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Visualising nostalgia through the music video *Tužne ljubavi* by Buč Kesidi

The music video *Tužne ljubavi* by the Serbian band Buč Kesidi (2025) expresses nostalgia through the traces of a broken love story, along with the retro visual world reminiscent of late socialist Yugoslavia. In this sense, nostalgia in the video is not only a personal feeling but a part of the collective and simulated experience of loss and longing. The video uses visual tools, such as contradictions, metaphors, retro culture, and fragmentation, to evoke different types of nostalgia in order to replicate an authentic experience of the aftermath of a breakup.

The music video draws inspiration from the aesthetics of the late 70s and 80s in the former Yugoslavia, which, as was the case in fashion, combined Western trends with national motifs (Velimirović, 2008, p. 59). Retro culture is expressed through the colour palette, actors' appearance, clothing, interiors with wallpaper and furniture of the era, and ultimately through the choice of the filming equipment. While the interplay of these elements transports the viewer back in time, it simultaneously maintains a connection with reality through the modernity of the love story.

The format of the video, worn edges, scratches, overexposed stains, and slight graininess reveal that it was shot on a film camera, which further reinforces the retro style the video aims to recreate. The use of this type of aesthetic in contemporary popular culture can be seen as a form of resistance to the precision and sterility of the digital world (Dabek, 2017, p. 230). Analogue media have become the object of nostalgic remembrance, with the medium's previous imperfections transforming into a source of newfound authenticity, and thus its aesthetics became attainable through digital practices (Schrey, 2014, pp. 28–29, 32). The popularity of the trend in music videos resulted in numerous post-production techniques that “simulate their visual feel and surface textures” (Strachan, 2019, p. 144).

The fusion of the mentioned elements and the song's genre evokes two types of nostalgia: simulated and collective. While the first one presents as a “bittersweet yearning for the indirectly experienced past” which “may be remembered through the eyes and stories of a loved one”, the second one refers to a past shared by a “culture, a generation, or a nation” and is collective in its nature (Baker & Kennedy, 1994, p. 171). This is exactly the reason why the effect is particularly pronounced in former Yugoslav states, including Slovenia, as they find themselves at the intersection of the two types of nostalgia, possibly even the third one, personal nostalgia, if the viewer experienced a breakup in the 80s. The sense of collectivism, although

transformed, still shapes social relations in the region today, making the imagery once again resonate more deeply with local audiences and highlighting one of the reasons for the band's success in Slovenia.

Besides the central role of retro culture, the music video follows trends of a postmodern art form, which consciously turns toward multiple narratives rather than following the metanarrative (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxiv). This narrative strategy replicates the instability caused by the breakup, as there is no single way of moving on. Another layer reinforcing this sense of instability is the retro aesthetic of Yugoslavia, which reflects the experiences of transition and uncertainty that followed its dissolution, indicated by filming the music video in the present-day setting and including depictions of decaying architecture that used to represent the country.

The postmodern characteristic is expressed through the fragments of the broken love story while avoiding the classic single narrative of the beginning, climax, and end of a love story. This helps to once again ensure the authentic feel of the video as it challenges conventional representations of love we usually see in popular culture. The idea is further supported by the date of publishing, which was last year on Valentine's Day (Buč Kesidi, 2025), once again opposing the norm and rather showing the reality of a modern-day romantic relationship or a situationship and the traces it leaves behind.

Visually, the fragmentation of the metanarrative is most evident through the understanding of time and place, which intertwine without a unified temporal logic, creating a sense of both compression and expansion. Each space in the video has its own independent timeline, while the only visual indicator of the time frame is the gradually setting sun. A similar approach is achieved through the video's stylistic heterogeneity, alternating between black-and-white and colour scenes and the use of different filming techniques.

Contradictions and metaphors often intertwine and present a recurring narrative element, expressed visually (such as the band members' bright clothing against a dark background) as well as conceptually (the simultaneous presence of retro culture with the modern love story or oxymorons like the covered motorcycle). Throughout the video, we see the male and female characters as they cope with a failed love story, revealing the contrast between action and stagnation. The characters are connected by their constant glances, which, instead of expressing closeness, express distance.

With a breakup, there often comes nostalgic remembrance of the past relationship and accompanying feelings of longing for an unfulfilled future. The mass socialist housing and retro

culture in the background reflect this idea, reminding us of a once-promised collective future. Additionally, the architecture is important as the character's loneliness also appears more striking against the backdrop of densely packed apartments, inviting the past as a symbol of collectivism and optimism, which contrasts sharply with the individualised and fragmented realities of today.

The contradictions are most telling when it comes to the portrayal of the two female characters. The frames, including the main female character, emphasise her eyes, keeping eye contact with the camera, while the other female character shies away from it. As eyes are commonly seen as a symbol of truth, eye contact could indicate the presence or absence of genuine emotion towards the male character. Similarly, this contrast is reflected in clothing. While the main female character wears a jacket, a shirt, and long pants, the other appears in a nightgown and stockings, indicating the nature of the relationship with the male character.

Stockings are further used as a motif, combining the theme with the band's identity. In the video, we encounter a moment in which a scene of the female character putting on stockings is followed by a similar frame, only now featuring one of the band members. In this way, the modern love story is symbolically linked to the band's own experiences and presented as an intimate yet shared issue of contemporary life.

Overall, the video intertwines different types of nostalgia, which serve as the anchor to replicate an authentic experience of the acceptance of romantic loss. The simultaneous existence of past and present, contradictions, metaphors, and other visual elements present the viewer with a fragmented vision of reality, expressing the uncertainty of modern-day intimacy.

References

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