on that understanding, imagine an alterna-

tive form of being in the world), followed by an attempt to actualize the imagination by taking concrete steps for rising above the condition of marginality. Undertaking the steps, however, does not provide any guarantee that the escape will be successful (in fact, more often than not it is not), but the ability to (re)imagine creates, even after repeated failures, a recurrent desire to attempt to transcend one's condition of existence and one's state of being.

Zabranjeno pušenje's third and last new-primitives record "Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari" ("Greetings from Safari Land") has as one of its central themes the exploration of the latter type of new-primitive man. The album's title is, in a sense, a salute to the alternative of imagination and the possibility of evading the peripheralness of one's existence. "Safari land" is a conceptual shorthand for the "new-primitive utopia", a place (or, in the end, a state of mind) signifying the desire and resolve to step outside one's socio-cultural universe, while "greetings" indicates that, for some at least, reaching the utopia of their imagination has been successful. Or as Karajlić puts it, in reference to the notion of "Safari land",

to people I'm singing about, [Safari] means some sort of paradise on earth – a land where there are bananas to one's heart's content, where beer is free, where lamb is barbecued on the beach, and where there is a plentitude of women. . . . It is, simply, the land where they can do whatever and however they wish, without worrying about all kinds of Chernobyls, airplane catastrophes, terrorism, and expensive rent. (Karajlić in Miletić, 1987, p. 33)

The problematic nature of new-primitive existence and new-primitive transcendence is explored most directly in one of the record's key songs, "Balada o Pišonji i Žugi" ("The Ballad of Pišonja i Žuga"):

Pišonja and Žuga remembered well
what they were told by Lepi that evening
'The seaside is a party, the seaside is where the chicks are'
'The seaside is the source of all life – isn't it Moke?'

Moke added that foreign girls give it away real easy
and that in a Zaostrog camp he banged a new one every night
Pišonja and Žuga could listen to them all night
Pišonja and Žuga had a seventeen-year-old boiling blood

The very same night Pišonja and Žuga
stole the tape player from a home for disabled
and shortly thereafter a Hrid-company bus

Pišonja switched into a gear
that hot summer night around 10 PM
'And now – destination seaside', Žuga yelled out

Pišonja was driving and smoking
Žuga likes the dark ones, Pišonja likes the blondes
after the seaside, straight on into the world
only the brave ones attain the glory

‘So long Breka barracks’
yelled Žuga blasting the tape player
‘You’ll receive the postcard from Safari Land’
‘Farewell, cockroaches!’

Cops blocked the road
around Bradina at about eleven-o-five
boogie-woogie was playing in the bus

Spotting the cops, at eighty kilometers an hour
Pišonja said to Žuga, ‘Buckle up, we’re taking off!’

A terrible crash ripped through the air
the sparks were flying in the dark
in the morning, people swore on their mother
that the muffler and the rearview mirror were found
fifty meters away lying in the ditch

And while they carried Pišonja to an Emergency Ward
he spotted the moon above and said
‘God, how is it that some can go all the way up there,
while me and Žuga cannot even make it to the seaside’

After that he fell unconscious and could no longer hear
the moon above him laughing for a long time

*Pišonja i Žuga, two loyal friends
taming the dangerous curves
please, keep an eye on them, Queen of speed*

Central to the song’s narrative is an attempt by the main characters to attain utopia through the transcendence of the limitations of one’s own conditions of existence – i.e. to escape “Breka barracks” and get, “by any means necessary”, to the Adriatic coast as the earthly “Safari Land”. The key subtext here, explicit to the *New Primitives* preoccupation with the problem at hand, is that an attempt at transcendence is not suggestive of “running away from oneself”, but that, quite contrarily, it implies full realization of one’s true essence. For Pišonja and Žuga, the dream of the Adriatic coast is not grounded in a desire to abandon their former selves and take on a new form of identity – that does not interest them in the least for they are perfectly content with who they are; rather, it is grounded in the sense that in getting to the coast they can finally

get a chance to be fully and unconditionally themselves. The coast – or “Safari land” – is therefore signification of an affirmation rather than negation of one’s autochthonous “new-primitiveness”; analogously, the “alternative of imagination” which inspires it is a manifestation of the highest form of conscientized new primitivism.

In this sense, “daring to transcend”, no matter what the cost, is in the final instance the (re)articulation of *New Primitives*’ ultimate “categorical imperative”: “dare to be new-primitive”. The chorus lines of “Meteor”, the closing track on “Pozdrav iz zemlje Safari”, are in many respects the finest poetic expression of both:

Believe me
my only wish is to soar high up
and, while up there, burn out like a meteor

“Anarchy All over Bašcaršija”: Concluding Remarks

Driven by the demands of building a new type of ideological community, the cultural foundation of the post-World War II Yugoslavia – new socialist culture – operated as a cultural hybrid that attempted to balance the socialist ideological demands of a new society and particular understandings of “progressive culture” as, essentially, cultural experiences of urban, bourgeois Western society. The end result of this balancing act was “socialist-in-content/progressive-in-outlook” cultural framework that, while re-framing Western bourgeois culture as “progressive socialist culture”, prioritized the cultural sensibilities of the sophisticated urban *milieu* as the most – and sometimes only – viable cultural foundation of the new socialist Yugoslavia. This resulted in what Goran Bregović called “rape by piano” (*silovanje klavirom*), i.e. a somewhat forceful imposition of “high Western culture” to the exclusion of authentically local cultural expressions that did not fit the “socialist-in-content/progressive-in-outlook” mould. In practical terms this meant that, for the most part, the parameters of the official Yugoslav culture were set outside of the realities of “actually existing cultures of Yugoslav society” which were either ignored or – if recognized – cast as peripheral to (and thus not fully compatible with) the cultural “great leap forward”.

As the paper demonstrates, the socio-cultural *praxis* of the *New Primitives* is best read as the most significant popular-cultural critique of the new socialist culture’s hypocrisy of prioritizing what was essentially foreign to Yugoslav socio-cultural *milieu* and failing to incorporate authentically local cultural experiences into its cultural portfolio. The movement’s poetics of the local articulated this by (1) taking the immediacy of one’s societal circumstance(s) as the

starting point of its expressiveness and giving it, through the prism of Sarajevo locale, specific socio-cultural and even historical contours and connotations; (2) insisting on real, direct, and unpolished language as the only credible means of expressing one's societal being in the world, and giving its linguistic idiom a definitive grounding in the language of the street of a specific socio-historical urban locale; and (3) giving voice (or, perhaps more adequately, face) to those segments of Yugoslavia's cultural spectrum either deemed peripheral or dismissed outright as (to put it crudely) "societal trash", i.e. as culturally marginal and (therefore) socially insignificant epiphenomena of the country's cultural realities. Ultimately, by de-universalizing – and de-mythologizing – the urban into concrete topographic, lexicographic, and sociographic specificities of the "real-existing" *milieu* of Sarajevo, the *New Primitives* created a popular-cultural platform that not only assessed critically the shortcoming of Yugoslavia's new socialist culture but also offered to the country a means of critically reflecting upon the nature of its own cultural self.

Despite militant advocacy of the local spiritual, intellectual, social, and cultural values and principles of life, and the movement's mandate of socio-cultural conscientization by prioritizing the autochthonous and by re-enchanting the local through the affirmation of its most authentic forms of being in the world, the *praxis* of *New Primitives* was anything but a call for parochialism and disengagement from an outside world. Rather, it was a call for being at the center of one's experiential field and for engaging with the world from the position of an integral socio-cultural subject. In this sense, the *New Primitives'* first and principal commandment was "know thyself", i.e. the dictum of "conscious mind". Its "final frontier" was an awareness that only by "knowing thyself" can one meaningfully engage – and negotiate one's relationship with – the world "out there".

Inasmuch as it would be erroneous to read the *New Primitives'* socio-cultural *praxis* as a call for parochialism and disengagement from the trans-local realities, it would also be equally problematic to interpret the movement's critical attitude towards new socialist culture as a negative disposition towards the overall project of socialist Yugoslavia. Despite all of its militancy, the *New Primitives'* critical engagement with Yugoslav society and its socio-cultural forces that – from the movement's viewpoint – threatened the dignity and sovereignty of the new-primitive individual was never premised on a destructive attitude towards society as such, but was fundamentally inspired and animated by the ideals and values of the very society that inspired and animated the critique itself. In other words, the *New Primitives'* poetics of the local, despite – or

more accurately, *because of* – being polemical and “quarrelsome”, was fundamentally *Yugoslav* in its foundational suppositions. According to Wruss (1985, p. 29):

The *New Primitives* is the first relevant movement in Yugoslav rock-music that doesn't understand rock'n'roll as a means of resistance and rebellion, but sees as the foundation of its poetic an affirmative attitude towards society. . . . With their militant Yugoslavism and the emphasis on the folkloric as the basic characteristic of Yugoslav culture, Sarajevo's bands have no intention of nullifying the specificities of other local and national cultures; rather, using one of to-them-accessible means they are emphasizing their local and national presence in the culture of Yugoslav peoples.

Ultimately, the essence of *New Primitives'* fundamental Yugoslavism, and the distilment of the movement's “political” credo, will find its finest expression in Karajlić's 1984 succinct but poignant “categorical imperative”: “Everything outside the OOUR²² is the mafia” (*Sve van OOUR-a je mafija*) (Karajlić in Janjatović, 1984, p. 14).

Notes

¹ It should be noted that the *lingua franca* of Yugoslavia's new socialist culture was Serbo-Croatian, by virtue of the majority of people either speaking the language or understanding it to some degree. This made it more challenging for the non-Serbo-Croatian population to establish its fully meaningful national cultural presence and for the Serbo-Croatian population to fully relate to non-Serbo-Croatian cultural offerings. Important exceptions, however, did exist. In terms of popular culture, one of the most important of these exceptions was Ljubljana's punk band *Pankrti* (*The Bastards*) which, despite singing in Slovenian, had a significant cultural presence on the national rock-scene. The band's importance beyond the borders of the country's most Western republic, however, pointed to the challenges of Yugoslavia's Serbo-Croatian/non-Serbo-Croatian linguistic and cultural divide, reflected upon most prominently by Momčilo Rajin in his highly appreciative review of *Pankrti's* debut record “Dolgcajt” (“Boredom”):

I, like the rest of my editorial-staff colleagues, do not speak Slovenian well enough, and that is a big handicap in listening and analyzing this – but not only this – record. Thus we are in a bit of a paradoxical situation in that often times we understand Anglo-American acts better than our own. . . . (Even if we knew the language well enough, the problem would still remain because most things were written in a local jargon, so, in terms of the handicap, it helps that I was in possession of a few translated songs). (Rajin 1980: 52)

Unfortunately, the majority of the Serbo-Croatian-speaking citizens of Yugoslavia very seldom took it upon themselves – or were indeed encouraged by the educational system – to learn other national languages.

It is important to point out that the predominance of the Serbo-Croatian language in Yugoslavia's national cultural discourse should not be read politically, i.e. as a linguistic means used by the Serbo-Croatian majority to establish some form of cultural and/or political domination

over the non-Serbo-Croatian population. According to Article 246 of the 1974 Constitution of second Yugoslavia,

the languages and scripts of all nations and nationalities have equal status. Thus in the Socialist and Federative Republic of Yugoslavia all languages of the nations are in official use; the languages of the nationalities are in use according to this constitution and the federal law. (unsigned, 1974)

From a legal point of view, therefore, since 1974 there was no one single official national language. The languages of all Yugoslav nations and nationalities were given the status of the official languages of Yugoslavia. Thus, in the context of the time period the paper focuses on, explicit politicization of Serbo-Croatian as a tool of cultural and/or political hegemony would have been taken – and could have always been challenged – as unconstitutional and legally indefensible.

² The *New Primitives* was a multi-dimensional artistic endeavour that included a radio-program *Primus*, a TV comedy show *Top-lista nadrealista* (*Top-list of Surrealists*), and the "rock-music front". The focus of this paper is on the last – i.e. its most significant embodiment, the rock-band *Zabranjeno pušenje* (on the non-music side of the New Primitives, see Chapter 2 in Levi, 2007).

³ "Vilayet" is an Arabic-derived word for one of the chief administrative divisions in Turkey. In the Bosnian context, it refers to an administrative province within the Ottoman Empire.

⁴ All Serbo-Croatian translations by the author.

⁵ Bosnian meat delicacy.

⁶ On the "problem" of Sarajevo's actors and local language, Branko Đurić, one of the key members of *New Primitives'* television troupe *Top-lista nadrealista* observes the following:

Belgrade and Zagreb speech is, I could say, in a way official. When in a classical theater piece one speaks in Belgrade or Zagreb accent you find it normal. That is in a way literary language. Ours sounds awful in these classical pieces. So the most difficult thing is that we have to pay much more attention to the way we speak. . . . Even now I'm trying to speak in a literary way, but no matter how much I try, you can feel that it doesn't come naturally. That is the biggest handicap for us Bosnian actors. Because of this we are called to be in a Zagreb or Belgrade film only when we need to play a Bosnian. It is very seldom otherwise. (Đurić in Kos & Pavić, 1987, p. 10)

What he is pointing to is a professional consequence of the inferior regard for the "Sarajevo dialect", entrenched within the authoritative mind of the cultural establishment.

⁷ In 1981, *Sjećaj li se, Dolly Bell* won the Golden Lion for Best First Work and FIPRESCI (The International Federation of Film Critics) award at the renowned Venice Film Festival. In 1982, the film won the Critic Award at São Paulo International Film Festival.

⁸ Bosnian pie delicacy.

⁹ According to Lošić (in Palameta, 1983), a better name for the movement perhaps would have been the *New Traditionals* rather than the *New Primitives*. In his view, the movement is fundamentally about revitalizing the existing, but hitherto "unknown", socio-cultural mentality of Sarajevo's locale (which is *de facto* its living tradition) and making it the focal point of popular-cultural expression of a new generation of Sarajevo youth, and, in doing so, validating it as a "new tradition", i.e. a new wave of accepting the traditional local mentality as *the* authentic mentality of one particular *milieu*. In Lošić's view, "New Primitives" is perhaps an unfortunate coinage because it carries a somewhat negative connotation which may be interpreted as a devaluation of the local socio-cultural realities of Sarajevo in

terms of equating “traditionalism” with “primitivism”: if the aim of the movement is to authenticate particular local experiences and to (pro)claim them as uniquely Sarajevo’s than correlating “local” with “primitive” might have been an unfortunate way of – in some people’s minds – making inferior that which is in reality exalted. For Lošić, in retrospect, the “movement of the *New Primitives* and understanding thereof speaks precisely of (un)consciousness of our people” (in Olujić, 1990, p. 44).

¹⁰ *Zabranjeno pušenje*’s song “Anarchy All over Bašćaršija” offers, through the character of Sejo, the finest “sociological profile” of the Jalijaš:

Sejo is feeling great today
last night on the street he beat up a hippy
the kid covered his face with the hands
but he got kicked so bad – his kidneys are no more

Sejo has a bit of a trouble thinking
last night he did not get stood up by his chick
he smacked her around a couple of times
because she tried to fool him about her period

Anarchy all over Bašćaršija . . .

Sejo likes Hanka and Šaban
he’s irritated by the “A” scrawled on the walls
last night he beat up a hippy badly
Sejo is a hero from Vratnik

New Primitives all over Bašćaršija
Sejo detests the West

¹¹ The crucial aspect of the *New Primitives* is the full real-life identification with new-primitive man. Thus the members of the movement dressed, behaved, and thought like their ideal-type construct. The strategic purpose, of course, was “leading by example” and putting philosophy into *praxis*.

¹² The nickname of Safet Sušić, Sarajevo’s “football God”.

¹³ “Gastarbeiter” is a German term for guest-workers – people who work in Germany, but are expected to return home after retiring. In a broader cultural sense, the term also denotes less educated people from predominantly non-Western parts of Europe who are physically in Germany but spiritually “back home”, and who, ultimately, invest most of their earnings in the culturally-recognized tokens of their economic success abroad (such as a West-European car – preferably Mercedes-Benz, Audi, or BMW – and a big house built in their hometown).

¹⁴ All parts of Sarajevo.

¹⁵ Bašćaršija is Sarajevo’s old merchant district located in the heart of the city.

¹⁶ As previously discussed, essential to the *New Primitives*’ articulation of a unique local tradition at the general socio-cultural plane was Emir Kusturica’s artistic “mining of the peripheral” and elevation of the marginal to the plane of the general-local, inaugurated with *Sječaš li se, Dolly Bell*. On a musical plane, however, the key problem of articulating the tradition was that there was nothing to mine – that is, that there was no (significant) tradition to speak of – and, thus, nothing to posit as the crux of one’s popular-cultural self-validation. This posed a significant problem for the *New Primitives* because if the movement was to project itself not as an anomaly on the local popular-cultural horizon but as a logical and organic outgrowth of the vibrantly rich music tradition whose starting point had

always been embeddedness in the local, by necessity it had to root itself in the autochthonous rock'n'roll universe and thus claim its rightful place within the local popular-cultural experience. Thus, in order to gain credibility as the reawakening and continuation of the local music legacy, the *New Primitives* had to invent the tradition and, effectively, create an authentic(ally local) popular-cultural *milieu* as the basis for its own self-validation. Doing this (in addition to, as we have seen, articulating the essence of the movement itself) was the "historic role" of the father of *New Primitives*, Elvis J. Kurtović.

As Wruss (1984) observes, Kurtović starts from the premise that Bosnia and Sarajevo do not have any (significant) popular-cultural past and that inventing one rests on taking over the entire history of Western pop-rock music and interpreting it as Bosnian and Sarajevoan pop-rock history. Central to this process is giving the foreign tradition an authentic indigenous note by positing the typically local thematics, iconography and mythologems as its narrative foundation, and inventing an authentically local pop-rock star, *Elvis J. Kurtovich & His Meteors*, as both the ultimate embodiment of the invented tradition and the prime exemplar of its principal stylistic shifts and phases. Kurtović's rereading and reinterpretation of the Western pop-rock history on his first record "Mitovi i legende o kralju Elvisu" ("The Myths and Legends about Elvis the King") works on several distinct, but interconnected, levels: appropriating global music trends as stylistic foundations for the local music tradition; reworking the Western rock'n'roll standards by inserting local cultural idioms into their narrative structure; prioritizing the autochthonous being in the world and its marginal manifestations as the focal point of the original rock'n'roll output; and demythologizing rock'n'roll itself by reevaluating its essence through the prism of the real-existing local rock'n'roll experiences and practices. Thus, the record provides the *New Primitives* with the necessary popular-cultural grounding by constructing the movement's authentically local rock'n'roll "pre-history" as a logical prequel to everything that will follow musically, thematically, and stylistically.

¹⁷ Audio transcription and German translation by Wolfgang Lehmann.

¹⁸ As Nele Karajlić puts it (in Brezarić, 1985b, p. 27): "Walter is an indication of true values which exist as such, but have remained foreign to the arts in general".

¹⁹ The picture used for the cover is a reproduction of the panoramic shot from "Valter brani Sarajevo" where, in pointing to the city from atop the nearby hill, the German officer reveals to his colleague Walter's ultimate identity.

²⁰ A reference to two most popular characters from the long-running and highly popular World War II series "Otpisani" ("The Write-offs").

²¹ Zenica is a city in central Bosnia & Herzegovina.

²² OOUR is an abbreviation standing for "Osnovna Organizacija Udruženog Rada" ("Elementary Organization of Associated Labor"), the foundational economic unit of Yugoslav socialist self-management.

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