

TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES IN POST-SOCIALIST SCREEN MEDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Jana Dudková and Katarína Mišíková

After the fall of the iron curtain, most of the post-socialist screen industries of Eastern Europe needed to come to terms with new cultural developments and geopolitical reorganization, leading to prolonged searches for new approaches to privatisation, funding, and legal support (and not just simply reorganizing along western lines). This volume was inspired by the need better to interrogate such processes and concepts of transformation at the level of screen aesthetics and their industrial contexts. It focuses primarily on the relationships between systemic institutional, legislative, and technological developments within the individual post-socialist countries of Central and South-East Europe, on the one hand, and, on the other, the regimes of content, distribution, and values specific to their national industries. The idea of bringing such case-studies together stems from our own research on the post-1989 development of Slovak cinema;¹ research which led us to recognize a need to compare the development of this nation's screen industries to those of others in the aforementioned regions that also underwent comparable socio-political changes. It is widely accepted by film professionals and scholars that Slovak cinema experienced a lengthy period of crisis in the 1990s, as it found itself on the brink of extinction after having lost much of its funding and institutional support, audiences, and even its technological infrastructure. Yet, while domestic understandings remain shrouded in myths of a non-existent sector, Slovak cinema actually re-emerged in the new millennium as a stable media hub. The restabilisation of the industry coincided with Slovakia's entry into the European Union in 2004 and with its response to global technological developments, among which digitisation was the most significant. It was therefore particularly important that we consider the still powerful representations of the Slovak screen industries in relation to the transformative experiences of other post-socialist industries. In this respect, it may be salient for Slovak media professionals to revise

¹ In the last few years, this research was conducted mainly under the project Slovak Cinema after 1989 supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency (the contract No. APVV-0797-12).

the sense of exceptionalism they often nurture – one derived from mythical narratives of extinction and resurrection – and instead bring about more nuanced and critical understandings of the similarities and differences between the region's screen industries.

A springboard for this volume was provided by discussions that took place after the fifth annual Screen Industries in East-Central Europe (SIECE) conference held in November 2015 in Bratislava. Founded and originally organised by the Czech Society for Film Studies in 2011, SIECE has emerged as one of the most relevant conferences in the region. After being held in the Czech Republic for four years,² a change of location and organisation proved particularly challenging when it came to the notion of Slovak cinema's downfall and its slow but ultimately successful re-emergence. In the spirit of this revelation, we decided to bring together ten of the papers presented at this conference, thereby offering a multifaceted perspective on the transformational processes of the post-socialist screen industries, and showcasing to an international readership the research taking place both in Slovakia and the region of Central and South-East Europe as a whole. After all, the papers presented at the conference were not limited to the post-socialist period (nor to East-Central Europe), but also covered diverse historiographical topics such as the introduction of colour film in the Soviet Union, technological change in socialist cinemas of the 1950s, and transformations of star images in pre- and post-war Czech cinema.³ The papers selected for this collection are, however, organised around issues we considered to be crucial to enriching understandings of those topics structuring the region's screen media industries after 1989, especially privatisation, national cinemas, popular cinema, digitisation, and (glo)cal histories.

Accordingly, the collection opens with a consideration of the post-socialist privatisation of the region's national film industries and the transformation of their administration and funding, offering two distinct case-studies. In the first of these, Martin Šmatlák examines the lengthy negotiations between the State and film professionals that would lead in 2009 to the establishment of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund as this country's first relatively autonomous film funding body. In the second, Elżbieta Durys focuses on the public discussions, nego-

² See <<http://www.cefs.cz/konference.html/>> [accessed 17 November 2016].

³ See the full program here: <<http://www.udfv.sav.sk/dokumenty/Program-SIECE.2015.pdf/>> [accessed 28 October 2016].

tiations, and other developments that preceded the establishment of the Polish Film Institute. Durys offers a comprehensive overview of the underlying political, legislative, and economic changes, examining the roles key agents such as the institute's first general director Agnieszka Odorowicz played in the process.

From there, the collection turns to changing screen media aesthetics in the region, particularly the relationships between the reforming post-socialist industries and national production aesthetic trends. Since one of the goals of this collection was to increase the visibility of scholarship on the Slovak screen industries in international circles, it begins its examination of the topic with two chapters focused on this country. In the first of these, Jana Dudková challenges the received wisdom about a collapse in Slovak television film production in the early 1990s, suggesting that it was in fact the country's collapsing *cinematic* institutions that led to the misconception of Slovak *film* production as either non-existent or unworthy of attention. From there, she compares major trends in live-action television and cinematic production, arguing that films made for television both differed from and anticipated the cinematic trends of the day. By contrast, Katarína Mišíková's chapter provides an in-depth study of a more recent trend in Slovak fiction cinema: "social drama." She examines various production, textual, marketing, and distribution strategies employed to reinforce these film's "reality effect," especially the issue of generification.

At this point, the collection shifts focus to take account of the distinctive post-socialist cinemas of other Eastern European countries by way of two chapters both concerned with the historical experiences of small-nation popular cinemas. In her contribution, Andrea Virginás compares the development of Hungarian and Romanian cinema in the half-decade after these two countries joined the European Union, thereby highlighting their distinctive approaches to audiences and releases, and challenging the notion of a clash between popular cinema and arthouse fare. Thereafter, Balázs Varga analyses Hungarian film comedy within the context of a popular cinema aimed at a broad domestic audience, offering important insights into its subgenres, textual conventions, and relationships to pre-1989 output.

To draw attention to the changes initiated by the new forms of digital delivery that have affected the film and television industries, as well as audience experiences thereof, the collection then features two chapters focusing on the development of new digital distribution platforms.

In his chapter, Chuck Tryon proposes eight concepts that shed new light on how these changes took place in the United States, and as a consequence on their potential impact on this region. While drawing from a non-European example, Tryon nonetheless posits a framework in which we might locate understandings of how platforms like Netflix, which have already exerted an influence on Central and Eastern Europe, may reshape audience tastes, habits, and media consumption. From there, Maya Nedyalkova tackles the impact of digitisation on film delivery, in order to spotlight the current limitations of pan-European on-line distribution, specifically the tension between attempts at transnational cooperation and the continued fragmentation of the European digital market. Concentrating on the case of Bulgarian participation in the second edition of "Streams: The European Online Film Festival," Nedyalkova underlines the saliency of increased interaction with audiences, as well as the evermore sophisticated branding, marketing, and publicity strategies of both national and transnational online platforms. The collection concludes with two chapters considering the extent to which efforts to reshape the (cinematic) past have characterized post-socialist screen media. In her chapter, Nevena Daković examines the various techniques, genres, and social functions of those examples of contemporary Serbian screen and visual media that redraw traditional boundaries between documentary and fiction. Daković spotlights a continued fascination in such works with relationships between history and memory as mediated by footage typically invoking representations of the country's socialist past. The importance of cinematic memory and local (hi)stories within the context of global processes also characterizes Ewa Ciszewska's chapter, which provides a study of the Polish city of Łódź as a post-cinematic space reinvented for the tourist gaze. Ciszewska outlines the various strategies local businesses have been employing to rebrand the city by resurrecting the cinematic heritage of what was one of this country's most important film industry centres.

Comprising the aforementioned ten chapters, this collection naturally does not purport to offer a complete picture of the complex history of post-socialist screen media in Eastern Europe. Rather, it hopes to offer an introduction to this topic, one that draws attention to the transforming characters of a series of national screen media industries facing myriad legal, economic, and technological challenges while their output undergoes distinctive aesthetic, narrative, rhetorical, and generic

changes. The collection also represents an important step in bringing Slovak scholarship into dialogue with that on the cinemas of the region's other post-socialist countries; lest we forget that Slovakia has all too often found itself playing host to a self-sufficient community of indigenous media scholars and professionals who rarely seek to engage international scholarly platforms. This situation is perhaps compounded by the fact that overseas scholars examining its cinema rarely visited its archives, instead choosing to conduct their research in the archives of e.g. the Czech Republic. In this sense, a number of the topics included in this collection challenge some of the preeminent preoccupations of the Slovak screen media community, such as the "colonizing" threat of digitisation, the mythical narratives of resurrection, and the blurring of the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, and between popular and art cinema. However, at the same time, it needs stressing that our compiling of this volume was also driven by the view that it is imperative that topics deemed supremely important in this country are afforded an international audience, one that may be equally interested in them and that may also develop insights into the similarities and differences characterizing various national contexts. As editors, we believe it is through such exchanges that this collection might inspire not only the Slovak academic and professional community, but also a larger readership with specific interest in screen media of post-socialist Europe.

SLOVAK AUDIOVISUAL FUND – A BRIEF HISTORY OF PROLONGED TIME

Martin Šmatlák

After the fall of communism, filmmakers in Central and Eastern Europe were faced with the crucial question of how best to turn the state monopoly system of film production and distribution into a new effective system of free enterprise underwritten by public financial support and cultural policy. The transition to such a cultural and economic system is presaged by two requirements. On the one hand, sufficient time is needed to allow for a process involving analysis, discussions, proposals, solutions, implementation, and evaluation. On the other, adequate know-how is needed, in terms of experience, workable models, and the capacity to work with other stakeholders in the cultural and political spheres, initially the Slovak Ministry of Finance.

In 1990, Slovak cinema had little of what was needed to achieve this type of successful transition. For one, it had no experience with a traditional film business or enterprise; since the emergence of the nation's film culture in 1938, Slovak film production and distribution was closely tied to its state monopoly system. Second, such transitions were unprecedented in Europe. Granted, comparable models characterised the film institutes and foundations of Scandinavia, the CNC in France, the Dutch Film Fund, and the public funding system in Great Britain; however, all of these institutions have developed gradually and in altogether different social, economic, and cultural contexts than those of Slovakia, making any one of them a potentially viable model for a fast and successful transition from a state monopoly to a public support system of private enterprise within the audiovisual sector. In short, stakeholders in this region have had to deal with a lot of reports, digests, papers, and recommendations written by foreign partners and friends, but ultimately there was no simple "transition formula." Rather, we have had to find our own way.

There was also a second requirement related to time. In an atmosphere of rapid social and political change, citizens expected an equally rapid transformation of the economic and cultural spheres. Of course, there was no fast-track solution, given the unprecedented nature of this

transformation. And so, Slovak cinema suddenly began to suffer from a lack of time and money.

In the transition process, each post-monopoly country found itself needing to develop fitting solutions to two basic problems. The first concerned the transformation or privatisation of the previously state-controlled production and distribution sectors into private companies capable of operating smoothly and of sustained growth. The second concerned the comprehensive reform of the state subsidy system and its orientation away from supporting particular *subject matter* – which is to say state initiatives – to *projects*, such as backing the production and distribution of individual films, festivals, and other audiovisual activities.

In effect, only two possibilities existed for the transformation or privatisation of state enterprises. The first was a two-step procedure based on their transformation into companies that would remain in the hands of the state before being traded publically, what we might call “consecutive” or “sequential” privatisation. The second possibility was “flash” privatisation, wherein the state sold off an institution lock, stock, and barrel to a private concern, who in turn would inherit its debts and be left to deal with its running problems. The latter was more suitable for a film distribution operation, leading to Slovak Film Distribution Enterprise (Slovenská požičovňa filmov) being privatised by way of a public tender that concluded in 1994. By contrast, the former was better suited to state-owned film studios and labs, owing to their technological backgrounds and large property holdings.

The story of the convoluted privatisation of state-run industry has been told many times, most notably in a detailed study by Václav Macek;¹ however, in this chapter, I would like to focus on a particular aspect thereof, one that can be considered symptomatic of the dynamics of the production culture after 1989 – a development one might describe as a case of throwing in the towel. As early as 1991, an authorized state administration decided to make Koliba Film Studios the subject of a process termed “coupon privatisation.” This was similar to sequential privatisation insofar as it involved the transformation of a state enterprise through the issuing of shares to individual investors and investment funds. The crucial problem with this method was that the state maintained a 30% stake in the newly privatised company. Filmmakers holding decision-making positions strongly objected to this proposal,

¹ MACEK, Václav. 1 297 245 000 Sk. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2010), pp. 125-154.

resulting in the first attempt to privatise “Koliba” ending before it really began. Its first key skirmish with the state resulted in a clear loss for Slovak cinema, and, as a consequence, no professional film studios have operated in Slovakia for twenty-five years.

The second important point in the transition process was the reorientation of the state subsidy system from supporting subject matter to supporting projects. Such a radical change requires three fundamental preconditions: secure source of finance, flexible legislation, and a transparent, professional, independent public institution. At this point, I would like to detail some of the plans, suggestions, and steps made during the long-term transition from Slovakia’s state monopoly-financed cinema to its publically supported audiovisual sector. By long-term, I mean the twenty-year period from the first draft of the new system in 1990 to the advent of a fully operative Slovak Audiovisual Fund (Audiovizuálny fond, AVF) in 2010.

In January 1990, the constitutive assembly of the Slovak Film Union (Slovenský filmový zväz) – the first professional association of Slovak filmmakers set up after 1989 – called for the establishment of a Slovak Film Fund financed by a combination of state subsidies and a percentage of film distribution revenue generated in the country. The principal objective of this proposal was to establish a fund that would be administrated by an independent institution – one independent from production and distribution companies and from direct political influence. Here, the fund was to be governed by a council consisting of film professionals appointed by the state, the Ministry of Culture to be precise. Its institutional independence was deemed essential if the fund was to back projects over subject matter, irrespective of whether the project in question was produced by a state-owned or private production company.

Referring to this initiative in June 1990, the Slovak Minister of Culture Ladislav Snopko submitted to the government a paper entitled Proposal of Organizational Structure, Economic and Legal Status of Slovak Cinema and Film Distribution (No. MK 6/1991-1/28).² Although rather vague in his arguments, Snopko concluded that such a transition would require four steps:

² Návrh organizačnej štruktúry, ekonomického a právneho postavenia slovenskej kinematografie a filmovej distribúcie.

- the preparation of a draft Slovak Cinema Act to end the state monopoly model of film production and distribution;
- the issue of a decree by the Czechoslovak government abolishing the state monopoly's control of the exportation of Czech and Slovak films and television programmes, thereby enacting the decree for a free audiovisual market in Slovakia;
- granting the Slovak Film Institute independence from Koliba Film Studios as a means of systematically protecting the country's audiovisual heritage;
- structurally reorganizing Koliba Film Studios and the Slovak Film Distribution Enterprise to initiate the privatisation of the audiovisual sector.

The document contained no specific clauses pertaining to the film fund, just one short paragraph stressing that such a fund would be established by the Ministry of Culture and governed by a "cinema committee," with no further details specified.

With state approval, the Ministry of Culture, in conjunction with several film professionals, prepared a first version of the Slovak Cinema Act. Even though several versions were drafted, none would be turned into an official proposal for submission to the government. Beside its basic proposition of moving away from the state monopoly model, the draft boasted some rather progressive elements for its time, including a proposal for the legal deposit of Slovak audiovisual works and related documents, which would come into existence in 2007 in response to the Audiovisual Act (Audiovizálny zákon, No. 343/2007 Coll.).

During discussions with various stakeholders, the calls made by the Slovak Film Union in January 1990 would be precipitously watered down by the time the official draft had been written that November. This version focused exclusively on the competency of the Ministry of Culture in the field of cinema in Slovakia, and on the opening of a free cinematic market, but there was no word on public film financing or other systemic changes. The free market would come to be fetishized, as the notion of cultural value was rendered irrelevant in a world where films officially came to be considered as commodities competing freely. This market-oriented position was most likely a by-product of the political climate of the transition period. After the fall of the state monopolies in a majority of economic sectors, a key question concerned how best to develop a free market system driven by local and international private

enterprise. In this context, state regulation or aid was deemed undesirable as a form of "anti-market" interventionism that was anathematic to the newly cherished principles of free market economics.

At the end of 1990, one final attempt was made to revive the idea of the fund. On 11 December that year, the Minister of Culture signed the Charter on the Slovak Film Institute – National Cinematographic Centre (No. MK – 2610/1990-1),³ which came into effect on 1 January 1991. Among the responsibilities of this new state institution was the administration of the film fund and the support of activity under the authority of an expert committee appointed by the Minister of Culture. Unfortunately, this never became a reality, due in large part to the Slovak Parliament adopting the State Cultural Fund Act (No. 95/1991 Coll.) that February. According to this act, the new fund – later renamed the Pro Slovakia Fund – would cover all cultural activities provided by non-governmental organisations or private companies for the next two decades, from architecture and modern design to cultural heritage, from music and dance to television and radio programmes, from small local libraries to major cultural events.⁴

The Ministry of Culture made one final attempt in June of 1991 to propose a new draft of the Cinema Act.⁵ The ministry had passed this version on to other government departments – other ministries as well as executive authorities – most of whom had no major issues therewith. However, the Ministry of Finance raised the following concern: "[w]e point out that cinema is fully based on a commercial principle and that state budgets do not take account of any subsidies for this purpose, neither now nor in the future."⁶ Its objection brought to a grinding halt the public funding system focused on new possibilities and activities in the field of Slovak film culture and industry for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, one group of filmmakers did not abandon the idea of establishing a new system of public support, although it would take

³ Rozhodnutie o zriadení Slovenského filmového ústavu – Národného kinematografického centra zo dňa 11. decembra 1990 (č. MK – 2610/1990-1).

⁴ A clause calling for 0.5 percent of the state budget of the Slovak Republic to be allocated to the fund annually has not been put into practice. For example, in 2000 the fund had a total operating budget of SKK72.5 million (€2.4 million). The fund allocated SKK9.2 million (€300,000) to film production, amounting to twelve percent of its budget and sufficient capital to finance two averagely priced Slovak films.

⁵ Návrh zákona Slovenskej národnej rady o kinematografii v Slovenskej republike.

⁶ Letter issued by the Slovak Ministry of Finance No. 8/1556/1991 bearing date 25 June 1991.

almost two decades for this idea to be put into practice following the establishment of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund in 2009.⁷ The Fund itself signalled the definitive end of the state cinema system in Slovakia. It was based on a principle of self-governance by film professionals, with no direct political influence on its decision-making processes. Financially, the fund was not wholly dependent on state subsidies, for, in addition to state subsidies, about 40% of its budget was to be provided by contributions from private enterprise, including Slovak television broadcasters, retransmission operators, cinemas, film distributors, and VoD platforms. The Slovak Audiovisual Fund therefore represents the culmination of the “disestablishment” of Slovak cinema.

Given the lengthy gap between 1991 and 2009, it is imperative we consider two additional episodes concerned with returning to the original idea of a film fund. The first was a document entitled *The Basic principles of the Act of National Cinema and the State Fund of the Slovak Republic for the Support and Development of National Cinema*.⁸ Submitted to the government by the Ministry of Culture in September 1993, it contained new clauses pertaining to the legal principles of Slovak audiovisual policy. These included clauses pertaining to what constituted a national audiovisual work, legal deposits of Slovak audiovisual works, evidence of film producers and distributors, registration of films in distribution, and anti-piracy policies. Moreover, the document contained a comprehensive overview of the state fund for the support and development of a national cinema that promised to be a key source of revenue needed to support film culture and industry in the country. Truly remarkable is a passage on the multiple sources of financing for the proposed fund, comprising state contributions, 15% of the revenue generated by the privatisation of state film operations, a share of revenues generated by projects backed by the fund, revenues generated by the rerelease of films produced under the state monopoly system, and administration fees paid by applicants.

It is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that this all took place in 1993, just as Slovakia had split from the Czech Republic and

⁷ The Slovak Audiovisual Fund Act (Zákon o Audiovizuálnom fonde, No. 516/2008 Coll.) was adopted by the country's Parliament in October 2008 and came into effect on 1 January 2009.

⁸ Návrh zásad zákona Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky o národnej kinematografii a o štátnom fonde Slovenskej republiky na podporu a rozvoj národnej kinematografie (No. MK-6/1993-1/22).

just as the political power of Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar and his HZDS (Movement for Democratic Slovakia – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko) Party was at its strongest. Nevertheless, despite the strong political position of the Minister of Culture Dušan Slobodník – a chief strategist to Mečiar – Slobodník's proposal to establish the Slovak state film fund was rejected. The message from the Ministry of Finance was clear: it was only possible to support film projects or other audiovisual activities by means of the state cultural fund Pro Slovakia, i.e. through the centralized decision-making authority of a government ministry.

A few months later, in December 1993, the Ministry of Culture redrafted the Act on Slovak Audiovisual Culture. The new draft only contained a single brief amendment on film financing, stating that the main source of finance for audiovisual culture was to be the state cultural fund Pro Slovakia. This short paragraph also proposed supporting Slovak cinema with unspecified grants from the Ministry of Culture's budget. Yet, the final version of the Audiovisual Act adopted in 1995 contained just one abbreviated paragraph on film financing reading “[t]he Ministry of Culture should take part in the financing of the production and distribution of Slovak audiovisual works through the state cultural fund Pro Slovakia.”⁹ The Ministry of Finance evidently held greater sway than the Ministry of Culture, even at a time when emphasis was placed on the national dimensions of cultural and political life in Slovakia. Another important struggle with the state was therefore also lost.

The second notable episode concerned the first version of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund Act. This version was approved by the Slovak government and adopted by the country's parliament in June of 2002. The act itself was quite similar to the Slovak Audiovisual Fund Act (Zákon o Audiovizuálnom fonde, No. 516/2008 Coll.) in terms of its structure, albeit with one important exception. According to the act, the rights to all Slovak films produced by the former Koliba Film Studios would be transferred from the Slovak Film Institute to the fund, allowing the fund to monetize them as a means of underwriting new projects. This amendment provoked controversy, with some professionals seeing it as an example of the “covert privatisation” of Slovak audiovisual heritage and deeming the act unacceptable as a consequence. As a result of these objections, stakeholders such as the Slovak Film Institute and the Slovak Film and Television Academy (Slovenská filmová a televízna akadémia) appealed to the President of Slovakia to return the act to

⁹ The Audiovisual Act (Zákon o audiovizii, No. 1/1996 Coll.), par. 6.

parliament. Although the President accepted this request, it took place at the end of his electoral term, ensuring parliament had no intention of ratifying his veto. Indeed, this is why Slovak audiovisual culture would have to wait six more years for the next – and finally successful – draft of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund Act.

Concerning the state financing of film culture, it is important to note that, in 2004, the Ministry of Culture fundamentally changed the system of financing by establishing a “grant system” focused on non-governmental cultural projects and activities. One of these grant programmes, entitled AudioVision, was focused on the structural support of audiovisual culture and industry. An important step toward a new system, as a ministerial initiative it was nevertheless fully dependent on state financing and political decision-making; each grant – even for ones as small as a couple of hundred Euros – needed ministerial approval.

At the end of the day, we might wish to consider why it took so long for structural change to take place in audiovisual financing in Slovakia. After more than 25 years, I feel it was a combination of insufficient self-confidence among filmmakers and excessive “cultural enthusiasm.” This lack of self-confidence was represented by an understandable but overly cautious approach to the “socialist” history of Slovak cinema and its traditions and cultural values. After all, it would seem rather unfair, somewhat naïve, and perhaps even politically imprudent to suggest that, of the 350 Slovak feature films produced under state-socialism, only about fifteen exhibit some cultural value, with the rest little more than trash. Such a view, probably resulting from an anticipated critical reinterpretation of the socialist realism cinema of the previous regime, did little to encourage the state to subsidize new film productions evincing new cultural values. Such demands would be understandable during a “revolutionary” period, but in practice this overly critical approach gave rise to cultural nihilism, a rupture in traditional textual approaches, the ascendancy of market principles over cultural aspects, and – above all else – it brought about a decline in Slovak audiovisual culture, technology, and production in the last two decades. Excessive cultural enthusiasm, on the other hand, was represented by a strong belief in politicians and economists understanding and accepting – without compromise – the legitimacy of the cultural demands of filmmakers. Such enthusiasm was probably based on their belief that, where they had needed to conform or to reduce the scope

of their ambitions under the pressure of the state monopoly, the new system would afford them the freedom more fully to express themselves in their new films.

Unfortunately, at the turn of the millennium, there were barely any new Slovak films due to the collapse of the old system and the absence of a functioning new model. But, after two decades of wins and losses, the audiovisual landscape of Slovakia seems to be in good shape, and, in spite of a continued lack of large film studios or an industrial bedrock, Slovakia has become part of a standard European film landscape, one boasting a foundation of cultural and economic principles characterized by:

- the protection of audiovisual heritage; enshrined in law, to be carried out by a state institution (the Slovak Film Institute), and acknowledged by the signing of the European Convention for the Protection of the Audiovisual Heritage (signed in 2003, in effect by 2008);
- the long-term restoration and digitisation of Slovak audiovisual heritage; supported by the government and carried out by the Slovak Film Institute;
- sustainable public funding of audiovisual culture and industries since 2010, overseen by the Slovak Audiovisual Fund (approx. €6.5 million year);
- membership of all relevant European audiovisual institutions and initiatives, including the Eurimages Fund, Creative Europe, and European Film Promotion;
- activation of film incentives focused on private investment in the audiovisual industries, including film production, in Slovakia;
- notable growth of Slovak film production and co-production participation in recent years, thanks in part to Slovakia’s ratification of the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production in 1995;
- increasing competitiveness of film production companies on both the domestic and international markets;
- an increase in the market share of Slovak-produced films in theatrical release following the digitisation of the country’s cinemas, with the support of the Slovak Audiovisual Fund;

- success of new Slovak-produced feature films, documentaries, and animated films at international festivals¹⁰, and the opening of an international distribution channel for Slovak films and filmmakers.

We might say with some optimism that, absent the challenges of the two decades following the fall of state-socialism, we would have been significantly less prepared to initiate a new audiovisual system based on a symbiosis of public financial backing and private initiatives in Slovakia's audiovisual culture and industries. Last but not least, such experiences furnish us with a solid foundation from which further to develop this system and to ensure its vitality for the foreseeable future.

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¹⁰ Among the most outstanding festival successes of Slovak cinema of last years are, for example, C.I.C.A.E. Award from IFF Cannes for *Slepé lásky* (*Blind Loves*, 2008, dir. Juraj Lehotský), the Youth Jury Award from Clermond-Ferrand Short Film Festival for *Posledný autobus* (*The Last Bus*, 2011, dir. Martin Snopek – Ivana Laučíková), the Tiger Award from IFF Rotterdam for *Môj pes Killer* (*My Dog Killer*, 2013, dir. Mira Fornay) and FIPRESCI award from IFF Toronto for *Eva Nová* (2015, dir. Marko Škop).

SUCCESSFUL TRANSFORMATION: WHAT PROTECTED POLISH CINEMA FROM EXTINCTION AFTER 1989?

Elżbieta Durys

In 2015, Poland celebrated the 10th anniversary of the “Cinematography Act’s”¹ passing and the establishment of the Polish Film Institute (Polski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej, PISF). The ceremonial gala, which took place on May 20 in the Grand Theatre – the National Opera in Warsaw, was broadcast by the prestigious nationwide public channel TVP Kultura and featured representatives of the world of culture, politics, business, and media. The lenses of photographers and cameras were attracted to the film stars and directors who attended the ceremony in great numbers. Everyone congratulated Agnieszka Odorowicz – the founder and general director of PISF – due to the tremendous success of the Polish Film Institute. The apparent evidence of this success were the international triumphs of Polish cinema, the increasing number of productions, and box-office successes of Polish films,² while director Andrzej Wajda simply stated that “[Polish cinema] revived like a Phoenix from the ashes.”³

The main function of all kinds of formal gatherings and galas is a celebration connected with an emphasis on the significance, services,

¹ The official name for the document in Polish is “Ustawa z dnia 30 czerwca 2005 r. o kinematografii,” in short: “Ustawa o kinematografii.” It was mistranslated into English in official documents as “the Act on Cinematography of 30 June 2005,” in short: “the Act on Cinematography,” and can be found on the PISF Webpage <<http://en.pisf.pl/film-law>> [accessed 15 October 2016]. The English equivalent for Polish word “kinematografia” is “cinema,” so the name of the act should be “the Act on Cinema.” Since its official translation is “the Act on Cinematography,” I will use the mistranslated version in the whole text.

² In this particular year, 2015, *Ida* (2013, dir. Paweł Pawlikowski) won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language feature film and *Ciało* (*Body*, 2015, dir. Małgorzata Szumowska) won the Silver Bear in Berlin.

³ In addition to the role and importance of the PISF, Wajda also pointed out the great services of the Polish Filmmakers Association (Stowarzyszenie Filmowców Polskich, SFP). See *Uroczysta gala obchodów 10-lecia PISF-u*, 12 May 2015, <<http://film.onet.pl/uroczysta-gala-obchodow-10-lecia-pisf-u/tkndck>> [accessed 23 January 2016].

and achievements of a given institution. It is important not only for the reason of image. Every day, the PISF faces severe criticism from the film community, therefore it is crucial to remember the positive aspects of its function. However, isn't the word "success" (used both by the prominent guests during the ceremonial gala and by the media) a kind of misuse in this context? In my opinion it is not. On the contrary, the PISF, as an institution, efficiently fulfills its objectives: Polish cinema exists in the awareness of Polish and international audience, Polish films are shown during recognized festivals all over the world and receive awards, the number of viewers has increased, and so on. Filmmakers complain about red tape and bureaucratic procedures, the not-always-clear assessment system of applications, or the schedule of transferring financial measures if the funding has been granted. However, these criticisms frequently ignore, on one hand, the situation after 1989 and before the PISF was established, and on the other hand – the situation in other areas supported from public funding, as for instance education.

I would like to have one more look at the events that preceded the formation of the PISF. Evoking the dynamics of the events and their context is of great significance here. It will also be the starting point for indicating and emphasizing the role and meaning of the factors which contributed to the success of the PISF. However, this success should be understood not only in terms of the number of films, viewers, and awards. It has to be remembered that, from the perspective of the 1990s and 2000s, the very fact of the existence of Polish cinema as a national cinema was not something foregone. On the contrary, the idea of supporting Polish cinema was treated as a relic of communist thinking which had to be removed as quickly as possible.⁴

A series of factors led to the predicted elimination of support not happening. Taking advantage of a historical perspective, I would like to bring out something for emphasis: people are usually the most im-

⁴ This statement and the title of my article sound a little dramatic. However, it is enough to go through press materials of the time to realize that the situation was serious and the threat was real. See GAJEWSKI, Jarosław. *Kino opieki społecznej*. In *Wprost*, 27 May 2003, <<https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/43443/Kino-opieki-spoecznej.html>> [accessed 6 December 2016]; RADWAN, Łukasz. *Instytut Filmu Pasożytniczego*. In *Wprost*, 29 May 2005, <<https://www.wprost.pl/tygodnik/76894/Instytut-Filmu-Pasozytniczego.html>> [accessed 6 December 2016]; RADWAN, Łukasz. *Kino niemoralnego spokoju*, In *Wprost*, 27 February 2005, <<https://www.wprost.pl/73683/Kino-niemoralnego-spojoju>> [accessed 6 December 2016].

portant part of the industry. Outside of the filmmakers involved in the battle for the film industry, two figures turned out to be crucial: Waldemar Dąbrowski (minister of culture from 2002 to 2005) and Agnieszka Odorowicz (first the secretary of state in the Ministry of Culture, then the general director of PISF between 2005 and 2015). The significance of some institutions and organizations must also not be forgotten. In the aforementioned case, the actions of Polish Filmmakers Association (Stowarzyszenie Filmowców Polskich, SFP) and its president Jacek Bromski and, since 2005, the Polish Film Institute proved to be essential. Two legal acts were crucial as well: the 1994 Copyright Act and the 2005 Act on Cinematography. Paradoxically, an extraordinary role was played also by negative external circumstances, such as the neoliberal reforms of the centre-left government and the actions of the minister of culture Andrzej Celiński (2001-2002), as well as the aggregate attack of a coalition of media companies, which forced the film community and the government to close ranks and act efficiently.

Merriam-Webster gives the following definitions of success: "the fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect, or fame" or "the correct or desired result of an attempt."⁵ The media reports concerning the celebration of 10th anniversary of PISF's functioning focused attention on exactly those aspects of success – the attainment of something and the result or outcome. The recognisability of the Institute in the international arena, the strengthening of Polish cinema's position, the awards won by Polish films, and the achievements of Polish filmmakers were widely written and spoken about Poland and Polish media.⁶ Due to the unique character of film production and the concept of subsidizing it using a public institution, I would like to expand the understanding of success by adding more mundane, yet important aspects of everyday function. As far as the co-financing of Polish cinema is concerned, the situation is stable and predictable, which is extremely important in the case of

⁵ There is also the third one: "someone or something that is successful: a person or thing that succeeds," <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/success>> [accessed 23 January 2016].

⁶ See FELIS, Paweł T. *Poliski Instytut Sztuki Filmowej kończy 10 lat. Skąd jego sukces i co trzeba poprawić?*. In *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 30 March 2015, <http://wyborcza.pl/1,75410,17677530,Poliski_Institut_Sztuki_Filmowej_konczy_10_lat__Skad.html?disableRedirects=true> [accessed 6 December 2016]; *10 lat PISF: Co czwarty film fabularny to film historyczny*. In *InteriaFilm*, 29 October 2015, <<http://film.interia.pl/wiadomosci/news-10-lat-pisf-co-czwarty-film-fabularny-to-film-historyczny,nld,1912278>> [accessed 6 December 2016].

investments such as filmmaking. Funds are available and the criteria for granting them are clear. The PISF constitutes the basis of system's functioning, annually ensuring the co-financing of a great number of films.⁷ Until now it has also been a self-reflective institution. The criticism it faced has been taken into consideration and, if deemed justified, changes have been made;⁸ moreover Agnieszka Odorowicz constantly tried working on the solutions that would allow to resolve the occurring problems.⁹

PRL HERITAGE

The context for comprehending the significance of such an understanding of success – as the stabilization of the situation, transparency, and clear rules – is, as I have already mentioned, a historic context. Like in all of the other countries of the Eastern bloc, after World War II, Polish cinema was under the complete supervision of the state. This control came down to economic and ideological issues; not only did the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows (Główny Urząd Kontroli Prasy, Publikacji i Widowisk), established by a decree in 1946 and functioning until April 1990, exercise control over the ideological issues, but central authorities for cinema and party bodies played an

⁷ In 2014, 24 movies were subsidized, with 7 debuts among them.

⁸ That happened, for instance, with the project assessment system. At first it was based on anonymously filled in questionnaires. However, it wasn't known who would be evaluating particular projects. Currently, after the 2012 reform (the expert systematic reform), people submitting the project (producer, with the director's approval) refer the project to a given team of experts, and the projects are assessed in a descriptive way. See BARRACLOUGH, Leo. Agnieszka Odorowicz on Polish Film Institute's Decade of Change, In *Variety*, 17 May 2015, <<http://variety.com/2015/film/global/agnieszka-odorowicz-on-polish-film-institutes-decade-of-change-1201498978/>> [accessed 17 January 2016]; ADAMCZAK, Marcin. *Obok ekranu: Perspektywa badań produkcyjnych a społeczne istnienie filmu*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2014, pp. 63-77.

⁹ The problem of the youth in the cinema industry and their debuts, the already mentioned change in the evaluation of submitted projects, the problem of screenplays. See CHACIŃSKI, Michał. *Najważniejszy jest widz. Rozmowy: Agnieszka Odorowicz, Legalna kultura*, <<http://legalnakultura.pl/pl/czytelnia-kulturalna/rozmowy/news/1582,agnieszka-odorowicz>> [accessed 8 November 2015]; BARRACLOUGH, Leo. *Agnieszka Odorowicz on Polish Film Institute's Decade of Change*.

important role as well.¹⁰ Certain independence and high standards of production were maintained thanks to some Film Units (Zespoły Filmowe),¹¹ as well as artistic and production entities that were in charge of film production.¹²

Despite the censorship, party's supervision, and constant threat of banning the screening of a film during the communist era, filmmakers had the possibility to shoot films which were, more or less explicitly, situated in opposition to the authorities. And these filmmakers took advantage of such opportunity, which resulted in their gaining a prestigious position in Polish society. In spite of cooperation with the authorities and a frequently servile attitude, the film community enjoyed an impressive amount of trust from the Polish audience. This is incredibly important, especially when we realize the Poles' neoliberal tendencies, which I will return to later on.

The turning point for the Polish cinema was the year 1989, the fall of communism and introduction of free market economy – presented as the only possible way out and sort of a condition for introducing democracy. Today we know, however, that we were exposed to the "shock doctrine".¹³ Thus, Polish cinema entered this period with quite a paradoxical burden. The reason was a law on cinema production passed in 1987, which was supposed to get the Polish cinema out of the crisis of the 1980s. This act maintained the state's monopoly on film production, the idea of centrally made decisions and conformity with the socialist rules of the system of Peoples Republic of Poland. On the other hand, it allowed emergence and functioning of private entities that would deal with film production having obtained a proper permit from the chairman of the Film Industry Committee (Komitet Kinematografii). Despite non-fulfilment of the main demand of the filmmakers' commu-

¹⁰ MISIAK, Anna. *Kinematograf kontrolowany: Cenzura filmowa w kraju socjalistycznym i demokratycznym (PRL i USA). Analiza socjologiczna*. Kraków: Universitas, 2006.

¹¹ It should be remembered that not all of the units can be attributed an equally commendable role as it frequently happens nowadays. A lot of them – as, for instance Czołówka – were formed in a specific political situation and they followed the prescribed political and propaganda line.

¹² For more on Film Units see ADAMCZAK, Marcin. *Film Units in the People's Republic of Poland*. In ADAMCZAK, Marcin – MARECKI, Piotr – MALATYŃSKI, Marcin (Eds.). *Restart zespołów filmowych. Film Units Restart*. Kraków – Łódź: Korporacja Ha!art – Państwowa Wyższa Szkoła Filmowa, Telewizyjna i Teatralna im. Leona Schillera, 2012, pp. 231-270.

¹³ KLEIN, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books – Henry Holt Company, 2007.

nity – introducing greater autonomy – the act was received with relief. After two years, due to the change of political situation, it turned out to be largely outdated and not adequate for the new reality.¹⁴

What occurred after that can be described as a prolonged intermediate period, which lasted sixteen years from 1989 to 2005, when the new Act on Cinematography was passed. This period could be characterized using William Goldman's expression: "Nobody knows anything."¹⁵ General operating frameworks were outlined by the outdated 1987 act. According to its regulations, the Film Industry Committee functioned as the state administration's central body for cinema within the Ministry of Culture and Art (Ministerstwo Kultury i Sztuki); the chairman was the head of this committee, and was directly subordinate to the minister.¹⁶

Article 8 of the Act defined the operational scope of the Film Industry Committee. Its task was to "ensure universal access of the society to the oeuvre of Polish and world cinema," to "create conditions for the development of all the genres and kinds of film work," to "design the direction of implementing the state's cultural policy concerning cinema," to "set the rules of conducting the production, editing and distribution," and to "set the rules of protecting, gathering, enlarging and making the resources of cinema accessible."¹⁷ Subsequent decisions of the parliament restricted or even made it impossible to execute the Act. What had the most severe influence on the Film Industry Committee and the situation in Polish cinema was the progressing privatization and dramatic decrease in donations.

Consecutive chairmen of the Film Industry Committee tried to function in the ensuing reality, while at the same time making fruitless efforts to either reform the existing act (the famous "reform of the reform" suggested by Juliusz Burski in February 1989),¹⁸ or to implement a new

¹⁴ GĘBICKA, Ewa. *Między państwowym mecenatem a rynkiem: Polska kinematografia po 1989 roku w kontekście transformacji ustrojowej*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006, pp. 27-30.

¹⁵ LEV, Peter. *American Films of the 70s: Conflicting Visions*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000, p. XVI.

¹⁶ The function of the President of the Film Industry Committee was held by: Jerzy Bajdor (1987-89), Juliusz Burski (1989-90), Waldemar Dąbrowski (1990-94), Tadeusz Ścibor-Rylski (1994-2001), Janusz Bodasiński (2001) respectively.

¹⁷ *Ustawa z dnia 16 lipca 1987 r. o kinematografii*, Dziennik Ustaw nr 22, poz. 127, <file:///C:/Users/ED/Downloads/D19870127.pdf> [accessed 6 December 2016].

¹⁸ GĘBICKA, Ewa. *Między państwowym mecenatem a rynkiem*, p. 30.

one. As Ewa Gębicka states, in Waldemar Dąbrowski's time (1990-1994) five projects were discussed. When Tadeusz Ścibor-Rylski was heading the Film Industry Committee, another four projects were read and even made their way to the session of the Sejm's Commission for Culture and Media (two in 1997 and two in 1999). They were, however, rejected. This lack of stability, further financial restrictions, and inability to reach an agreement translated into an increasingly difficult situation for Polish cinema. It wasn't even changed by the box-office success of the films belonging to the first wave of historic cinema from the end of 20th and beginning of 21st century. On the contrary, the success revealed further problems, as it turned out that the increase in the number of viewers was temporary. Moreover, after every huge rise, there occurred a dramatic decrease in the cinema attendance, which shows the behaviour of the audience was not permanently influenced.¹⁹ Critical comments coming from the film community itself also appeared. Counting on one historical giant that could attract an audience resulted in the lack of funds for other film productions. Additionally, productions of historical films were almost monopolized by the older generation of directors. As a result, the graduates of film schools had to wait for their debuts for several years.

During this time, the situation was saved by public and private investors. Two of them – The Polish Television (Telewizja Polska SA) and the private cable TV station Canal+ Polska – came to be significant players. Thanks to its excellent financial situation (mainly because of the cash inflows from commercials), Telewizja Polska SA was, up until 2005, the most serious film producer. The amount of resources invested in the best periods of its activity even came to 60% per year. "Out of 15 debuts made in the years 1998-2000, 6 were in 100% produced by Telewizja Polska."²⁰ As Ewa Gębicka stresses, it was most visible during the subsequent editions of the Polish Film Festival that annually took place in Gdynia. In 1993, out of 27 competing films, 21 were subsidized or co-financed by Telewizja Polska, in the year 2000 it co-financed 20 (11 financed in whole) out of 29 competing pictures. Five years later, 8 out of 21 competing films were financed by TVP in 100%. As a compar-

¹⁹ KOWALSKI, Tadeusz (Ed.). *Raport o stanie kultury. Kinematografia: W kierunku rynku i Europy*, pp. 31-32, <http://kultura.gminick.megiteam.pl/download/is_www/Raport_o_stanie_kultury_kinematografia_W_kierunku_rynk_u_i_Europy.pdf> [accessed 5 November 2015].

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

ison, Film Production Agency (Agencja Produkcji Filmowej)²¹ was the producer of 3 and co-producer of 8 films in the same year.²² According to concession obligations, Canal+ Polska invested in feature films (and also in serials later) from the moment it was founded in 1994. Every year it financially participated in the production of four or more feature films, making a financial contribution between 2 and 80%.²³ This process slowed down after the complete transition to a digital platform. In 2013, due to financial difficulties, Canal+ started to back down from this area, sticking to football, the other important field of its investments.²⁴ During the first ten years Canal+ co-financed over 60 feature films as well as 20 documentaries and short films.²⁵ It is worth taking into consideration the fact that other significant private TV station which entered the market in 1992 (Polsat), evaded its concession obligations over most of that period. TVN, established in 1997, did not start getting seriously involved in the production of feature films until the late 2000s, creating a kind of autarchy.

DETERIORATING SITUATION

Despite all those problems, such a situation could continue and this “transitional period” could last infinitely, especially considering the Poles’ ability to adapting and circumventing the rules.²⁶ The community was more and more integrated, though there were some attacks on the Film Industry Committee and the authors gathered around it. What reverberated particularly strongly was Krzysztof Kłopotowski’s attack at the so-called barons of Polish cinema, while another criticism was Janusz Wróblewski’s attack directed more towards the authorities

²¹ A body created by Film Industry Committee to subsidize and supervise film production sponsored by the government.

²² GĘBICKA, Ewa. *Między państwowym mecenatem a rynkiem*, pp. 108-114.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁴ See SZEWCZYK, Łukasz. *Canal + wstrzymuje inwestycje w filmy. Skupi się na sporcie?*, 22 February 2013, <<http://media2.pl/media/100615-Canalplus-wstrzymuje-inwestycje-w-filmy.-Skupi-sie-na-sporcie.html>> [accessed 1 February 2016].

²⁵ GĘBICKA, Ewa. *Między państwowym mecenatem a rynkiem*, p. 117.

²⁶ See LEWANDOWSKI, Edmund. *Charakter narodowy Polaków i innych*. Warszawa: MUZA SA, 2008.

of the Film Industry Committee.²⁷ The situation got significantly worse after Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej, SLD) had come to power (2001). The left-wing government, paradoxically, made the decision about introducing drastic savings and reductions of budgetary grants. In 2001, the Film Industry Committee was liquidated and most of its tasks were taken over by the Film Department (Departament Filmu) in the Ministry of Culture. However, cinema budgets were reduced by a third. As Edward Zajiček says, only thanks to a certain bureaucratic trick by the chairman of the Film Industry Committee, Tadeusz Ścibor-Rylski, was it possible to maintain the continuity of production: “Before being dismissed he signed over a dozen of overdue applications for subsidizing the planned films, presenting the minister with a *fait accompli*.”²⁸

Drastic budget cuts and the liquidation of the Film Industry Committee turned out to be just the beginning. It seems that what filled the film community’s cup of bitterness to the brim was more and more courageously expressed in, then-Minister of Culture, Andrzej Celiński’s vision of reforming Polish cinema according to the pattern of the American film industry. In reality, it would have meant eradication of the Polish cinema. In the summer of 2002 Andrzej Celiński was dismissed and the ministry was taken over by Waldemar Dąbrowski, well known and highly valued by the community. One of his first steps was to gradually increase budgetary funds for the cinema – according to Zajiček, from 6 million in 2002 to 26 million PLN in 2005.²⁹ However, a far more significant move was the decision to intensify work on a new cinema act. The situation required particular caution since, in that time, the community of broadcasters and distributors gained strength, having at its disposal considerable resources to lobby actions in the parliament. That community opposed any solutions which would impose upon them obligations towards Polish cinema; they also promoted free-market ideas in the film production, distribution and exhibition, which, in the economic practice of the globalized world, would have meant imposed by American distributors.

²⁷ GĘBICKA, Ewa. *Między państwowym mecenatem a rynkiem*, p. 85.

²⁸ ZAJIČEK, Edward. *Poza ekranem. Kinematografia polska 1896-2005*, 2nd edition. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Filmowców Polskich – Studio Filmowe Montevideo, 2009, p. 330.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 331-332.

LEGAL ACTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Anna Wróblewska highlights one more (and much earlier) legal instrument and its role in the formation of the contemporary film market in Poland, which was the 1994 Copyright Act (Ustawa o prawie autorskim). It not only clearly emphasized that the subjects of copyright are “audiovisual, including film, works,” but also extended the number of people involved in the creation of a film, whose activities were to be covered by copyright and, as a consequence, translated into specific, measurable financial benefits in case of the film’s use. Moreover, the protection of such right was prolonged to 70 years. As Wróblewska writes: “It is hard to believe, but until 1994 filmmakers received royalties only for the screenplay. [...] The fact that the director, operator and later – as a result of amendment of the act – also the film set designer and, with time, other co-creators of the film became entitled to royalties, considerably improved the authors’ material situation.”³⁰

Protection of copyrights and the resulting financial benefits certainly could translate into the increase of the filmmakers’ engagement in the socio-organizational field. Realizing that the fight for the rights translates into notable benefits, they could feel motivated to further activities. However, obtaining such protection could also have disincentivising effects on personal involvement – if I, as an individual, have accomplished my objective, there is no point to fight anymore. But that’s where yet another player became active – the Polish Filmmakers Association (SFP). In 1995, the SFP set up the Union of Audiovisual Authors and Producers (Związek Autorów i Producentów Audiowizualnych, SFP-ZAPA) whose objective is to collectively manage the audiovisual works’ copyrights. ZAPA protects the rights of audiovisual producers and a number of authors: directors, screenplay and dialogues authors, directors of photography, film set designers, costume designers, sound engineers, editors, and interior decorators. Further contracts signed with the users of audiovisual works and the fees charged on behalf of the authors and producers made it possible to not only pay the royalties, but also gather the funds by way of collection, that is to say, the profit of SFP-ZAPA. As Wróblewska stresses: “This money soon proved to be essential for conducting many years of lobbying activi-

³⁰ WRÓBLEWSKA, Anna. *Rynek filmowy w Polsce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Wojciech Marzec, 2014, p. 25.

ties in favour of the Act on Cinematography, carrying out costly legal expertises, gaining international support and conducting campaign in the country.”³¹ This campaign turned out to be crucial due to increasing neoliberal tendencies in Polish society and a concentrated lobbying campaign by the media concerns against the financial support of Polish cinema.

MEDIA CAMPAIGN

During that time a clear polarization became visible among those interested in reforming cinema. On one side, there were distributors and owners of private and cable TV stations (it was mainly about TVN and Polsat), on the other side, there were filmmakers. The former were in favour of a free market economy, pointing to the American industry’s organization system as the role model. The latter looked to the direction of solutions adopted in the European Union, especially France, emphasizing the necessity of state’s financial support for film productions. The discussion that swept through the media was incredibly turbulent. Marcin Adamczak, who attempted to analyze it, drew attention to the dissimilarity of not only the vision, but also the reasoning and the emotions involved. He described the coalition of media concerns as the supporters of “invisible hand discourse.” For them, cinema was above all a form of entertainment. It was supposed to be financed by profit-minded investors, for whom the box office success would be the criterion for evaluation of a given film. They highlighted the necessity of “curing” Polish cinema, which was for them synonymous with subjecting it to the free market rules. Tax reliefs for the producers were supposed to be the only form of state’s intervention supporting Polish cinema.³²

³¹ WRÓBLEWSKA, Anna. *Rynek filmowy w Polsce*, p. 25.

³² ADAMCZAK, Marcin. Zwycięska gra wokół Ustawy o kinematografii. In *Magazyn Filmowy*, no. 6 (2015), pp. 14-21, <<http://www.sfp.pl/magazyn,114,a4607b4769a01b8023b17d8230a819cf,pdf.html>> [accessed 13 November 2015]; ADAMCZAK, Marcin. *Globalne Hollywood, filmowa Europa i polskie kino po 1989 roku. Przeobrażenie kultury audiowizualnej przełomu stuleci*. Gdańsk: słowo/obraz terytoria, 2010.

Both the owners of Polsat and TVN made airtime available for the advocates of their own vision. However, the greatest zeal in the discussions was shown by the journalists of a conservative-neoliberal socio-political weekly magazine *Wprost*, frequently going as far as to use vulgar names. As Adamczak writes, during three years of the media campaign, twelve articles attacking the film community appeared in the pages of *Wprost*. Polish cinema was called “the cinema of social welfare,” the future Polish Film Institute – “the institute of parasitic film” or “the institute of film crafty buggers.” The attempts to introduce levies in favour of Polish cinema were described as a “cash rip-off,” “living off the taxpayers,” “playing artistic work for our money, but without our consent.”³³

The advocates of the opposite option used far more balanced expressions. They highlighted the need of the Polish film industry to be supported financially by the state. They used – as Adamczak put it – “the helping hand discourse.” For them, cinema had mainly artistic value, belonging to the area of art and constituting an element of national culture – cultural and national values were supposed to be the criterion for its evaluation. This side jointly gathered the authors representing different attitudes and generations: of the older as well as the middle generation, representatives of auteur as well as popular cinema. Their institutional support was the Polish Filmmakers Association who – as I have already mentioned – provided organizational and financial assistance during the difficult process of the media campaign. On the part of media, the authors were supported by *Telewizja Polska* and a monthly magazine *Kino*. The latter, due to its character of a magazine mostly read by more sophisticated public, did not constitute an effective counterbalance for *Wprost*. Adamczak emphasized however, that well-balanced articles were to be found in *Gazeta Wyborcza* (the most popular daily newspaper in Poland, read by the intelligentsia) or other weekly socio-political magazine *Newsweek*.³⁴

³³ ADAMCZAK, Marcin. Zwycięska gra wokół Ustawy o kinematografii, p. 18.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

PARLIAMENTARY BATTLE

The centre-left government (2001-2005), in which Waldemar Dąbrowski (politically unaffiliated) held the portfolio of the minister of culture from 2002, after PSL had left the coalition, was the minority government. During its last operational period, it functioned with a growing awareness that the next elections will be won by either a liberal-conservative party (Civic Platform – Platforma Obywatelska, PO) or a conservative-right-wing party (Law and Justice – Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS). The former was known for perfectly fitting into the invisible hand discourse, standing firmly behind the coalition of media companies. The latter, on the other hand, aspired to gain ideological control over all the possible institutions. Therefore, it was even more urgent to hurry up with work on the new cinema act. After the failure of yet another proposed project, minister Dąbrowski delegated this work to a very young, at that time only 30 years old Agnieszka Odorowicz. What needs to be strongly emphasized, is the fact that during less than a year it was necessary not only to prepare a project of the new act, but also to adjust its regulations to the EU regulations (as, since 2004, Poland has been a member of the European Union) and to gain support of individual forces in the parliament because, as I have already mentioned, the centre-left coalition SLD-UP which ruled at that time did not have the majority of votes.

PEOPLE

Agnieszka Odorowicz (born in 1974 in Katowice) came to Warsaw from Krakow, where she graduated with a degree in economics. She gained experience in arts management while working as the vice-president of Krakow's Association of Academic Culture (Stowarzyszenie Kultury Akademickiej). In June of 2003, she became a secretary of state in the Ministry of Culture, being the plenipotentiary for the structural funds and at the same time the member of the task force working on the national strategy for the development of culture. Thanks to that, she honed her skills in EU negotiations. In August of 2004, minister Dąbrowski promoted her to the position of the secretary of state in the

Ministry of Culture responsible for the new cinema law. This mission required incredible courage, engagement, negotiation skills, and efficiency. The biggest expert in the issues concerning film production in Poland, Edward Zajiček, who systematically followed Odorowicz's actions, stated even that what the secretary of state was able to achieve verged on the miraculous.³⁵

As I have mentioned, and what has to be strongly emphasized, three issues had to be worked on simultaneously: preparing the text of the new act, adjusting the regulations to the EU regulations and obtaining consent for the government's protection of the Polish film industry as well as gaining support of the majority in the parliament in order to vote the act through. One should also remember about the ongoing media campaign, sponsored by media concerns, against Dąbrowski's position. Odorowicz herself mentions this period as one of hard and incredibly intense work.³⁶ Although the foundations of the text of the act were ready, it was possible to introduce an article that secured the functioning of Polish Film Institute as well as the funds to support the cinema in Poland. At the same time this exposed the draft to concentrated attacks. It concerns article 19 stating that: entities running cinemas, distributing entities, TV broadcasters, operators of digital platforms, and operators of cable TV shall pay the Institute 1.5% revenues earned.

THE FINAL BATTLE

On May 18, 2005, Sejm of the IV term passed the Act on Cinematography. According to Marcin Adamczak, 302 deputies voted for the Act, 93 voted against, and 7 abstained from voting. On June 30, the upper house of the parliament made amendments and approved the Act. It came into force on August 19, 2005. It is also worth bringing back the structure of the votes. SLD, PiS and PSL (Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe, Polish Peasants' Party – an agrarian Christian democratic party) voted on the whole in favour of the Act, while UP (Unia Pracy, Labour United – social-democratic party) and LPR (Liga Polskich Rodzin, League of

³⁵ ZAJIČEK, Edward. *Poza ekranem*, p. 332.

³⁶ CHACIŃSKI, Michał. *Najważniejszy jest widz. Rozmowy: Agnieszka Odorowicz*.

Polish Families – a nationalist conservative party) almost entirely supported it, while the following voted against: PO, Self-Defense (a populist conservative party) and Antoni Maciarenko and his supporters.³⁷ However, it was not the end. Edward Zajiček sneeringly states that the opponents of the Act did not lay down their arms. For a very long time they challenged the Act and the ultra-neoliberal Employers Confederation "Lewiatan" even referred it to the Constitutional Court. Agnieszka Odorowicz was attacked as a private person as well.³⁸

After the first successful stage, there was time for the second phase. The Polish Film Institute was to be appointed by the virtue of the Act (article 7). While the Act contains the expression the PISF "is being set up," it does not say anything more than that, instantly moving on to its function. Agnieszka Odorowicz dealt with that also, after she had successfully passed through the individual stages of a competition for the post of the PISF general director and won that position. As she said in the interview from 2015, detailed solutions had to be developed: "structures, operational programs, ways of functioning and relationships with partners."³⁹ She and her associates succeeded in achieving all of the above in such an effective manner that first funding applications were examined already in 2006.

The situation in Poland, like in all other countries of the former Eastern Bloc, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and rejection of the system of real socialism, involved the necessity of reforms in nearly all of spheres of life and the governing of the country. The number of mistakes made was huge and did not always result only from the lack of knowledge and applying the experiment described by Naomi Klein as the "shock doctrine."⁴⁰ Changes in national cinema lasted incredibly long – as I have mentioned, the "in-between period" covered sixteen years. At the beginning the changes were very dynamic, however they had negative character. While the government got rid of the distribution and broadcasting system efficiently and without a second thought, it also widely opened the doors for international distributors and companies investing in multiplexes. Some of the film studios, e.g. the one located in Łódź, were gradually closed. However, Marcin Adamczak points out that not all of those changes were of an explicitly negative nature. The

³⁷ ADAMCZAK, Marcin. *Zwycięska gra wokół Ustawy o kinematografii*, p. 20.

³⁸ ZAJIČEK, Edward. *Poza ekranem*, p. 332.

³⁹ CHACIŃSKI, Michał. *Najważniejszy jest widz. Rozmowy: Agnieszka Odorowicz*.

⁴⁰ KLEIN, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine*.

change in the way of film production from the system based on film studios (and their production section employees) to the project-based system (assembling the crew for a particular film) allowed to eliminate overstaffing and, as a consequence, translated into an increase in – previously extremely low – effectiveness of production.⁴¹

Nevertheless, from a chronological perspective it can be said that the Polish cinema emerged from these changes comparatively unscathed, and provided itself with a relatively stable working environment as well as development prospects. It should, however, be highlighted that it was due to a series of various factors, frequently connected to one another. Undoubtedly, those were the people engaged and dedicated to the cause (outside of filmmakers, this means Waldemar Dąbrowski and Agnieszka Odorowicz), institutions and organizations (The Polish Filmmakers Association and its president Jacek Bromski, and, since 2005, The Polish Film Institute), legal instruments (the 1994 Copyright Act and the 2005 Act on Cinematography), as well as the circumstances. Among the latter, though it may sound paradoxical, what were important were the neoliberal reforms of the centre-left government and the actions of the minister of culture Andrzej Celiński as well as the concentrated attacks of the coalition of media concerns that forced the film community and the government to close ranks and act effectively.

⁴¹ ADAMCZAK, Marcin. *Globalne Hollywood, filmowa Europa i polskie kino po 1989 roku*, pp. 240-249.

ONE MYTH, TWO PATHS: THE SLOVAK TELEVISION FILM AFTER 1989 SEEN THROUGH THE NARRATIVE ON CONTEMPORARY SLOVAK CINEMA

Jana Dudková

THE STATE OF “COLLAPSE”

In the most systematic publication on the history of Slovak cinema, 1997 *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie (The History of Slovak Cinema)*, film scholar Vladimír MIČOUŠEK mentions “a state of total collapse” of live-action television production at the turn of 1980s and 1990s.¹ In another part of the same publication, Václav MACEK uses a more cautious, but still quite ambivalent claim, that “films were being produced in television until 1989.”²

On the basis of my preliminary research of Slovak feature-length television fiction released after 1989, I was, however, able to verify that, unlike in national cinema, television production was quite fruitful even during the times that film historians regard as devastating.³ I also noticed that live-action TV production had very similar genre and thematic tendencies as the live-action films produced primarily for cinematic distribution, but these tendencies often appeared in different periods,

¹ MACEK, Václav – PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*. Martin: Osveta, 1997, p. 504.

² Ibid., p. 283.

³ The most complete lists of television films are contained in the bilingual (Slovak and English) Film Yearbooks published by the Slovak Film Institute in Bratislava. In this text, I departed from the data published in Yearbooks for the respective years and concentrated mostly on live-action TV films longer than 55 minutes. For the data about the production of 1990s, see *Filmová ročenka 1990-1999, časť 2 – Film Yearbook 1990-1999, part 2*. Bratislava: Slovenský filmový ústav, 2000.

performed different symbolic functions, and offered different features of film style or modes of storytelling.

This convinced me to offer a comparative analysis of TV and cinematic film production as another method of challenging both a wide-spread myth about the non-existence of Slovak film and the current narrative about its progressive development. As a result, this text has three points of departure: besides a rough thematic analysis of feature-length television and cinematic (live-action) production released after 1989, I count the two oppositional narratives⁴ on Slovak film/cinema. The first one is based on imagining the Slovak *film* as (symbolically or even practically) non-existent, which appears as a side-effect of the prolonged and unsystematic transformation of both Slovak cinema and television shortly after 1989.⁵

The second one forms, on the contrary, a counter-narrative about progress of Slovak *cinema* which could be derived from various kinds of texts or even visual materials following the development of professional discourse on Slovak cinema (while most often provided by journalists, publishers, film professionals, authors, producers, etc.). As I have claimed in my earlier article,⁶ this (counter-)narrative has been developed by abandoning the narrative about the crisis and isolation of Slovak cinema and fostering an awareness about the international successes of new generations of documentary and animation directors, especially after the emergence of feature-length creative documentaries since 2003. Most recently, this narrative has also been instrumental in creating of a more assertive image of Slovak *film*, which is – nevertheless – often presented as peculiarly polarized between „genre film“ and „social drama“.

⁴ I prefer the term “narrative” instead of “discourse” since the phenomena I have in mind follow a structure of an obsessively-repeated (and almost biblical) *story* (about a collapse and resurrection).

⁵ This narrative was most probably created by film critics, journalists and professionals at the very beginning of 1990s. Abandoned by many of them during the first two decades of the new millennium, it still remains surprisingly present among various groups of recipients (see, e.g. the results of the research of social representations of the notion of Slovak film among high school students in URBAN, Marek. *Existuje slovenský film? Výskum sociálnych reprezentácií “slovenského” a “českého filmu” u študentov stredných škôl*. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2014), pp. 138-154).

⁶ E.g. DUDKOVÁ, Jana. *Medzi ideológiou a kreativitou. Presuny autorstva medzi režisérom a producentom v slovenskom ponovembrovom filme*. In *Kino – Ikon*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2014), pp. 80-105.

While the first narrative refers to both cinematic and TV film, the second one usually refers to cinematic film – almost completely neglecting the parallel (and sometimes even more progressive) development of television production. In his dissertation on the notion of Slovak film among film professionals, students and critics between 2012-2014, Marek Urban even notices an a priori negative perception of television (film) as such.⁷

THE END OF A BEGINNING

In order to stress the similarities but also the differences within parallel paths of Slovak cinematic and TV film, let us remind ourselves of some facts.

Unlike the post-socialist transformation of national cinema which started at the beginning of 1990s, transformation of state-run television in Slovakia was initiated by the Union of Socialist Youth during the early autumn of 1989, almost two months before so called “Velvet Revolution”. The Organisational Committee, established at the Union on 21 September 1989, directed the process of neutralising the upper management of television, and gradually assumed decisive authority for transforming the television’s key structures. Six days later (on 27 September 1989), the Program Committee was established with the goal of providing broadcast structure during the interim period.⁸ It was expected to last until the first post-revolution director officially took his office, which finally happened on 20 February 1990; however, just like in cinema, “interim” period lasted much longer. During the short period from 1990 to 1992, as many as five sets of upper management took their turns in the public Slovak television, and till the end of 1994, the number of directors who took their turns was already eight (the first

⁷ URBAN, Marek. *Sociálne reprezentácie v diskurze slovenských filmových profesionálov v rokoch 2012-2014* (dissertation: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre, 2016), p. 203 and onwards.

⁸ See MISTRÍKOVÁ, Zuzana – ZMEČEK, Andrej (Eds.). *Mediálna ročenka – Slovensko 1990-2000*. Bratislava: Mediálny inštitút, 2001, p. 10.

post-November director, writer and journalist Roman Kaliský himself was replaced by Peter Zeman already in August 1990).⁹

In this situation, it was almost impossible to build up sustainable dramaturgy or a vision of further development. It was mostly due to the un-systematic transformation that television production in Slovakia was perceived as founding itself in a prolonged crisis, sharing a similar fate with Slovak cinema. Nevertheless, there are some major differences in the features of the two crises. For example, non-transparent privatisation of the state-run Koliba Film Studios (Slovenská filmová tvorba Bratislava – Koliba),¹⁰ which resulted in a huge decrease in production, in the liquidation of some film professions, and technological background, was not followed by adequate changes in legislation. Despite the fact that privatisation had begun in 1991, and since then cinematic production was provided by private subjects only, the end of state monopoly in cinema was legalized no earlier than in January 1996, when the new law on audio-visual production became effective.¹¹

On the contrary, the new and quite progressive Act on Slovak Television (STV) as a public institution (the Act No. 254/1991) became valid already since 1 July 1991. And while the greatest crisis in cinema emerged between 1992-2002, with only 2 up to 4 feature-length films (mostly co-productions with Czech Republic) made per year during the whole period, the greatest decrease in television film production took place only at the beginning of the new millennium (its consequent rectification came about with the so-called “Contract with the State” for the years of 2010-2014,¹² the goal of which was the legislative amendment of conditions in order to increase the insufficient state support for original TV programs).

⁹ Ibid., pp. 11-12. For the complete list of directors of Slovak Television, see the television’s official site, <<http://www.rtvs.org/o-rtvs/historia/riaditelia-slovenskej-televizie>> [accessed 10 March 2016].

¹⁰ For more about the privatisation of state-run film industry and its unclear connections with the political regime of Vladimír Mečiar see in MACEK, Václav. 1 297 254 000 Sk. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2010), pp. 125-154.

¹¹ ŠMATLÁK, Martin. Hľadanie vlastnej cesty. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2008), p. 138.

¹² This is namely Contract no. MK - 77/09/M on Content, Goals and Provision of Public Services in the Area of TV Broadcasting for Years 2010-2014, hereafter referred to only as the “Contract With The State” (“Zmluva so štátom”), covering the period from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2014. The Contract was signed on 21 December 2009, coming into effect on 1 January 2010.

The actual transformation of the state-run television into a public institution¹³ did not have the immediate, drastic impact mentioned in *The History of Slovak Cinema* – at least not in the quantitative parameters of production of TV films. On one hand, the decrease in the number of feature-length films was significant in comparison with the first half of 1980s when, during the decade’s first three years alone, more than 40 TV films were produced (with some of them consisting of several parts).¹⁴ This was, however, not a sustainable situation, so that a decrease in production came as early as in the second half of 1980s, several years before the change of political regime.¹⁵

On the other hand, when seen in the light of the decrease in production of films for cinema after 1992, the situation in TV production was nowhere near being on the brink of extinction.

Despite that, the transformation from state-run to public, and from federal to national, together with the related ensuing chaos, multiple politically-motivated changes in leadership structures, and thus, the inability to propose stable qualitative standards or dramaturgical plans, resulted in the tendency for a narrative to be formed which spoke about television’s quantitative as well as qualitative downfall – a narrative that emerged also in a broader context of imagining the Slovak film as such.

This narrative can be traced both in imagination of film professionals and in works of film historians. Albeit historians tend to be more cautious in case of national cinema, as I have already mentioned, even some authors of *The History of Slovak Cinema* refer to “a state of total collapse” of live-action TV production at the turn of regimes and decades.¹⁶

A similar idea about the purported collapse is captured in the video film *Adam a Anna* (*Adam and Anna*, 1992, dir. Zoro Laurinc). Here, a former television star of fiction programs is presented as a person who is no longer recognized neither by public nor by her former colleagues. Despite the fact the film was released in 1992 (merely two or three years after the supposed “collapse”), the reason for the star’s loss of recognisability is neither her age nor loss of talent – it is her being

¹³ De iure, this took place when the Slovak Parliament passed its Act no. 254/1991 coll. on 24 May 1991.

¹⁴ MACEK, Václav – PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*, p. 465.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 469.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 504

explicitly associated with the suggested *end* of production of TV films and their replacement with entertainment formats such as TV quizzes. It is not easy to trace all possible reasons for the emergence of this kind of narrative. They could be related to the temporary halt in the production of various TV departments during 1990,¹⁷ or even to the suspension of the broadcasting of the popular feature-length format, so-called “Bratislavské televízne pondelky” – “Bratislava’s Television Mondays”. These TV-staged plays (mostly adaptations of famous literary works by renowned international or Slovak authors) had a long tradition of production and regular broadcasting, which dates back to the very beginning of national television, in 1957. What’s even more important – in contrast with majority of Slovak TV production, they also had a large audience in the Czech (and not only Slovak) part of former Czechoslovakia. From this perspective, it is no wonder the professional and public audiences perceived the cancellation of this tradition as a traumatic event. Even the authors of the Slovak Media Institute’s 2001 Yearbook, which was tasked with summarising the development of Slovak media from 1990–2000 (and still remains the only systematic overview of the post-socialist development of television in Slovakia),¹⁸ state:

To give up the 30-year tradition and a strong position on the market with an audience of 15-million was a fatal mistake that was never remedied afterwards. [...] The phenomenon built by entire generations of Slovak actors, directors, dramaturges, ceased to exist by our own making.¹⁹

It is possible that these events, together with the combination of unsystematic transformation and great but unfulfilled expectations about the future progress of television (as well as the unfulfilled changes to daily life, other institutions, and arts after the downfall of communism) fostered the rise of the nihilistic narrative about Slovak television (as well as cinematic) film.

It, however, turns out the number of feature-length TV films ranged from 6 to 10 per year in the first few years after the November ‘89 revolution.²⁰ According to data published in *Film Yearbook 1990–1999*, sever-

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The 2001 Yearbook was designed as a preparation for a planned – but never realized – yearly format. See the cover page of MISTRÍKOVÁ, Zuzana – ZMEČEK, Andrej (Eds.). *Mediálna ročenka – Slovensko 1990–2000*.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 14.

²⁰ *Filmová ročenka 1990–1999, časť 2 – Film Yearbook 1990–1999, part 2*.

al TV films were released both during 1990 and 1991²¹ despite the claim from *The History of Slovak Cinema* that, during 1990, no original television film was finished.²² Although much lower than during the early 1980s, this number approximately matches the standard production level of pre-revolution *cinema*. Moreover, many of TV films consisted of several parts and many of them were shot on classical film stock: among them, the three-part film *Dido* (1991, dir. Dušan Rapoš), the five-part mini-series *Štúrovci* (1991, dir. Peter Mikulík), the two-part *Jediná* (*The Only One*, 1991, dir. Anton Majerčík) or the two-part *Duo Zemganno* (1993, dir. Juraj Bindzár).

This means that the idea of collapse doesn’t refer to technological changes within television industry, albeit inability to sustain the existing standard of producing films shot by classical film technology was, later on, solved by fostering the production of the video-film format (this was supposed to prevent TV production from being reduced solely to the format of in-studio, staged plays).²³

In other words, the technological changes *did* happen and even had an impact on the overall quality of (TV) film image, but didn’t precede the emergence of the myth about collapse. In 1990, as many as three films shot on classical film stock were released: a psychological drama about rising infidelity in human relations *Citové cvičenia* (*Emotional Exercises*, dir. Ladislav Halama), a sci-fi thriller *Podzemie čarodejníc* (*Witches’ Underground*, dir. Jurij Morozov), made in coproduction with RSFSR, and an epic youth musical with a fairy tale twist *Takmer ružový príbeh* (*A Rosy Story*, dir. Juraj Jakubisko).²⁴ In 1991, 10 live-action films with runtimes exceeding 55 minutes were produced, with majority of them shot on 35 mm film: besides the three-part *Dido* and a mini-series about the famous generation of national revivalists *Štúrovci*, there were also a lyrical film based on an eponymous ballade by Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav *Zuzanka Hraškovie* (dir. Franek Chmiel), a psychological drama about alienation *Od rána do úsvitu* (*From Morning Till Daybreak*, dir. Ľubo Kocka), and a biopic about young Mozart, *Variácie slávy* (*Variations of Fame*, dir.

²¹ Ibid.

²² MACEK, Václav – PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*, p. 504

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ In addition, STV Bratislava co-produced a cinematic film *Dávajte si pozor!* (*Beware!*, dir. Jozef Heriban and Jozef Slovák). Apart from the mentioned films, 4 more video films were also released in the respected year – two of them being psychological dramas: *Rodina* (*Family*) and *Vianočná spomienka* (*A Christmas Memory*), both directed by Ľuba Velecká, and two fairy tales produced by the regional Košice TV studio.

Miroslav Sobota). Two of the films were shot on 16mm,²⁵ and only three on video.²⁶

A greater problem than the decrease in production itself was the overall chaotic nature of the industry's transformation, as Slovak Television's management and its individual programming departments constantly changed, with minimal chance of establishing a stable programming concept and a long-term strategy.²⁷ Nevertheless, it is possible to determine an approximate timeline of dominant film topics and types, which, in some cases, preceded or copied the tendencies found in live-action production for cinema, and in other cases were altogether autonomous.

I will briefly mention the most important of these, especially those that appeared during the 1990s, before the decrease in production which started at the beginning of the new millennium, in order to show how some of them actually functioned as preparation of (or for) the contemporary development of Slovak cinema – while some other of them followed this development, but did so in quite an autonomous manner which reflected the different social roles expected, on one hand, of television and, on the other hand, of cinema.

1990-1992: FILMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Before I pass to the phenomenon of film production for children and youth, let me summarise the overall trends in Slovak live-action production right after the fall of communism.

At the turn of the decade, Slovak cinema oscillated between the late-socialist revisions of communism and the desire to offer new modes of artistic (as well as popular) storytelling. The first post-socialist Slovak

²⁵ The two-part adaptation of Klára Jarunková's prose *Jediná* (*The Only One*) and the balladic film *Život a smrť pastiera Jána* (*Life And Death Of Shepherd John*, dir. Marián Kleis Jr.), produced for STV Košice.

²⁶ *Anorexia Mentalis* (dir. Ľuba Vančíková), *Mário zapískaj...!* (*Mario, Whistle...!*, dir. Yvonne Vavrová) and the two-part film *Rozruch na onkológii* (*Turmoil at Oncology*, dir. Ľuba Velecká). Apart from these films, STV Bratislava also co-produced all of that year's films produced for cinema, with the exception of Martin Šulík's *Neha* (*Tenderness*).

²⁷ MISTRÍKOVÁ, Zuzana – ZMEČEK, Andrej (Eds.). *Mediálna ročenka – Slovensko 1990-2000*, pp. 11-18.

films for cinemas often depicted psychological or moral devastation as a result of previous regime (like Martin Hollý's *Právo na minulosť – The Right for the Past*, 1989; Dušan Trančík's *Keď hviezdy boli červené – When the Stars Were Red*, 1989; or even Martin Šulík's 1991 debut *Tenderness*).²⁸ Nevertheless, Slovak cinema of the time also offered several attempts aimed at commercial successes or the implementation of "western" popular genres,²⁹ as well as an emergence of a new generation of directors who introduced new, mostly fragmentary ways of storytelling and self-reflexive postmodern aesthetics (Martin Šulík, Štefan Semjan, Miroslav Šindelka).³⁰ It is worth mentioning that outside of the specific approach of this new generation, who tended to point out current problems of searching for national and post-socialist identity, there were very few attempts to depict the transformative processes in society and its political environment, with Jakubisko's film *Lepšie byť bohatý a zdravý ako chudobný a chorý* (*Better to be Rich and Healthy than Poor and Sick*, 1992) as the most systematic one, which referred to the end of communism as well as to the rise of nationalism, poverty, and criminality in post-socialist Slovak society.

There were also a few films depicting the problems of youth or intended for young audiences released between 1989-1990, but with the exception of Dušan Rapoš's commercially successful, but aesthetically heterogenous and ideologically ambivalent *Fountain for Suzanne 2*, this type of film had already begun to disappear from national cinema.

At the same time, within TV production, the slightly-outdated moralism of psychological dramas and films for youth and children dominated together with a consistent production of fairy tales, historical films or adaptations of literary classics. On the other hand, relatively

²⁸ MACEK, Václav – PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*, pp. 490-491. For more about representations of socialist past in Slovak cinema see also MIŠÍKOVÁ, Katarína. A Country with a Tiny History and Thick Lines? Memories of the Socialist Past in Slovak Post-Socialist Cinema. In *Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 1 (2015), pp. 67-78, and PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. Indexy totalitarizmu a pop-kultúrne intervencie v slovenskom hranom filme. Príspevok k medialite súčasného umenia. In *Slovenská literatúra*, vol. 58, no. 2 (2011), pp. 105-117.

²⁹ E.g. the local blockbuster *Fontána pre Zuzanu 2* (*Fountain for Suzanne 2*, 1993, dir. Dušan Rapoš), or an (unsuccessful) attempt at criminal thriller, a co-production with Austrian television ORF with Michael York in the leading role – *Rošáda* (*Rochade*, 1991, dir. Peter Patzak).

³⁰ For more about the narrative style of this generation see MIŠÍKOVÁ, Katarína. Znovunájdienie tvorivej slobody? Pokusy o postmoderné rozprávanie v slovenskom hranom filme deväťdesiatych rokov. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 18, no. 2 (2014), pp. 106-118.

free from the apparent anticommunism which was typical of several cinematic films of the transition era, TV production of this period developed a stable tradition of skeptical approaches to the process of wild implementation of (neo)liberalism and its negative impact on everyday life for both ordinary people and cultural elites. We can see this in early post-November family dramas like *Adam and Anna*, in some youth films like *The Only One*, and in a majority of psychological dramas dealing with the economic crisis and its impact on crises of traditional partnerships over a two-decade long period (e.g. *Čajová šálka lásky – A Teacup of Love*, 2000, dir. Pavol Gejdoš). Although it was more conservative in adopting alternative modes of storytelling, new topics and genres, as well as new, more liberal life values, television live-action production remained more consistently open to the current problems of transforming society such as corruption, poverty, crime, and the general crisis of fidelity in interpersonal relationships. It, however, also remained more straightforward (and simple) in their formulation (in contrast, for example, with the fragmentary, ironic, and metaphorical narration of Martin Šulík's films, or the elements of magical realism and 1960's performativity in Jakubisko's *Better to be Rich and Healthy...*). This was partly possible due to the short, yet relatively broad public debate about television,³¹ which was obviously still fruitful, at least in the sense that, from the very beginning of its development in the post-socialist condition, the production of TV films intuitively adopted the idea of television as public service – in contrast with cinema which chaotically oscillated between a more or less (un)successful search for autonomous art forms and more or less (un)successful attempts on commercial successes.

In this context, it is no doubt symptomatic that during the first years after the November revolution, films for children and youth in particular formed one of the most dominant parts of television live-action production. Most of them were produced as educational, psychological or historical dramas about growing up by the Main Department of Films for Children and Youth (Hlavná redakcia programov pre deti a mládež). Together with fairy tales and psychological dramas for adults, these films were probably envisioned as a relatively safe way of entering the new social and political era and dominated the production precisely in times of the most frequent clashes between various ideologies.

³¹ Compare with MISTRÍKOVÁ, Zuzana – ZMEČEK, Andrej (Eds.). *Mediálna ročenka – Slovensko 1990-2000*, p. 11.

Most of them were not aimed to challenge artistic norms but a few of them, at least, experimented with references to arthouse cinema (e. g. *Zuzanka Hraškovie* offers a unique interpretation of Pavol Orságh Hviezdoslav's classic ballade while resembling the poetic narrative style of the golden era of Slovak television film from the 1960s). However, most of the production of the mentioned department remained in line with the dramaturgical plans of the previous period, preferring educational and ethical issues,³² aimed to warn the youth about the decadence of a too-liberal and alienated world, as well as to strengthen awareness about traditional family values. *Anorexia mentalis*, for example, is a psycho-social portrayal of the evolution of a relatively new type of disease warning about its relapse, while the adaptation of a popular youth novel *The Only One* refers to a corrupted school system, the dangers of parental divorces, and infidelity in partner relationships.

Films of this kind were made also in other production departments; the video film *Adam and Anna*, which depicted a tragicomic existential battle of an unemployed former actress taking care of her grandson abandoned by both of his parents, was, for example, made by Production Center of Artistic Programs (Producentenské centrum umeleckých programov). The film refers to various problems of current society: the "entertainisation" of television, the rise of unemployment and poverty, the loss of trust in the new post-revolution government (the heroine, as the symbolic *vox populi*, suspects the ministers of corruption), or betrayed expectations from opening of the borders (in this case, a young boy dreams about return of his ex-patriate mother, who never shows up).

The skeptical approach to the liberation of social and ethical norms prevails even in 1995 when one of the last youth films appears: *Iba taká hra* (*Just a Game*, dir. Vladimír Fisher) which depicts the story of a boy, negatively impacted by slot gaming machines after moving to the capital city.

However, some of films intended for youth also tried to capitalize on commercially successful cinematic titles. This is the case of *A Rosy Story* following popular youth films like Dušan Rapoš's *Fontána pre Zuzanu* (*Fountain for Suzanne*, 1985) and Jaroslav Soukup's *Discopříběh* (*Discostory*, 1987). On the other hand, many of the youth TV films featured

³² See *Československá televize – Ideově tématický plán na rok 1987/1988* [Czechoslovak Television – the thematic and ideological plan for 1987/1988]. Available at the Archive of Slovak Television, Bratislava.

ideologically-ambivalent attempts at fusing stories for youth with elements of ethno-political myth (e.g. an allusion to waking from a thousand-year sleep in *A Rosy Story*, or the allusion to Ján Hus and both Czech and Slovak myths of martyrdom in Rapoš's story about early Christians, *Dido*).

Regardless of the intensity of moral message or skepticism about current society, the importance given to production for children and youth in the years 1989-1992 is not just proven by the fact that most of them were shot on classical film stock (not only the visually extraordinary *A Rosy Story* with an attractive combination of story about rising star and fairy tale about Sleeping Beauty, but also the historical biopic *Variations of Fame*, the poetic ballade *Zuzanka Hraškovie*, the peculiarly ambivalent *Dido*, or the moralistic *The Only One*).

Nevertheless, already in 1993, the Main Department of Films for Children and Youth was dismissed, which meant a practical end for children's and youth film. After *Just a Game*, as the sole and last exception, films for youth and children were completely replaced by video fairy tale films. Usually low-budget, based on lower-quality scripts, dramaturgically amateurish, and featuring naïve renditions of video tricks and SFX, these were often produced by private studios and remarkably contrasted with some of the television films from the beginning of 1990s – like fairy-tale-inspired Jakubisko's *Rosy Story* – which were still comparable with the high professional standards of the 1980's Slovak-German fairy tale cinema co-productions.³³

While films for children and youth completely disappeared from Slovak cinema until recently, television production resisted this phenomenon, at least, during the first years of the transformational period. Thanks to replacement of films for children with low-quality video fairy tales, television production, however, proves the basic change of the discourse in which the children and youth audience is neglected and underestimated. Unlike cinema, which had to wait for the official formulation of films for a youth audience as one of the priorities of national financial support from the Slovak Audiovisual Fund (Audiovizuálny fond, AVF),³⁴

³³ This includes fairy tales like Jakubisko's cult film *Perinbaba* (*Lady Winter*, 1985), Hollý's *Sol' nad zlato* (*Salt More than Gold*, 1982), Luther's *Král Drozdia brada* (*The King Blackbird*, 1984), Herz's *Galoše šťastia* (*The Galoshes of Fortune*, 1986), and Ťapák's *Plavčík a Vratko* (*Plavčík and Vratko*, 1981) and *Popolvár najväčší na svete* (*Popolvár, the Gratest in the World*, 1982).

³⁴ The first results of this "dramaturgical" strategy of Slovak Audiovisual Fund (established in 2009) appeared no earlier than 2014, with three fairy tales released during

television production offers much earlier evidence of the need for change: the family film *Amálka, I Will Go Crazy* (*Amálka, ja sa zbláznim*, 2000, dir. Eva Borušovičová), which, in line with earlier *A Rosy Story*, capitalized on the presence of popular music and colourful pictures infused with almost cinematic qualities while offering a simple story of familial love between an elder sister getting married and her smart-yet-jealous, younger brother. *Amálka, I Will Go Crazy* is the second film by Eva Borušovičová, who entered Slovak cinema with a feminine version of Šulík's famous 1995 film *Záhrada – The Garden* (i.e. *Modré z neba – Blue Heaven*, 1997), but continued within a completely different style (after *Amálka*... as an excursion to TV production, she helped to establish the new cinematic trend of "urban lifestyle film" with her *Vadí nevadí – Truth or Dare*, 2001), proving she had an ambition to fill major gaps of domestic filmic discourse. Nevertheless, her single attempt at film for children didn't foster any further changes in the development of national television.

1993: STORIES ABOUT TOTALITARIANISM

During 1993, together with the dismissal of the Main Department of Films For Children And Youth – and in contrast with its relatively "safe" yet socially critical production – Slovak Television offered also a sudden (albeit extremely short-lived) emergence of allegorical stories referring to totalitarianism. In cinema, films about totalitarianism emerged and disappeared earlier, and performed a completely different set of (anti-communist) ideological patterns and genres (mostly the aforementioned historical and/or psychological dramas about communism),³⁵ while never (or very rarely) referring to continuities between the contemporary social and political environment and the communist one. On the contrary, within one or two years of television production, we

2014 and 2015 (one of them made as minority co-production with Czech Republic): *Láska na vlásku* (2014, *Love in Your Soul*, dir. Mariana Čengel-Solčanská), *Johankino tajomstvo* (*Johanka's Secret*, 2015, dir. Juraj Nvota) and *Sedem zhavranelých bratov / Sedmero krkavců* (*Seven Ravens*, 2015) by Czech director Alice Nellis.

³⁵ Martin Hollý's *The Right for the Past* (1989), Dušan Trančík's *When the Stars Were Red* (1989), Juraj Bindzár's *Okresné blues* (*District Blues*, 1990), Martin Šulík's *Tenderness* (1991).

can find a wide range of topics and genres related to depiction of totalitarianism and referring not only to communism but to dangers of new forms of totalitarian regimes as well. Already in 1992, an adaptation of Eugène Ionesco's absurd drama about dying king was released under the title *Kráľ umiera* (*The King is Dying*, dir. Yvonne Vavrová). During 1993, 5 out of 8 films longer than 55 minutes were related to analyses of totalitarian power,³⁶ one of them referring to a distant past (a historical film about the Inquisition *Hon na čarodejnice – Witch Hunt*, dir. Martin Kákoš), one to the political persecutions of the early 1950s (*Príbeh Mateja Hózu – The Story Of Matej Hóza*, dir. Peter Mikulík), and the other three referring to the nature of the power, allegorically related to contemporary social and political circumstances: *Posledný cocktail* (*The Last Cocktail*, dir. Miloslav Luther) based on the Sławomir Mrożek's play *Ambassador* (*The Ambassador*), a thriller about the continuing impacts of the dark communist past (*Prípad na vidieku – The Countryside Case*, dir. Stanislav Párnický), and a drama about interviewing a minister (*K.O.*, dir. Ľuba Velecká), based on the Terence Rattigan play *Heart to Heart*. Most of these films allude to similarities between historical or imaginary totalitarian regimes and the current political dangers in the country.

This tendency, perhaps most expected from the Slovak post-socialist cinema and television in general, proved to be short-lived mostly due to the clash of political and ideological ideas within Slovak Television's constantly changing organisational structures. We can even speculate about linking its speedy demise – practically immediately after it had emerged – with the establishment of Vladimír Mečiar's power in 1992. Besides these speculations (which would certainly require more investigation regarding the political impacts on the constantly changing dramaturgical efforts in Slovak Television), one thing remains clear: through their strong relation to the contemporary society and political environment, the television films of 1992-1993 are not only different when compared with dominant types of narratives on totalitarianism in cinema, but they also emerge in a different period.

In fact, Slovak *cinematic* production is often seen as lacking profound criticism of totalitarian regimes. In the period between 1989 and 1992, some authors resort to reflecting on the impacts of communism – with rare exceptions referring to pre-war totalitarianism,³⁷ but their critique

³⁶ *Filmová ročenka 1990-1999, časť 2 – Film Yearbook 1990-1999, part 2*, pp. 197-200.

³⁷ See Miloslav Luther's *Chodník cez Dunaj* (*A Path Across the Danube*, 1989).

do not involve “straightforward ‘revolutionary’ anticommunism”³⁸ nor a radical critique of the society or analyses of political circumstances – they are, as the authors of *The History of Slovak Cinema* state, rather built up as stories about individuals psychologically and morally destroyed by the authoritarian system.³⁹ Later on, references to communism are replaced by other topics, so that the only critical approaches to totalitarianism remain the much later solitary projects on the Holocaust⁴⁰ or Juraj Nvota's conventional attempts at popular nostalgic narratives about the end of the 1968 Prague Spring and the following period of so called “Normalisation” (*Muzika – Music*, 2007; *ešteBák – Confidant*, 2011; and *Rukojemník – Hostage*, 2014).⁴¹

In this sense, TV live-action production once again features seemingly higher interest in public life, which corresponds with its ideal function as a relatively independent public institution. The massive emergence but quick disappearance of tendency to analyze authoritarian or totalitarian power, however, appears (once again) quite symptomatic.

BEFORE AND AFTER 1992: AWAKENING OF THE NATION

In films produced for cinema, the topic of national identity quickly found itself in covert opposition to the Mečiar's authoritarian regime that came to power in 1992, with general dominance of an ironic atti-

³⁸ MACEK, Václav – PAŠTÉKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*, p. 490.

³⁹ Ibid..

⁴⁰ Starting with a melodramatic take on the topic in *Všetci moji blízki* (*All My Loved Ones*, 1999) by the director Matej Mináč (who continued in recycling the same topic within documentary cinema), and continuing ten years later by *Nedoržaný sľub* (*Broken Promise*, 2009, dir. Jiří Chlumský) and another five years later by *V tichu* (*In Silence*, 2014, dir. Zdeněk Jiráský).

⁴¹ The situation is different in documentary cinema, where the interest in (anti)communism or the totalitarian Slovak Republic (1939-1945) appears sporadically, but in different times: firstly in Dušan Hanák's *Papierové hlavy* (*Paper Heads*, 1995), and later in films like Robert Kirchhoff's *Kauza Cervanová* (*Normalisation*, 2013 – suggesting the continuity between legal procedures common for both the 1970s and the present), Ivan Ostrochovský's controversial *Garda* (*Guard*, 2015) about Hlinka guardists of fascist Slovak Republic, or the mannerist *Zamatoví teroristi* (*Velvet Terrorists*, 2013, dir. Peter Kerekes – Ivan Ostrochovský – Pavol Pekarčík) about post-socialist disillusion of three former anticommunist rebels.

tude to national symbols and a doubtful attitude to the very essence of the nation.⁴² Most of these films that put the national myth into question involved innovative ways of (mostly fragmentary) storytelling and elements of postmodern aesthetics – and most of them were made by new generation of debutants.⁴³ The only film made by an older director which fits the description above is, in fact, Juraj Jakubisko's *Better to be Rich and Healthy than Poor and Sick* which combines its basic story with ultimately actual references to the rise of nationalism shortly before the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, Slovak cinematic production of the 1990s witnessed also emergence of popular films by Dušan Rapoš and their peculiar combination of fostering multicultural and inter-ethnic friendship together with the symbolical "Slovakisation" of "the Others."⁴⁴

With regard to TV production, the situation is, nevertheless, much more complicated. Some would suppose that TV films' portfolio would include more films promoting nationalistic rhetoric, at least during the Vladimír Mečiar era (1992-1998, with a short pause during 1994). However, the investment in national identity already began before 1989. One of the most expensive television projects of post-socialist times was a TV series about the famous generation of Slovak revivalists, *Štúrovci* (1991), the preparation of which started long before the "Velvet Revolution." Just like this TV series, most of the post-November TV films dealing with the topic of the nation are classically narrated, romanticized biographies or individual and group portraits of national heroes, revivalists, or intellectuals. The emphasis is often placed on the battle against Magyarisation (e.g. in a film about the last days of

⁴² The collection of films with an ironic attitude to the nation includes the debuts by Martin Šulík (*Tenderness*), Štefan Semjan (*Na krásnom modrom Dunaji – On the Beautiful Blue Danube*, 1994) and Miroslav Šindelka (*Vášnivý bozk – Passionate Kiss*, 1994), as well as the second and the third of Šulík's films (*Všetko čo mám rád – Everything I Like*, 1992, and *The Garden*).

⁴³ On the contrary, TV films of the same period were directed mostly by authors from the middle generation (since the last generation of debutants in television emerged towards the end of 1980s – compare with MACEK, Václav – PAŠTĚKOVÁ, Jelena. *Dejiny slovenskej kinematografie*, p. 469 and onwards).

⁴⁴ This is most obvious when we draw our attention on a character played by an expatriate from Mali, a singer and dancer Ibrahim Maiga. Rapoš introduces this character in the second (1993) and third sequel (1999) of his *Fountain for Suzanne*, gives him ironical name Vápno (Lime) and makes him repeat various declarations about his "Slovak" identity – including wearing a Slovak national costume and dancing a Slovak national dance on his African wedding.

folk art collector Pavol Dobšinský, *Zlatá podkova, zlaté pero, zlatý vlas – Golden Horseshoe, Golden Pen, Golden Hair*, 1997, dir. Vladimír Fischer). Many films also employ the topic of personal sacrifice: after all, the importance of such sacrifice appeared already in aforementioned *Dido*, a youth film which refers to the parallel between (the people's) revolutions run "from below" and the national awakening. But there are no explicit examples of fostering the nationalistic rhetoric after the establishment of Mečiar's government: the only film that could be explicitly linked with political dominance of "Mečiar's" people is monumentally martyric story about medieval prince Pribina (*Knieža – Prince*, 1998, dir. Martin Kákoš), script of which was written by contemporary Minister of Culture in Mečiar's government, Ivan Hudec.

On the other hand – and in contrast with films about past martyrs – the national topic in films about the present appears through critical voices just as it appears in films for cinema. A television satire referring to B-movies and pop-cultural phenomena *Baščovanský a zať* (*Baščovanský and Son-in-Law*, 1994, dir. Tomáš Krnáč) offers a depiction of a "common man" who uses the newly acquired democracy to achieve personal benefits. The topic of national awakening is impersonated mainly by a local politician Jánoš. Riding his bicycle around the village and visiting his potential voters, Jánoš (whose name sounds undoubtedly Hungarian) doesn't hesitate to switch from a radically nationalistic "Slovak" program to an alternative version defending the rights of national minorities. He possesses both of them in his briefcase and replace one with another immediately after he meets a bunch of Roma musicians at Baščovanský's car-service station. The film offers a reading of national awakening as a mere political commodity deprived of a faith in a positive essence.

Another example of ironical attitude is *Lúpež dejín* (*Historical Bank Robbery*, 1995, dir. Ľuba Velecká). Here, the legend of a local Robin Hood – the "Slovak" brigand Jánošík and his group⁴⁵ – is adapted into a contemporary story about a group of hackers who manage to rob the world's largest banks and transfer their money to accounts of Slovak citizens. The film offers a possibility to be read as a story of a small nation's battle against an imperial power, and at the same time it balances between criticism of the wild privatization of 1990s, political satire and

⁴⁵ The brigand Juraj Jánošík is a semi-legendary character in both Slovak and Polish cultural traditions.

the glorification of national pride, with a rather cynical “happy” ending, wherein the national court exonerates the thieves.

Featuring very clumsy dramaturgy, dialogues and acting, and ideologically ambivalent, *Historical bank robbery* is, thus, also an example of another tendency that becomes prominent during the first years after 1989 – a tendency to involve mutually-contradictory discourses in order to avoid a clear ideological message. We can consider this as a consequence of the dependency on decision-making authorities while still faced with turbulent ideological battles, both in the public sphere and within public television’s own organisational structures. Not surprisingly, the heterogeneity already appears in some youth films trying to transcend regular discourse about growing up while alluding to the historical moment of westernisation and democratisation as well as of liberating or even “decolonising” of the nation: like in Rapoš’s *Dido* (with its story about early Christians involving references to heterogeneous historical phenomena: socialist movements, emancipation of women, national martyr figures like Hus and Palach, and liberation from a decadent imperial power),⁴⁶ or in Jakubisko’s *Rosy Story* (with its combination of romance, health-and-sexual-education narrative about rising star facing her first period, and references to both the famous fairy tale and the national myth about an awakening from a thousand-year sleep).

DOMINANT: SOCIAL DRAMA?

After a wild beginning of 1990s, when multiple tendencies appeared and disappeared, and when the safety of classically narrated fairy tales, historical, family or youth films alternated with parables about the nature of power but also with the heterogeneity of unclear and ambivalent messages (sometimes masked by emergence of the so called postmodern mixture of styles, values and cultural codes), the relative stabilisation of political regime finally led to re-establishing of conservative psychological and family drama as dominant genres of Slovak

⁴⁶ The film thus appears almost as an utopian attempt to fuse national, socialist, and feminist issues while at the same time offering a possibility to be read as an allusion to liberation from the hegemony of the Soviet Union.

television film. As I have already elaborated elsewhere,⁴⁷ most of TV dramas made after 1989 promote traditional Christian and middle class values together with universal Humanist values, which, however, shield them from the xenophobia, populism, and nationalism often present in the contemporary public political life. Most of them are also socially attentive even when dealing with lifestyles of cultural elites, but also very conservative stylistically as well as in the values they promote. When compared with contemporary cinematic films about partnership and family crises, they are, nevertheless, more open to social interaction: instead of choosing heterotopic, idyllic or hypermodern spaces isolated and isolating from social and historical bonds with community,⁴⁸ the TV psychological dramas usually stress the importance of communal life. Even if they draw attention to the isolation of families / lovers in crises (a topic that some of them share with contemporary cinematic films), they are most often placed within city flats, offering different opportunities of escape. In several films, characters facing conflicts wander around city streets and recover from their crises while interacting with random people of various social backgrounds (e.g. *Dlhá krátka noc – A Long Short Night*, 2003, dir. Peter Krištúfek; *A Teacup of Love*), while in the others, at least a basic awareness about the contrasts between the life within the flat and life in the city streets is offered (*Klietka – Cage*, 2000, dir. Stanislav Párnický). Thus, the TV production of the 1990s differs remarkably from the trends which became dominant in cinema, beginning with the “garden” films set within isolated family residencies

⁴⁷ DUDKOVÁ, Jana. Slovak Television Film after 1989: Between Social Drama and Popular Genres. In *Slovenské divadlo*, vol. 63, special issue (2015), pp. 61-72.

⁴⁸ I wrote more about the relation between the typology of Slovak cinematic spaces after 1989 and the notion of collective (communal or national) identity in DUDKOVÁ, Jana. Between the Center and the Margin: The Notion of Central Europe in Slovak Cinema after 1989. In *Illuminace: The Journal of Film Theory, History and Aesthetics*, vol. 25, no. 4 (2013), pp. 79-94 (especially the section “From Irony to Cynicism: From Gardens to Non-Places”, *Ibid.*, pp. 82-87). See also DUDKOVÁ, Jana. The Problematic Other and the (Im)possibility of Cross-Cultural Dialogue in Slovak Cinema after 1993. In HANÁKOVÁ, Petra – JOHNSON, Kevin B. (Eds.). *Visegrad Cinema. Points of Contact from the New Waves to the Present*. Prague: Casablanca – KFS FF UK, 2010, pp. 109-129.

in the countryside⁴⁹ and ending with ultramodern urban films set within posh cafés or shopping centers.⁵⁰

The social attentiveness of these films is also a kind of invisible predecessor for the most recent trend of Slovak “festival” dramas. Let us remind ourselves that minimalistic “social dramas” were recognized by domestic critics as the most prominent genre of Slovak cinema only after 2012, especially since the international festival release of film *Až do mesta Aš (Made in Ash, 2012, dir. Iveta Grófová)*.⁵¹ However, the need for social drama began to be formulated much earlier as a reaction to the isolationism of Slovak cinematic films. Already by 2005 the first attempts in the genre appeared, with Martin Šulík’s *Slnecný štát (The City of the Sun)* and Zuzana Liová’s TV debut *Ticho (Silence)*. The two films were followed several years later by Mira Fornay’s debut *Líštičky (Foxes, 2009)*, which, however, gained quite negative response from domestic critics and despite international successes still didn’t foster the rise of new narrative on Slovak cinema.

Despite the fact it was made for television, Liová’s film clearly reflects on the demand for a more realistic portrayal of regional economic decline within cinema. While involving an exceptionally concentrated storytelling that draws from newer trends of arthouse cinema, it is more a reaction to the status of contemporary Slovak cinema, and even a foreboding of its future trends, than an example of continuity with psychological TV dramas of the period.

⁴⁹ For more than ten years, the tendency to lock the stories into isolated countryside family residences dominated – starting in mid-1990s with Martin Šulík’s *Garden* and Eva Borušovičová’s *Blue Heaven*, and continuing with Laura Siváková’s *Quartéto (2002)*, Peter Bebjak’s *Marhuľový ostrov (Apricot Island, 2011)*, or Mariana Čengel-Solčanská’s *Miluj ma alebo odíď (Love Me or Leave Me, 2013)*.

⁵⁰ Besides the aforementioned tendency, at the beginning of the new millennium some filmmakers also chose modern or hypermodern urban settings. We witness this tendency in Vlado Adásek’s *Hana a jej bratia (Hannah and Her Brothers, 2001)*, Eva Borušovičová’s *Truth or Dare*, Miro Šindelka’s *Zostane to medzi nami (It Will Stay Between Us, 2003)*, or Vlado Fischer’s *Polčas rozpadu (Half Breakdown, 2007)*, but also in several other “urban lifestyle” films.

⁵¹ See URBAN, Marek. *Sociálne reprezentácie v diskurze slovenských filmových profesionálov v rokoch 2012-2014*, p. 72 and onwards.

CONCLUSION

We can see that some of the tendencies which became desired among film professionals at the beginning of the millennium, and appreciated among journalists several years later, were actually quite present in the portfolio of TV films. On one hand, the portfolio of TV films challenges the narrative on Slovak cinema while fostering topics and genres which were absent in cinematic production in the long-run, but very present in live-action production for television (with fairy tales and socially-sensitive psychological dramas as the most obvious examples, both of them among the most stable genres of TV film that appear over the entire quarter of the century, and both of them completely absent in cinematic production until the last few years).

On the other hand, perception of the deficiencies of production for cinema retrospectively influences the TV production itself, which we could see not only at the example of Liová’s TV debut *Silence* but, more recently, also in two cycles of TV films released during 2010 and 2011: *Filmoviedky (Film-Stories)* and *Nesmrteľní (Immortals)*, both of them trying to introduce relatively new types of popular filmic genres into television production.⁵² Both cycles were reactions to the rapid decrease in production due to the economic decline of Slovak Television at the beginning of new millennium (during 2002-2009, only 1 or 2 feature-length live-action TV films were made annually, which is equivalent to the number of films produced for cinema during the period of its greatest crisis 1992-2002).

Following this slump, the programming structure has started to focus more on the feature-length live-action format only after the so-called “Contract with the State” was signed,⁵³ the goal of which was the legislative amendment of conditions allowing for increasing state support for original TV programs, including the goal of following the functions of public service and developing the national cultural heritage.⁵⁴ Thus, as an extremely speedy reaction, the cycle of *Immortals* reflected on the abandoned tradition of TV adaptations which, in the socialist era,

⁵² I already wrote more about the two series in DUDKOVÁ, Jana. *Slovak Television Film after 1989*, pp. 67-72. The following text departs from this study.

⁵³ The “Contract” signed at the end of 2009 came into effect only on 1 January 2010 – see the footnote no. 12.

⁵⁴ See the Preamble of the “Contract”, <file:///C:/Users/VEGA/Downloads/zmluva-so-statom-preambula-stv.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2015].

managed to fuse the ideas about artistic refinement, social engagement, and at the same time audience popularity (the aforementioned tradition incorporated in regular broadcasting of “Bratislava’s Television Mondays”). It brought works of world and Slovak literature to a contemporary audience, but “translated” the original stories into contemporary Slovak settings. On the other hand, modes of storytelling and the choice of genres in the series’ individual films stemmed from the demands formulated within the professional community of filmmakers, therefore some films came ahead of new trends that were being introduced to the national cinematic production only year or two later: e.g. Róbert Šveda’s *Fejs* (2010) – an adaptation of Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* – fuses the genre of romance with elements of popular youth subcultures and offers an effective genre hybrid which can be regarded as, professionally, quite an unusually-mature predecessor of the amateurish *Lóve* (dir. Jakub Króner, 2011), a cinematic hit released one year later.

The *Film-stories* cycle had similar ambitions of revival, and introduced seven individual films during the years 2010-2011.⁵⁵ Both cycles focused on establishing a complex generational, genre, and thematic diversity. The rapid process of project development and production led to a set of qualitatively very uneven films which failed also in terms of audience ratings. On the other hand, both cycles offered examples of popular genre hybrids a bit earlier than they appear in Slovak cinema. The first cinematic attempt at a romantic film for young audience (Jakub Króner’s *Lóve*) was released only in 2011. At the same time, Slovak cinema witnessed a trend inspired by suspense and horror genres, which consisted mainly of horror films (*Attonitas*, 2012, dir. Jaroslav Mottl; *Zlo – Evil*, 2012, dir. Peter Bebjak) but also included other genres, even an am-

⁵⁵ Namely, *Dušičky seniorov* (*Halloween of Seniors*, dir. Stanislav Párnický), *Nočný trezor* (*Night-Time Safe Deposit*, dir. Karol Vosátko), *Zradení* (*Betrayed*, dir. Martin Kákoš), *Evi-na križová cesta – Náhradná matka* (*Eva’s Calvary – Surrogate Mother*, dir. Yvonne Vavrová), *Obhliadka* (*Field Inspection*, dir. Mariana Čengel Solčanská), *Olé, zápražka* (*Olé, Roux*, dir. Jozef Banyák) and *Výstrel navyše* (*One More Shot*, dir. Ján Stračina).

Within the same period from 2010 to 2011, a total of yet another 10 films were produced and premiered on television as a part of the *Immortals* cycle: *Diabol* (*Devil*, dir. Roman Polák), *Dlhá cesta domov* (*Long Road Home*, dir. Katarína Ďurovičová), *Ena B.* (dir. Ladislav Halama), *Fejs* (dir. Róbert Šveda), *Hon na legendu* (*Hunt for a Legend*, dir. Stanislav Párnický), *Kontrola* (*Inspection*, dir. Viktor Csudai), *Kvety a Lucia* (*Flowers and Lucia*, dir. Stanislav Párnický), *Lúbi neľúbi* (*Loves Me, Loves Me Not*, dir. Róbert Šveda), *Náramok* (*Bracelet*, dir. Emil Horváth Jr.), and *Projekt Alfa* (*Project Alpha*, dir. Karol Vosátko).

ateurish attempt at a mystery sci-fi *Immortalitas* (2012, dir. Erik Bošňák). By contrast, *Film-stories* and *Immortals* introduced both genre varieties at least one or two years earlier.⁵⁶

It is, perhaps, not as much the result of generational differences between representatives of the authorial professions working predominantly in television and in cinema, but also the relative invisibility of live-action TV production – and its relative lack of prestige – in the eyes of film historians, critics and film professionals, that led (together with different sets of social functions expected from cinematic and public TV release) to emergence of parallel – seemingly similar, but not overlapping paths of Slovak cinematic and TV films.

Nevertheless, this invisibility – and even continuing negative perception⁵⁷ – of Slovak television film is, despite of real qualities of singular television (as well as cinematic) projects – one of the most challenging spheres of research that emerges in front of domestic film scholars.

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⁵⁶ On the other hand, both varieties were present already in the Slovak TV series produced since the second half of 2000s by private ones as well as by the public television: e.g. the romance was present in the family series like *Panelák* (*The Block of Flats*, 2008-2015, produced by TV JOJ), while suspense and horror were present in several series based on true or fictional criminal cases (*Mesto tieňov – The City of Shadows*, 2008-2012, produced by TV Markíza, or two series of *Kriminálka Staré mesto – The Old Town CSI*, 2010 and 2013, produced by public Slovak television).

⁵⁷ In his dissertation on social representations of the notion of Slovak film, Marek Urban concludes that the notion of television (film) was still (and quite despite its reviving tendencies) perceived extremely negatively among all chosen groups (film critics writing on Slovak films in the period 2012-2014, professionals evaluating live-action projects for Slovak Audiovisual Fund, and students of directing and of dramaturgy and screenwriting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava). URBAN, Marek. *Sociálne reprezentácie v diskurze slovenských filmových profesionálov v rokoch 2012-2014*, p. 203 and onwards.

THE REAL STORY: INDEXING STRATEGIES OF SLOVAK SOCIAL FILM DRAMAS

Katarína Mišíková

In the past quarter-century, Slovak cinema has been undergoing fundamental changes, however, only recently have these manifested positively in formation of more consistent aesthetic trends, one of them being the trend labelled as social film drama. This rather stylistically heterogenous body of films has been treated as a genre by some film critics and scholars (including myself); however, several filmmakers and film scholars have questioned social drama as a distinct genre. Jana Dudková, for example, notes, that “[...] it is rather a tendency to establish similar kind of relationship between the local and the global and similar choice of distribution channels and target, mainly festival, audience.”² This claim implies a fixed concept of genre as a canon, but at the same time, suggests that generic concept of social drama is the result of effort to “[...] group together common elements into a single generic model.”³ Hence, it is mainly a critical construct. This paper sets out to examine common denominators of several recent Slovak fiction

¹ MIŠÍKOVÁ, Katarína. Hľadanie žánru. In MIŠÍKOVÁ, Katarína – FERENČUHOVÁ, Mária (Eds.). *Nový slovenský film. Produkčné, estetické, distribučné a kritické východiská*. Bratislava: Vysoká škola múzických umení v Bratislave, 2015, pp. 9-36. The term “social drama” was used in large number of reviews on fiction debuts of documentary filmmakers, e.g. FERENČUHOVÁ, Mária. Rok sociálnych drám. In *Kinečko*, vol. 3, no. 12 (2012), p. 7; SMEJKAL, Pavel. Lásky jednej plavovlásky. In *Film.sk*, vol. 13, no. 10 (2012), p. 28-29; SOTÁKOVÁ, Zuzana. Náš film, ktorý láka na realitu. In *Hospodárske noviny*, 17 September 2012, <<http://style.hnonline.sk/kultura-135/recenzia-nas-film-ktory-laka-na-realitu-518561>> [accessed 15 October 2016]; MIŠÍKOVÁ, Katarína. Hommo economicus v ohrození. In *Kinečko*, vol. 4, no. 14 (2013), p. 15; FAJNEROVÁ, Lucia. Záznaky sa vraj nedejú. In *Pravda*, 8 September 2013, <<http://kultura.pravda.sk/film-a-televizia/clanok/292221-recenzia-zazraky-sa-vraj-nedeju/>> [accessed 15 October 2016]; KREKOVIČ, Miloš. Prečo je na Slovensku sociálna dráma nadávkou? In *Denník N*, 19 March 2015, <<https://dennikn.sk/75337/socialne-dramy/>> [accessed 15 October 2016].

² DUDKOVÁ, Jana. Medzi minulosťou a prítomnosťou. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 20, no. 2 (2015), p. 55.

³ Ibid.

films which can be summed up by the term of social realism. I will analyze the similar ways in which filmmakers of Slovak social film dramas index their films in order to emphasize their relation to the actual world and examine narrative and stylistic variations of social realism.

Although beginnings of the social film drama trend can be traced back to the turn of the millenium, the label has been predominantly tied to the fiction film debuts by the documentary filmmakers known as Generation 90.⁴ The positive critical appraisal of Generation 90’s documentaries stems partly from their success on the international festival circuit, and partly from opposition to two main fiction trends around the millennial turn, called the “hanging garden films”⁵ and “lifestyle urban films.”⁶ While these two trends are usually perceived as antagonistic, they share, as a subject, their protagonists’ quest for identity via a creative milieu that focuses on intergenerational and romantic relations, social escapism, and renouncement of direct representation of social issues.⁷ On the other hand, documentaries of the Generation 90 introduced current issues such as economic transformation, multiculturalism, globalisation, politics, disadvantaged social groups, etc. Although these documentaries form a rather stylistically heterogenous group, they are dominated by the interactive and performative mode of representation,⁸ and deploy staging devices, thus blurring the line between reality and fiction.

The screenwriter of several of these documentaries, Marek Leščák, was the co-writer of emblematic esoteric film *Záhrada* (*The Garden*, 1995),

⁴ This term was first coined by influential film critic Pavel Branko to describe common characteristics of works by Jaroslav Vojtek, Peter Kerekes, Marko Škop, Robert Kirchoff, Juraj Lehotský and Zuzana Piussi. BRANKO, Pavel. Generácia 90. In *Film.sk*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2004), <http://old.filmsk.sk/show_article.php?id=2013> [accessed 15 March 2016].

⁵ This term was first coined by Zuzana Tatárová and referred to the trend inspired by Martin Šulík’s films such as *Záhrada* (*The Garden*, 1995). TATÁROVÁ, Zuzana. Visuté záhrady Slovenska. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 2, no. 4 (1998), pp. 75-76.

⁶ This term was first coined by Juraj Malíček in his review of the film by Katarína Šulajová *O dve slabiky pozadu* (*Two Syllables Behind*, 2004). MALÍČEK, Juraj. Pop po domácky. In *Slovo*, vol. 7, no. 9 (2005), p. 16. Later it was introduced to historical discourse on Slovak cinema by Martin Šmatlák. ŠMATLÁK, Martin. Hľadanie vlastnej cesty. In *Kino-Ikon*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2008), pp. 135-147.

⁷ MIŠÍKOVÁ, Katarína. O generačnej mimoreči. In PTÁČEK, Luboš (Ed.). *Současný český a slovenský film – pluralita estetických, kulturních a ideových konceptů*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci, 2010, pp. 17-33.

⁸ As described by Bill Nichols in NICHOLS, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.

directed by Martin Šulík. Together they paved the way for change from fantastic realism towards social realism in their film *Slniečny štát* (*The City of the Sun*, 2005). The story is set in the industrial Moravian city of Ostrava and introduced working class characters instead of artists and dandies, the sombre reality of industrial landscape instead of isolated rural houses or hypermodern urban locations, and a story fueled by the struggle for economical survival instead of esoteric fantasies or psychological drama. Soon, other directors followed this same path. In *Návrat bocianov* (*Return of the Storks*, 2007), Martin Repka combined several characteristics of the “hanging gardens” trend with an interest in social phenomena. The story of a young woman, who abandons her life and love in Germany in order to discover her family roots in rural Slovakia, is set in similarly isolated area as previous “hanging gardens” films. However, several episodes of the narrative are tied to current issues such as unemployment, human trafficking, the relationship of post-socialist countries to the European Union, etc. On the other hand, *Malé oslavy* (*Small Celebrations*, 2008) by Zdeněk Tyc is set in urban locations, but primarily examines the relationship between a mother and a daughter from an economically unstable background. This realistic turn in Slovak cinema coincided with influences of realistic arthouse cinema from Dogma 95, to British social dramas, the Dardenne brothers’ films, Romanian New Wave and New Hungarian Cinema. Only after the Slovak Audiovisual Fund (Audiovizuálny fond – AVF, as the institution responsible for the systematic support of domestic cinema) was founded in 2009 and its priorities were repeatedly set on subjects of minorities and underprivileged, feature-length films, debuts and low-budget films, did the filmmakers of Generation 90 receive a strong impetus to turn from documentary to the realm of fiction. Their films followed the newly awakened interest of Slovak fiction filmmakers in actual reality, however, in comparison with their predecessors presented somehow more uncompromising stylistic vision of realism.

INDEXING FICTION AND NONFICTION

While the documentaries of Generation 90 used staging devices characteristically found in fiction film, social dramas show a significant in-

fluence from documentaries. For example, the documentary *Zamatoví teroristi* (*Velvet Terrorists*, 2013) by Peter Kerekes, Ivan Ostrochovský and Pavol Pekarčík, which portrays three men convicted of terrorist acts during communism, mixes fictive storyline about a young terrorist trainee with actual events from the life of one of its protagonists. On the other hand, fiction film *Až do mesta Aš* (*Made in Ash*, 2012) by Iveta Grófová features several scenes of observational documentary. In documentary *66 sezón* (*66 seasons*, 2003) by Peter Kerekes, who combined history of public swimming pool in eastern Slovakian city Košice with private history of his family as well as with history of Czechoslovakia, the director’s grandmother in her young age is played by a visitor of local swimming pool. In fiction film *Koza* (2015) by Ivan Ostrochovský former boxing champion Peter Baláž portrays himself. So where does the border between fiction and nonfiction lie?

According to Carl Plantinga “[...] nonfiction discourse asserts, or is taken by the spectator or listener to assert, that the states of affairs it presents occur or occurred in the actual world,” while “[...] on the other hand, a fiction may suggest thematic truths, but it presents particular states of affairs not to assert their occurrence, but to create a narrative fiction – a fictional world.”⁹ The distinction between fiction and nonfiction is, hence, a matter of sociocultural convention and, to a certain extent, depends on the pragmatic use of the film. Plantinga suggests that nonfiction (and fiction) are to be taken as fuzzy concepts that are not defined by a certain essence, but by family resemblances. Their difference “is not based solely on intrinsic textual properties, but also on the extrinsic context of production, distribution, and reception.”¹⁰ Noël Carroll¹¹ proposes the term *indexing* for exploring these extrinsic contexts. Indexing mobilises the viewers’s expectations and attitudes towards films and results in labelling the film either as nonfiction or fiction. In order to stress reference to actual world, social film dramas mix elements of fiction and nonfiction and their filmmakers deploy several indexing strategies, characteristic for nonfiction. Similarly to documentary films, social film dramas present civic initiative as a reflection of

⁹ PLANTINGA, Carl. Rhetoric of Nonfiction Film. In BORDWELL, David – CARROLL, Noël. *Post-Theory. Reconstructing Film Studies*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, p. 310.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ CARROLL, Noël. From Real to Reel: Entangled in the Nonfiction Film. In *Philosophic Exchange*, vol. 14, (winter 1983), pp. 5-45.

social issues, thus cueing the viewers to sympathise or empathise with actual emotions of actual protagonists and eventually overcome various prejudices. So it is a fiction genre, whose impact to a large extent lies in how it succeeds to evoke and validate the impression of authenticity. Plantinga¹² mentions several indexing tools like opening credits, promotion materials, press releases, interviews and intratextual cues that create a social contract between the filmmaker and the discursive community. For example, *Slepé lásky* (*Blind Loves*, 2008) by Juraj Lehotský, which portrays romantic relationships between blind couples, is labelled as a documentary, although all scenes are staged – one of them even in the form of subjective animation sequence. On the other hand, Lehotský's *Zázrak* (*Miracle*, 2013) features several nonfiction elements, but is labelled as fiction. The difference lies in the fact that in *Blind Loves* the protagonists stage their own lives for the camera, while in *Miracle* nonprofessional actors stage completely fictional – although inspired by reality – story. Plantinga explains this difference as a difference between an assertive and a fictive stance. However, Slovak social film dramas mix several indexing strategies, thus evoking a fuzzy divide between nonfiction and fiction. Let us consider three examples.

Cigán (*Gypsy*, 2011) by Martin Šulík is a story of a boy, whose living conditions in Romani settlement determine his tragic fate. According to his own words, Šulík wanted to shoot a film about the Romani community while using Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* as the basis for the plot in order to depict an archetypal moral dilemma in current social context. He selected motifs from reality that would parallel Hamletian motifs. He shot the film on authentic locations with a Romani cast and in dialect. The motif of unavenged murder and ghost of the father remained in the film; however, other motifs were transformed by real events. For example Ophelia was replaced by a girl, whose character derived from the fate of real 17-year old girl, who was repeatedly sold by her parents as a bride to wealthy men. The realistic background of the Hamletian archetype was provided by episodes deriving from media representations of Romani community issues, such as stealing of wood, loan sharks, social benefits, police terror, etc.

Iveta Grófová started to develop the film *Made in Ash* as a documentary about girls from poor background who come to the Czech town of Aš (the symbolic end of post-socialist world) in order to work as seam-

¹² PLANTINGA, Carl. *Rhetoric and Representation in Nonfiction Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

stresses and become prostitutes. Because of potential violation of privacy of protagonists she was not able to depict many events and that is why she decided to cast nonprofessional actors in a narrative that combines nonfiction footage, staged scenes and subjective animated sequences.

Koza by Ivan Ostrochovský was inspired by a documentary the director made as a student. The plot about the tour of a former Olympic boxing champion Peter Baláž, called *Koza* (Goat), is fictional, but is taken from the actual social situation of the main protagonist. Ostrochovský used paradocumentary devices, cast exclusively nonprofessional actors, including the real-life Goat, and shot the film on authentic locations with predominantly static long shots.

Let us first explore production, promotion and distribution indexing strategies of social dramas. Similarly as *Made in Ash* and *Koza*, several social film dramas derived from nonfiction projects. *Miracle*, a story about a girl in a detention centre, is inspired by real-life stories of inmates of similar institutions and by the fate of the main protagonist. One of the stories of film *Deti* (*Children*, 2014) by Jaro Vojtek deals with the relationship of a father to his autistic son and reenacts several scenes from the director's documentary film on autism *Tak ďaleko, tak blízko* (*So Far, So Near*, 2014), which premiered shortly after the fiction film. This connection with real-life stories is also accentuated by the promotional strategies of these stories "written by real life".¹³ The filmmakers of *Ďakujem, dobre* (*Fine, Thanks*, 2013, dir. Mátyás Prikler) state that their writing strategy was to "have a look around."¹⁴ DVD bonuses of film *Miracle* feature footage of casting with its nonprofessional actress, who recounts several events of her life, which were later used in the plot and dialogues. Similarly, the connection between the films and reality is articulated by introducing nonprofessional film stars to film festival audiences by protective filmmakers, who in this way publicly share their testimony about "their" real-life heroes.¹⁵ Innovative distri-

¹³ These partly derive from promotional strategies of nonfiction cinema, deployed by Generation 90 filmmakers in several films. See also DUDKOVÁ, Jana. Slovenský film *Hranica* a problém konštruovania kolektívnej identity. In *Slovenské divadlo*, vol. 58, no. 4 (2010), especially pp. 622-623.

¹⁴ Presskit, <http://www.filmtopia.sk/Dakujem_dobre_presskit_sk.pdf> [accessed 15 March 2016].

¹⁵ This strategy is most visible in the case of *Koza*, whose director presented his protagonist on numerous occasions at film festivals or public screenings and discussions, but was also deployed by filmmakers of *Gypsy* and *Miracle*.

bution strategies also serve as means of indexing. The crew of *Gypsy* organised premiere of the film for the extras in Romani settlement in Eastern-Slovakian village of Richnava. Before the actual release *Children* was introduced to viewers in smaller towns in order to bring the film closer to viewers, whose stories it recounts. *Slovensko 2.0 (Slovakia 2.0, 2014)*, anthology film featuring two short social dramas, premiered simultaneously in several Slovak cities, shortly after was broadcasted on national television and released on DVD.

INDEXING THE GENRE OF SOCIAL DRAMA

Indexing by means of production, promotion, and distribution strategies reinforces the reality effect of social dramas. It is complemented by indexing through intratextual elements, which can be described by semantic and syntactic traits subsumed under the concept of genre. By mixing fictive and assertive stances, social dramas cue reflection of the actual reality, however, do not stress affiliation with a single genre. Like fiction and nonfiction, genre is a fuzzy concept. Rick Altman¹⁶ explains, it is a multi-discursive concept used for circulation of meaning between filmmakers, critics and viewers. In this social circulation, production, critical and audience discourses compete for the use of genre for their own means. The following table compares genre identification of films subsumed under social drama in three different discourses.¹⁷ Grant project proposals for Audiovisual Fund¹⁸ represent the production discourse, press kits and webpages distribution discourse, and the internet movie database Česko-slovenská filmová databáza (The Czecho-Slovak Film Database, www.csfd.cz) represents the audience discourse.

¹⁶ ALTMAN, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: British Film Institute, 1999.

¹⁷ Titles in bold font were all written in cooperation with screenwriter Marek Leščák.

¹⁸ Available online <http://registracia.avf.sk/zobraz_ziadosi.php?program=1&pod-program=11> [accessed 15 August 2016].

	Audiovisual Fund grant project proposal	Presskit / Webpage / FB official page	www.csfd.cz
Slnčný štát (The City of the Sun, 2005, dir. Martin Šulík)	-	tragicomedy	comedy / drama
Návrat bocianov (Return of the Storks, 2007, dir. Martin Repka)	-	drama	drama / romantic
Malé oslavy (Small Celebrations, 2008, dir. Zdeněk Tyc)	-	drama	drama
Líštičky (Foxes, 2009, dir. Mira Fornay)	-	drama	drama
Cigán (Gypsy, 2011, dir. Martin Šulík)	drama	drama	drama
Dom (The House, 2011, dir. Zuzana Liová)	drama	drama	drama
Až do mesta Aš (Made in Ash, 2012, dir. Iveta Grófová)	fiction film	drama	drama
Môj pes Killer (My Dog Killer, 2013, dir. Mira Fornay)	drama	drama	drama
Ďakujem, dobre (Fine, Thanks, 2013, dir. Mátyás Prikler)	tragicomedy	drama	drama / anthology film
Zázrak (Miracle, 2013, dir. Juraj Lehotský)	social drama	drama	drama
Deti (Children, 2014, dir. Jaro Vojtek)	feature-length fiction anthology film	x	drama / anthology film
Slovensko 2.0 (Slovakia 2.0, 2014)	anthology film	x	anthology film
Koza (2015, dir. Ivan Ostrochovský)	road movie	drama	drama / road movie
Eva Nová (2015, dir. Marko Škop)	drama	drama	drama

We can note, that, with a single exception, social drama as genre identification is present neither in production or distribution, nor audience discourse, although critical discourse has frequently used this generic term. Considering differences in poetics among the various directors, we can identify variations in narration, style, and syntactic structures of social realism in analyzed body of films. Hence, the concept of the social film drama can be best understood as a critical construct. As seen from the perspective of Altman's semantic-syntactic-pragmatic approach, it is a mode of using a genre by film critics. By adding the adjectival label to the genre, drama, critics construct social drama. Altman calls this process of creating new genres *genrification*. In this way, critics on one hand create a link to international realistic arthouse cinema, on the other hand, they convert the domestic micro-tradition of social documentary – represented by directors who gradually, but probably not permanently – turned to fiction film. According to Altman, filmmakers do not create new genres intentionally, but rather by trial and error try to repeat success of previous productions by replicating certain elements of earlier films. Contrary to critics, they are not interested in creating a genre, which is shared in the production discourse, rather a cycle, which is subject to creative licence. In the process of genrification other filmmakers try to imitate successful elements, which do not stress affiliation with previous cycles, but with a certain genre. Genrification is then completed when critics retrospectively label shared characteristics of films.¹⁹ A cycle of fiction films written in cooperation with Marek Leščák thus creates a hybrid genre, which is characterised mainly by prevalent realistic representation. Realism is a concept that is not reserved exclusively to a single genre, however plays a key role in fusion of semantic and syntactic elements of social film dramas.

These films share several subjects: unemployment, economic crisis, migration and economic migration (*Return of the Storks; Fine, Thanks; The House; Foxes; Made in Ash; segment Bez vône – Fragrance free from Slovakia 2.0; Koza*), social problems of Romani community and racism (*Gypsy; Made in Ash; My Dog Killer; segment Maratón – Marathon from the film Children; Koza*), prostitution and drugs (*Gypsy; Made in Ash; Miracle*). The characters are either outsiders living on social periphery

¹⁹ Altman described this process on the example of *The Ipcress File* (1965, dir. Sidney J. Furie), that by means of genre identification and comparison tried to establish connection to successful series of James Bond films. ALTMAN, Rick. *Film/Genre*, pp. 117-119.

(*Gypsy; Made in Ash; Miracle; Koza*) or are desperately trying to fulfill their middle-class dreams (*Foxes; The House; Fine, Thanks; Eva Nová*). These subjects are depicted with varying levels of realism, but a recurrent and unifying subject is the disintegration of traditional family communities and their replacement by economic relations. This aspect points to continuation of films from the millennial turn, however, while these associated intergenerational relations with the subject of identity, contemporary social dramas use generational confrontation for depiction of social phenomena. *Return of the Storks* by Martin Repka deals not only with the disintegration of family relationships in modern world, but also with torn ties in Europe, divided by borders. The heroine Vanda, a descendant of a German family deported after World War II, leaves Germany in order to reconnect with her grandmother who returned to her former home in the Slovak countryside and who has found romance with her childhood sweetheart. Here, Vanda encounters the problems of a politically and economically unstable border between the European Union and the rest of Europe and becomes indirectly involved in human trafficking. These experiences lead her both to strengthening the ties with her own family and acknowledging her own multicultural identity.

However, most of later cases of social drama do not bring such a comforting resolution of the plot. The episodic narrative of *Fine, Thanks* by Mátyás Prikler presents three storylines, loosely connected by family relationships between characters of mixed Hungarian-Slovak family during family rituals: funeral, Christmas, and wedding. These storylines are interconnected by recurring motif of economic crisis that becomes a catalyst of smothering conflicts. An old couple argues over the household finances; children put their freshly widowed father in a rest home against his will in order to get hold of his flat; a marital crisis between a couple is brought to boil by the unstable employment position of the husband; a businessman whose marriage is traumatized by the tragic loss of his son, deals in a similarly emotionally detached manner with the employees he wants to fire as with his own wife. The finale brings a multi-cultural wedding, but is rather a foretoken of future escalation of problems than a true happy-ending.

The family in Zuzana Liová's *The House* suffers by lack of attention and empathy from the father, whose only expression of affection for his daughters is securing their material needs. He builds houses for both

of his daughters, although the elder escaped from family nest to troubled marriage and the younger only dreams of escaping the limiting environment in order to work in United Kingdom. The conflict between safe, yet limiting, tradition and the challenges of the modern world reminds us of the dilemma faced by the protagonist of Šulík's *The Garden*, however, Liová roots her film firmly in current reality and presents character types which are both universal (despotic father, submissive mother, restless young woman, etc.) and typical of rural Slovakia. In the finale, the family is – at least temporarily – reconstructed: the father comes to terms with his daughters living their own lives, the main protagonist sets out for UK and father continues the construction of the house for the family of his elder daughter. Economic migration from the rural areas of Slovakia also provides background for *Foxes* by Mira Fornay. The film compares Eastern-European protagonists, who struggle for economic survival in Ireland, to foxes, looking for food in the garbage. The main protagonist works here as an au-pair, but her tempestuous character causes her constant conflicts that result in her losing her job as well as connection to her sister. As a second rate citizen of EU, she finds no compassion from the locals.

Made in Ash by Iveta Grófová and *Koza* by Ivan Ostrochovský similarly feature characters that are perceived by others as second-rate citizens and whose social situation stems from their position as members of the Romani minority. However, in both instances, Romani ethnicity provides a realistic background for the characters, but does not determine their fate in direct ways: the heroine of *Made in Ash* follows the path towards prostitution with other girls from various backgrounds, the protagonist of *Koza* is rather portrayed as a scapegoat, universal symbol of human suffering, than a typical representative of Romani community. Both protagonists are cut off from their family ties and experience existential and social isolation in foreign country: Dorota from *Made in Ash* was forced to find a job abroad instead of continuing her studies, because her family was not able to support her anymore; *Koza* undergoes severe physical suffering in order to earn enough money for abortion of a child, he and his partner are not able to support.

The young protagonist of *Miracle* by Juraj Lehotský is a member of racial majority, however, her family background condemns her to struggle for both economic and emotional survival in unfavourable conditions – her mother got rid of her, a problem child, and put the heroine in a

detention centre. However, Lehotský's ferocious heroine fights for her happiness in all the wrong places: she is in love with a drug addict who sells her for his dose, and when she succeeds in escaping gangsters and finds out her love was betrayed, she – herself still a child – is pregnant and decides to give her baby for adoption with the hope of securing a better future for her offspring. The miracle mentioned in the title of the film refers to the only gentle human contact she experiences: the look of her newborn son, who soon will be the child of someone else.

In *My Dog Killer* by Mira Fornay the family disintegrates as a direct result of racial prejudice. The young protagonist Marek experiences intense shame because his mother left his father for a Romani man and had a bastard son. In a small Western-Slovakian town, this stigma leads him to mask his shame in adopting a tough identity among neo-Nazis and the search for validation through his fighting dog named Killer. This deadly cocktail of racial hate and shame leads to tragedy that forces him to face his own guilt. Among all the films of social drama trend, *My Dog Killer* is the most uncompromising in its tragic finale, yet it does not judge its protagonist, instead tries to lead the viewer to understand his situation through consistent use of follow shots, helping the viewer to get a perspective of his world view.

A slightly different portrayal of a disintegrated family can be found in *Eva Nová* by Marko Škop. The film, a story of a once-famous actress who got old and weary in her struggle with alcoholism and after years spent in rehab tries to re-establish both her life and relationship with her estranged son, creates complex levels of meaning through references to the relation between fiction and reality (the heroine repeatedly practices her lines for real life in front of a mirror), and to both the history of Slovakia (as a former socialist star, Eva collaborated with communism and is now completely forgotten) and Slovak cinema (the use of film footage and promo materials of the real actress Emília Vášáryová playing Eva Nová creates subtle levels of cinematic memory).

The depiction of social issues is typically perceived as a symptom of realism, because these provoke questions not only about the structure of filmic representation, but also about its referent. This is mainly caused by prevalence of realistic motivation. However, repeating the same realistic traits gradually reveals their conventional nature and may cancel

the impression of singularity and authenticity.²⁰ For example, *Gypsy* departed from stereotypical depiction of a Romani character thanks to presenting his mental subjectivity, but did not avoid replicating stereotypical media representations of Romani community. Four stories from *Children* by Jaro Vojtek similarly compose a virtual catalogue of social phenomena that cause disintegration of families, like illness, alcoholism, criminality, adultery, etc. In order to estrange reality and avoid sociological clichés, several films merge sociological and archetypal elements. *Gypsy* frames contemporary story with Hamletian archetype, *The House* introduces the motif of house as a complex poetic figure (it functions both as metonymy of family and metaphor for Slovakia), in *Children* the ages of man are connected to cycle of four seasons, *Koza* creates a parallel between Christ's calvary and the last tour of a former Olympic champion. Social stereotypes are also questioned or ironised. In *Made in Ash* and *Koza* Romani ethnicity of protagonists provides realistic motivation for the plot, but does not determine their personal identity. *My Dog Killer* breaks the stereotype by introducing ethnically mixed patchwork family. *Fine, Thanks* integrates nondiegetic material of TV news in the sujet in order to connect microeconomics of family with macroeconomics of society.

THE STYLE OF SOCIAL REALISM

Social dramas create characteristic iconography of urban or rural landscapes. These long shots typically serve as establishing shots which provide orientation at the beginning of film or its sequence, or are used as visual leitmotifs, that structure episodic narratives. They also provide characterisation of protagonists by depicting their natural environment, thus reinforcing the reality effect. In some instances these shots even become emotional landscapes, which show limited life horizons of protagonists – may it be suburban area, Romani settlement, periphery, or a small town.

One of the main qualities of realistic narration is replacement of causal chain by elements of chance and classical narrative structure by epi-

²⁰ THOMPSON, Kristin. Realism in Cinema: Bicycle Thieves. In *Breaking the Glass Armour. Neoformalist Film Analysis*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 197-217.

sodic narration.²¹ Both techniques evoke rhythm of everyday flow of life. Slovak social dramas employ them in various degrees: from films composed from several short stories (*Fine, Thanks; Children*) to dramatically compact stories (*The House, My Dog Killer, Eva Nová*). The causal chain may be replaced by chronology of one day (*My Dog Killer*), a journey (*Koza*), passage of seasons (*Made in Ash, Children*) or traditional rituals (*Fine, Thanks*). Causal motivations may even be completely suppressed. Chance events compose the story of gradual downfall of protagonists in *Made in Ash*. It is not clear, whether the killing of Romani half-brother by the dog of neo-Nazi protagonist in *My Dog Killer* was an intentional act or a tragic incident. The unpredictability of reality is often accentuated by absurd elements and free motifs with no causal relation to fabula (for example, ostriches in a Romani settlement in *Gypsy*) and by observational documentary footage (the depiction of everyday life of various institutions in *Made in Ash; Fine, Thanks; Miracle*). Open endings of the films do not resolve the fates of protagonists, although in some cases they indicate magical reconciliations characteristic of the "hanging gardens" films trend (*The House, Miracle, Children, Koza, Eva Nová*). However, in social dramas, this reconciliation is not motivated by esoteric factors but by the transformation of characters through the passage of time. Two positions can be distinguished in the narration of these films. The observational realism of films like *Fine, Thanks, My Dog Killer* or *Koza* prefers description to psychology, does not offer access to subjectivity of characters, its narration is often uncommunicative. The other side of the spectrum represents the highly subjective narration of films like *Gypsy* or *Made in Ash* and by visualisation of fantasies, dreams and perceptions of characters offers access to their inner world.

This realistic motivation is dominant also in justifying stylistic devices. Several directors prefer nonprofessional actors (*Made in Ash, Koza, My Dog Killer*) or combine them with professionals (*Gypsy, Miracle*), but others work exclusively with established actors (*The House; Fine, Thanks; Eva Nová*). The social backgrounds of characters are articulated in dialogues that feature regional dialects or minority languages. Films are shot on location, often without additional lighting. Aside from resulting in documentary style, low-key lighting can also create emotional

²¹ BAZIN, André. *What is Cinema?* Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1967 and KRACAUER, Siegfried. *Theory of Film: Redemption of Physical Reality*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997.

restraint. Because the young neo-Nazi in *My Dog Killer* finds the body of Romani boy in almost pitch-dark, the viewer is not offered any cues to his emotional reaction and can only guess, what had happened. De-focused compositions reinforce the impression of randomness and can both block access to emotional reaction of characters (*Fine, Thanks*) or evoke their perceptions (*Made in Ash*). *Made in Ash* combines hand-held camera, footage from security cameras and mobile phone with defocused images and animation sequences thus creating a paradoxical effect of both subjective and observational realism.

The long take and deep focus are traditionally perceived as prominent realistic devices. Pier Paolo Pasolini even considered the long take to be the reproduction of the language of reality.²² However, the equation of specific technique to realism is problematic and as Slovak social dramas illustrate, the long take is not the only device of evoking the reality effect. *My Dog Killer* and *Koza* are the most consistent examples of the usage of long take as seemingly un-manipulated representation of reality. However, while in *My Dog Killer* the camera is constantly moving in follow shots, in *Koza* static images are prevalent and camera moves only when being attached to the car. No less realistic alternative is used in *The City of the Sun* where hand-held camera and dynamic montage imitates journalistic footage. In *Miracle* jump cuts are used, pointing to natural passage of time.

The usage of long shots stems from observational realism, which prefers description to narration. It may seem that this mode of representation is transparent, because real people portray themselves in stories inspired by their own lives. However, these otherwise realistic social dramas deploy several elements that contradict realistic representation and feature elements that reinforce the connection between several films from screenwriter Marek Leščák. These elements are not justified by the relation to actual world, but to other works, discourses, or even to filmmakers themselves. They cancel the verisimilitude of representation, distort the reality effect, intensify self-consciousness of narration, and, by transgressions of narrative levels, make the presence of authors of social drama cycle visible. Shots from *Gypsy* featuring the hero looking directly into the camera are recurrently used between sequences,

²² PASOLINI, Pier Paolo. Observations on the Long Take. In *October*, vol. 13 (summer 1980), pp. 3-7, <<http://fdm.ucsc.edu/~landrews/178s2010/Assets/8656165C/observations%20on%20the%20long%20take.pdf>> [accessed 15 March 2016].

inviting the viewer to assume attitude towards events depicted and at the same time referencing Hamletian question "To be, or not to be." This is a visual equivalent of authorial metalepsis,²³ through which the author directly addresses the viewer. A different effect is created by a committee meeting scene in *Fine, Thanks*, which is a parody of the decision-makers of the Audiovisual Fund, often criticised by young independent producers from the milieu of authors of social dramas.

There are several realistically motivated auto-citations from Leščák in *Children*, the most striking being the visual identification of the daughter from the fourth story with the protagonist of *Miracle*. However, the director Vojtek develops this motif in the final scene, when the daughter indirectly assists her ill father to drown in the sea. This highly implausible act cannot be realistically justified. What is more, the narration does not give the viewer any clues to take the final image as her fantasy and therefore can neither be justified compositionally. This metaleptic estrangement of reality is a manifestation of the creative self-confidence of the authors of these social dramas, who, by mixing nonfiction and fiction elements, create the prestige of a social drama cycle and pave the way to its genrification.

CONCLUSION

Although Slovak social film dramas present a rather wide variety of generic and stylistic traits, they share a common stance that mixes elements of fiction and nonfiction. This tendency is closely tied to the documentary output of several directors, but also represents a significant realistic turn in Slovak fiction cinema that can be also understood as a generational authorial stance. While the considerable differences in narration and style of Slovak social film dramas question the concept of social drama as a distinct genre, a semantic-syntactic-pragmatic analysis points to common characteristics, that can be subsumed under wider international trend of social realism. This Slovak version emphasizes affiliation to arthouse cinema, which is traditionally resistant to unambiguous generic classifications. Slovak social realism can best be explained with regards to motivations and effects tied to the mixing

²³ GENETTE, Gérard. *Métalepse. De la figure à la fiction*. Paris: Éditions Seuil, 2004.

of fiction and nonfiction elements as well as to specific thematic motifs, stylistic choices and indexing strategies. Slovak social film dramas seek to create a strong reality effect by means of dealing with current social issues, by dominance of realistic motivation of stylistic devices and by production, distribution and promotion indexing strategies that emphasize connections between films and actual reality. Prevalence of realistic motivation is particularly present in the use of poetic tropes and archetypal elements that on one hand stem from imminent physical reality of protagonists, and on the other hand, refer to implicit levels of filmic representation. This strategy is abandoned exclusively in metaleptic figures of screenwriter Marek Leščák. The metaleptic effect present in some films made in collaboration with Leščák usually cancels the reality effect, because instead of actual reality it refers to other discourses: to other works (*Gypsy*), films (*Children*) or to production background (*Fine, Thanks*). However, these metalepses emphasize affiliation to a distinct (generational) cycle of films, by means of which they articulate prestige of authorial trend of social dramas.

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HUNGARIAN AND ROMANIAN FILM PRODUCTION IN TRANSNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS: SMALL DOMESTIC TASTE

Andrea Virginás

INTRODUCTION

Hungarian and Romanian film productions are two post-communist Eastern European industries that are geographical neighbours. Through the border-region of Transylvania – the part of Hungary until 1944 and the part of Romania since, as well as its mixed, occasionally bilingual Hungarian and Romanian population – they dispose of an area of cultural overlap.¹ In the case of film industry this cultural overlap is manifested through the frequent individual collaboration of Hungarian and Romanian film professionals, often mediated by creators of Transylvanian origin. As no formal regional platform for coproduction exists, such films are usually transnational co-productions with further national partners involved: such was the case with Tudor Giurgiu's 2015 *De ce eu? (Why Me?)*, a Romanian political thriller co-produced with Bulgaria and Hungary, and edited by Hungarian-Transylvanian editor Réka Lemhényi. In spite of these multiple points of connection, examples of contemporary Hungarian and Romanian cinema are far from being similar; actually they may be characterized as radically different, and it is the effort to understand this difference, emerging from a regional interdependence, which governs my paper.

¹ The issue is described in detail by CUNNINGHAM, John. From Nationalism to Rapprochement? Hungary and Romania On-Screen. In MAZIERSKA, Ewa – KRISTENSEN, Lars – NĂRIPEA, Eva (Eds.). *Postcolonial Approaches to Eastern European Cinema*. London – New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014, pp. 147-173.

I will start with a short historical overview of Hungarian and Romanian feature film² production, highlighting the manifold similarities between these two cinema industries generally regarded as delimited into pre-communist (before 1945/1948), communist (1948/1945-1989), and post-communist (since 1989/1990) eras. I will proceed by suggesting that this historically and politically founded meta-narrative needs to be complemented with more objective possibilities of assessment if we wish to come to terms with the quickly changing realities of post-analogue filmmaking and film-viewing, digitally interconnected on a European Union level as well as on more global level, obviously influencing Hungarian and Romanian film production too.³ The 2007 model of small national cinemas developed by Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie⁴ allows for such a conceptual re-alignment, as it not only offers numerical references based on which to categorize given national cinemas as being small, but it also highlights the fundamental need – be that imposed by outer aggression or inner urge – of such film production entities to position themselves as always already connected on a regional or transnational level. Hjort and Petrie’s concise formulation is illuminating in this respect:

in Europe, the traditional sense of bounded and differentiated national cinemas has always been more difficult to maintain in the case of small nations, and consequently, in addition to nationally specific initiatives, filmmakers have benefited from sources of pan-European support (MEDIA, Eurimages), regional initiatives (the Nordic Film and TV Fund) or co-production sources often located in the metropolitan centres (Channel Four, Canal +). Former colonial relationships [...] have also ensured a source of external funding for filmmakers in some small nations, predicated in each case on a cultural or linguistic bond.⁵

² By “feature film,” it is meant “a film with a running-time enough to be considered the principal or sole film to fill a program” (see Feature film, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feature_film>, [accessed 15 December, 2016]), generally also a live-action fiction film.

³ An opinion already formulated in IMRE, Anikó. Introduction: Eastern European Cinema from *No End* to the End (As We Know It). In IMRE, Anikó (Ed.). *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012, p. 2.

⁴ HJORT, Mette – PETRIE, Duncan (Eds.). *The Cinema of Small Nations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

This has also been a dominant feature of the two neighbouring cinemas I focus on, present in all the mentioned historical eras.⁶ The latest accession of Hungary and Romania to a transnational entity influencing feature film co-production happened in 2004, and 2007, respectively, when these former communist countries joined the framework of the European Union. By presenting the similar ascending numeric trends that have characterized feature film production in Hungary and Romania in the five-year periods following their accession (2004-2009 for Hungary and 2007-2011 for Romania), as well as the opposing trends emerging from the next five years (2010-2015 for Hungary and 2012-2016 for Romania),⁷ I will argue that these trends can be interpreted as transnationally influenced domestic corrections performed on small national cinema markets, that, however, are not identical. These data sets indirectly confirm the importance of a transnational framework of production in the case of small national cinemas, with the European Union’s cooperative and co-financing schemes evidently playing a fundamental role in Hungarian and Romanian national film production. Finally, I will compare the top lists of the five most popular Hungarian, respectively Romanian films of the second five-year periods,⁸ the post-2010s, nicknamed by the Hungarian cultural press “the Vajna-era” (after the famous governmental deputy and producer of the *Terminator*-films, Andy Vajna, who has been responsible for state film funding). Based on this comparison I will suggest that the experience and memory of transnationally oriented, studio-based, commercial film industry in pre-communist Hungary informs post-communist Hungarian

⁶ As mentioned by film historian Mircea Dumitrescu, the first internationally recognized film production related to Romanian filmmaking was an (anticommunist) Italian-Romanian coproduction, the 1942 *Odessa in fiamme* / *Odessa în flăcări* (*Odessa in Flames*, dir. Carmine Gallone). DUMITRESCU, Mircea. *O privire critică asupra filmului românesc*. Braşov: Arania, 2005, p. 14.

⁷ The data I am working with originates from *The Hungarian Movie Database*, <<http://archiv.magyar.film.hu/hmdb/>> [accessed 18 November 2015], and from the database of The Romanian Film Promotion, <<http://www.romfilmpromotion.ro/en/publications>> [accessed 18 November 2015].

⁸ These top lists are synthesized by me, the author, based on official national movie audience data presented by The National Film Office in Hungary (Nemzeti Filmiroda), <<http://nmhh.hu/filmiroda/>> [accessed 18 February 2015], The Hungarian National Film Fund (Magyar Nemzeti Filmalap – MNF), <<http://mnf.hu/en/>> [accessed 18 February 2015], and The Romanian National Film Center (Centrul Național al Cinematografiei – CNC), <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=187> [accessed 16 November 2015], all the three being coordinating and funding agencies.

audience taste, in spite of arthouse cinema's centrality in the official canon (partly inherited from communist times). In contrast, the five most popular Romanian films of the 2010s highlight the importance of auteur-driven arthouse cinema in a small national film market with meagre domestic studio and commercial film traditions – apart from the communist era when, however, political censorship was also dominant.⁹

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Hungarian feature film production coagulated into an industry in the 1910s,¹⁰ and although it went into decline in the early 1920s,¹¹ state intervention in the period 1924-1927 restructured the industry,¹² which went on to incorporate sound starting with 1929. A versatile panorama of commercially-oriented genre films emerged throughout the 1930s and until World War II, with box-office popularity and fandom practices accepted as signifiers of success.¹³ According to film historian Györgyi Vajdovich in the period 1931-1945 a number of 352 Hungarian feature films were made – which equals a yearly production of up to 25 feature

⁹ In her monograph Dominique Nasta mentions that the 1989 revolutionary agenda of “people from the film industry” referred to “the abolition of censorship and the rehabilitation of a whole range of shelved or banned films from the past”, with “many short or feature debuts [...] delayed and [...] waiting to be screened.” NASTA, Dominique. *Contemporary Romanian Cinema: The History of an Unexpected Miracle*. London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2013, p. 75.

¹⁰ In 1917-1918 and worldwide Hungary followed only Denmark, The United States, Germany and Italy as a film production industry in terms of produced and distributed films, and in 1918 more than a 100 Hungarian feature films were presented to the public. See BALOGH, Györgyi – GYÜREY, Vera – HONFFY, Pál. *A magyar játékfilm története a kezdetektől 1990-ig*. Budapest: Műszaki Könyvkiadó, 2004, p. 21.

¹¹ “Because of distribution difficulties, invested capital offered no return, thus it was not possible to start the production of new films.” Ibid., p. 40. This and subsequent translations from Hungarian, if not signaled otherwise, are the author's own. (V. A.)

¹² Ibid., pp. 40-41.

¹³ Using state subsidies and subventions, distributors went into funding productions which were usually shot in interiors, on small budgets, always based on successful subjects and popular stars. Ibid., p. 50.

films – out of which a number of 201 (56%) could be qualified as comedies.¹⁴

Romanian feature film production in the first half of the 20th century was characterized by infinitely less capital and scarce structuring forces present in a fragile national market, situated further than the Hungarian/Budapest one from such filmmaking centres as those in Vienna or Berlin, and not close enough to revolutionary Russian/Soviet film industry. Thus, before the installation of communist rule in 1945-1948, those who made films in Romania usually came from abroad or were theatre personalities¹⁵ and self-investing mavericks related to the transnational European film enthusiast network, rather than being formed by a studio-based domestic industry as was the case with Hungary. It was only in 1941-1943 that the first memorable feature film was produced in the only studio, consisting of one room, in Romania's capital city, Bucharest. This was director Jean Georgescu's adaptation of a well-known comedy of manners, *O noapte furtunoasă* (*A Stormy Night*, 1943) by Romanian playwright I. L. Caragiale.¹⁶ As film historian Mircea Dumitrescu formulated: “during the *Starting period* [1896-1948] we cannot invoke aesthetic factors as they were inexistent with the exception of *A Stormy Night* directed by Jean Georgescu (1943)”.¹⁷

During the years of state socialism (1945/1948-1989), in both Hungary and Romania filmmaking became a cultural industry funded by state money and controlled by official communist party ideology,¹⁸ with low and occasional private participation possible in marginal, avant-garde type filmmaking in the case of Hungary,¹⁹ an activity under strict cen-

¹⁴ VAJDOVICH, Györgyi. “Az egyszerű néző cirkuszi szórakozása”. Az 1931 és 1945 közötti magyar filmek megjelenítése a magyar filmtörténeti monográfiákban. In *Metropolis*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2009), p. 50.

¹⁵ The only Romanian feature film produced in the period of introducing sound, *Visul lui Tănase* (*Tănase's Dream*, 1932) was directed by German Bernd Aldor and financed by popular theatre actor Constantin Tănase. DUMITRESCU, Mircea. *O privire critică asupra filmului românesc*, p. 12.

¹⁶ The Romanian National Film Center (CNC) page, <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=187> [accessed 16 November 2015].

¹⁷ DUMITRESCU, Mircea. *O privire critică asupra filmului românesc*, p. 10. This and subsequent translations from Romanian, if not signaled otherwise, are the author's own (V. A.).

¹⁸ “During the *Socialist Period* (1948-1989), the arts and culture in general were brutally subordinated to political and ideological factors [...]” Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁹ In his 2013 monograph on Béla Tarr, András Bálint Kovács mentions a propos Tarr's 1988 *Kárhozat* (*Damnation*) that “[i]f Hungarian Television had not been involved in

sorship in Romania.²⁰ While in Hungary, the studio-centric film industry remained ideologically suspicious because it was already present in pre-communist times,²¹ it was exactly the pre-communist lack in the industrialization of Romanian filmmaking that permitted its larger-scale centralized development after 1945, a tendency therefore more accentuated than in simultaneous communist Hungary. We might refer to Dominique Nasta citing Mira and Antonin Liehm's groundbreaking 1977 *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film after 1945* in this respect: "In Liehm's opinion, Romania clearly lagged behind the other Eastern European film industries. Only in 1965 did they manage to produce eighteen films, with craftsmanship and themes being more varied."²² In this period, "socialist/communist success" was quantified in state financial support received for a given production, and in the interest manifested by official film criticism and theory as well as by international festival presence and prizes, re-confirming the aesthetic choices of the state socialist cultural industry.²³

Since the 1989 regime-change, the majority of Hungarian and Romanian feature films continued to be funded by the state. In Hungary, The Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary (Magyar Mozgóképek Közalapítvány, MMKK)²⁴ fulfilled the role of the central coordinating body in the period 1990-2010, as a new entity created in the post-communist era. In 2011 it was replaced by The Hungarian National Film Fund (Mag-

the production, it would have been the first Hungarian feature film after World War II to be produced entirely outside the official filmmaking system." KOVÁCS, András Bálint. *The Cinema of Béla Tarr. The Circle Closes*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, p. 10.

²⁰ "the concessions to which the Romanian filmmakers subscribed in the period 1945-1990 were of such nature that they aesthetically compromised cinematographic production." See DUMITRESCU, Mircea. *O privire critică asupra filmului românesc*, p. 6.

²¹ See PÁPAI, Zsolt – VARGA, Balázs. Hollywoodon innen és túl: Bevezető a magyar műfaji film összeállításához. In *Metropolis*, vol. 14, no. 1 (2010), pp. 8-22.

²² NASTA, Dominique. *Contemporary Romanian Cinema: The History of an Unexpected Miracle*, p. 19.

²³ See VARGA, Balázs. Benne lenne? Magyar filmtörténeti toplisták és a kanonizáció kérdései. In *Metropolis*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2009), pp. 32-44. This latter feature was more present in the Hungarian than the Romanian case, as the second is less dependent on external/exterior legitimization than its Western neighbour, perhaps also because of Romania's more profound isolation from the rest of the (non)communist world.

²⁴ The Motion Picture Public Foundation of Hungary (MMKK) page, <<https://web.archive.org/web/20090309191434/http://www.mmka.hu/object.bbca7c61-2193-4bbe-b4fd-f755ba18f954.ivy>> [accessed 17 March 2016].

yar Nemzeti Filmalap, MNF), the re-organization having been motivated by the financial difficulties of the former institution, but also partly influenced by governmental party politics. The MMKK-era in the 2010s meant the introduction of a rigorous process of selecting projects: with screenplays/projects applying first for development, and then, possibly, for production and postproduction. In addition, currently there are specific marketing and first film funds available as well.²⁵

In contrast to the Hungarian case, the central national body, which exists to this day in Romania, the The Romanian National Film Center (Centrul Național al Cinematografiei, CNC) was created as such in 1965, having the functions of organizing state-funded film production and distribution throughout the country via the three main studios dedicated to feature-length fiction, documentary and animated film production.²⁶ The CNC was not shut down in 1989, thus continuing its activity, through numerous re-organizations, in the years of transition. It was in 2006 that a decree was issued, according to which, feature-length film production would be directly financed and based on a system of applications, which exists to this day in Romania.²⁷ Concerning the fundamental relevance of the state/ CNC funding in contemporary Romanian (but also Hungarian or Eastern European feature-length filmmaking as such), the outlook voiced by Cristina Iacob, the director of the 2nd most successful Romanian film of the last 5 years, *Selfie* (2013), in a 2014 interview, is highly illustrative:

"After I wrote the script [...], I did what every scriptwriter and director does: I went to the national scriptwriting contest of the CNC. There they take into account the grades given to the script, but also your grades as a director," tells Cristina Iacob, who emerged as first in the category of "debut features." This success meant the financing of 300.000 Euros offered by the CNC, to this being added a sum from MediaPro Pictures [a private Bucharest filmmaking studio constituted on the ruins of one communist-era state studio, note by V. A.], and other sources. "Such a victory is an important thing because it is thanks to this that you can attract further sponsors: it functions as a kind of a guaran-

²⁵ The Hungarian National Film Fund (MNF) page, <<http://mnf.hu/en/>> [accessed 18 February 2015].

²⁶ The Romanian National Film Center (CNC) page, <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=187> [accessed 16 November 2015].

²⁷ The CNC page, <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=187> [accessed 16 November 2015].

tee. If you haven't won this contest [at the CNC, V. A.], no one will risk investing into your film," explains Cristina, who distributes her film through her own company, ZAZU Film.²⁸

POST-ACCESSION PRODUCTION NUMBERS IN TWO SMALL NATIONAL CINEMAS IN EASTERN EUROPE

Both the Hungarian and Romanian filmmaking industries might be situated in the framework of Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie's 2007 *The Cinema of Small Nations*. The recently coined term of small national cinemas refers to film industries which originate from smaller nation-states – as for their number of inhabitants and territory – with a generally low GNI per capita, and the historically formative experience of being dominated by non-nationals.²⁹ The model of small national cinemas is not a normative one, allowing for a considerable fluctuation of the values. The authors of publication stress that it is the combination of variables, and they point out the need for a comparative perspective that should govern the examination of it.

Table 1. The model of small national cinemas³⁰

Country	Population (mil)	Area (km2)	GNI per capita (USD)	Domination
Model countries according to Hjort-Petrie	4-10	<273,000	1,200-60,000	Colonial, Imperial
Hungary	9.9	93,000	ca. 12,000	Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Eastern Bloc, EU
Romania	19.8	237,491	ca. 10,850	

²⁸ PANAIT, Andrei. Despre matematică și film cu Cristina Iacob. In *Forbes România*, 21 May 2014, <<http://www.forbes.ro/despre-matematica-si-film-cu-cristina-iacob-20374>>, [accessed 15 December 2016].

²⁹ HJORT, Mette – PETRIE, Duncan (Eds.). *The Cinema of Small Nations*, p. 6.

³⁰ This argument and data are presented in a more detailed manner in VIRGINÁS Andrea. A "kis mozik fogalma": román és magyar filmgyártási példák. In *Filmszem*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2014), <<http://filmszem.net/archivum/2014-negyedik-efolyam/>> [accessed 17 June 2015].

Hungarian cinema fits Hjort-Petrie's categorization based on the four variables of territory (93,000 km²), inhabitants (9,880,000),³¹ GNI per capita (ca. 12,000 USD in the early 2010s, a similar estimated value for 2015 as well),³² and the experience of domination – by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Soviet Union and, indeed, the European Union – to the degree that it may be even considered a typical small national cinema. Romania, on the other hand, in terms of its population (ca. 20 million) and area (237,500 square km)³³ is in the upper margins of a small national cinema according to Hjort and Petrie (similar to Taiwan or Burkina Faso as per their examples).³⁴ However, in terms of its recent GNI per capita (ca. 8000 USD in the period 2008-2012,³⁵ comparable to Bulgarian or Tunisian data, around 10 000 USD as for the estimated 2015 values),³⁶ and of its long history of subjugation by the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy or as part of the Eastern Bloc, it certainly should be included in this type of cinema. According to the premise of the small cinemas paradigm, these factors lead to small cinemas – in our case, the Hungarian and the Romanian one – having an insignificant film(ic) output with regard to global film production, or major national cinema productions. The aforementioned status of a small national cinema was obscured to various degrees by the fact that both countries have been included into various transnational entities such as the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the pre-1945 period, the Eastern bloc between 1945-1990, and finally, both of them attempted to join the European Union, which they managed in 2004 (Hungary) and 2007 (Romania), respectively.

³¹ Data originates from the Wikipedia page of Hungary, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungary>> [accessed 16 March 2016].

³² Data originates from the World Bank country sheets, World Bank website, <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD>> [accessed 30 October 2013, and 15 November 2015].

³³ Numerical data originates from Romania's Wikipedia page, <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania>> [accessed 8 September 2014].

³⁴ HJORT, Mette – PETRIE, Duncan (Eds.). *The Cinema of Small Nations*, p. 6.

³⁵ Data originates from the World Bank country sheets, World Bank website, <<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD>> [accessed 30 October 2013, 15 November 2015].

³⁶ The estimated 2015 GNI per capita values for Hungary and Romania originate from the two countries Wikipedia pages, <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hungary>> [accessed 16 March 2016], and <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania>> [accessed 8 September 2014].

This latest transnational framework of cooperation and coproduction – the programmes of the European Union – have had a fundamental effect on both Eastern European small(er) national cinemas, and by simply considering the changes in the number of films produced within this framework we might sense the process. Counting and grouping film production in Hungary and Romania since their respective accessions to the EU, what definitely emerged as a trend was the constant rise in the number of films produced in the first five-year periods following the accession (2004-2009 and 2007-2011, respectively), and then a drastic change in the first parts of the second five-year periods (2010-2014 for Hungary, and 2012-2016 for Romania). This meant a serious decrease in the number of films produced or in production in Hungary, and a serious increase in the number of films produced or in production in Romania.³⁷

The Hungarian Movie Database³⁸ presents 587 titles in production in 2005, the first year of this small national cinema's membership in a post-communist transnational structure. Out of this mass of productions, however, only 27 were feature-length fiction films made for cinema or television, a number that is close to the average of 23-25 films produced in a similarly transnational, market-oriented Hungarian film industry in the 1931-1945 pre-war period. The other titles in production in 2005 were documentaries, short films, experimental films, animation films and television material. In 2006, a number of 584 titles are listed, out of which 40 are feature-length fiction films made for cinema or television. A slight decrease starts in 2007: in this year we have a number of 417 titles mentioned in the Hungarian Movie Database, out of which 27 are feature-length fiction films, with 390 titles belonging to the other categories. In 2008, the number of films in production in Hungary is again higher, 455, out of which 24 are listed as feature-length fiction films made for cinema or television. In the last year of the first five year-period, 2009, the Database mentions 308 titles, out of which 37 are categorized as feature films.

In the second five-year period, the numbers start to change more remarkably: in 2010, there appear 40 titles of television or cinematic feature films, out of which 20 could be characterized as having reached the interest threshold of the movie-going public, with a number of 125

³⁷ These trends seem to be valid in November 2015, the date of finalizing this research.

³⁸ *The Hungarian Movie Database*, <<http://archiv.magyar.film.hu/hmdb/>> [accessed 18 November 2015].

of non-feature-length or nonfiction film titles in production. In 2011, when the aforementioned restructuring of the state film funding system has been effectively carried out, we find (according to the Hungarian Movie Database) 26 feature-length fiction films listed as being in production, with 134 titles belonging to the other categories. It is in 2012 that a very spectacular change occurs in the numbers: only 13 feature-length fiction film titles appear as being in production, out of which only 6 premiered in that year, with 7 titles being pushed off for the upcoming years;³⁹ for this year, only 5 documentary titles are listed in the Database as being in production. For the next year, 2013, among the titles that appear in production or with premiere scheduled in that year there are 8 documentary titles, 24 titles of short and animation films, and 10 titles of feature-length fiction films meant for cinema. Out of the latter, one is an omnibus film by several young directors; the fate of 3 further titles is still not finalized, and 6 titles have not reached premiere either in that year, or up to 2015. The Hungarian Movie Database gives the following data for the year 2014, the first year with really low numbers: 15 titles, out of which, however, each reached premiere and each may be characterized by good audience numbers or serious festival nominations. As for the breakdown: we are speaking about 1 documentary, 6 short films, and 9 titles of feature-length fiction films, out of which 7 had their premiere in 2014 or 2015. For the 2015, the numbers listed in the Hungarian Movie Database are the following: 1 documentary, 6 other types, and 20 feature-length fiction film titles, out of which 7 already had their premiere, with 13 titles in various stages of pre- or production (some of them with low probability of ever being made). If we try to describe the Romanian film production based on the five-year periods starting with the country's 2007 accession to the EU framework, somewhat different numbers and trends appear. In the first year of its EU-framework membership, 2007, 6 feature-length fiction films made for cinemas⁴⁰ and 1 documentary film are listed as being in pro-

³⁹ Some of which, like Áron Máttyássy's *Vikend (Weekend)* premiered only in 2015, and some, like Bálint Kenyeres' *Tegnap (Yesterday)* is still being in production in the first part of 2016.

⁴⁰ In Romania, the rich communist tradition of public television feature-length fiction films can be said to have stopped totally in the post-1989 period, in contrast to Hungary, where this tradition not only exists, but also continues to inform film production, with notable examples being made every year.

duction in the yearly publication entitled *The Romanian Film Index*.⁴¹ The numbers increase slightly in the next year, 2008, when 1 documentary and 14 feature-length fiction films are listed as being in production or set for premiere. In 2009, the number of documentaries increases to 7, while the number of feature-length fiction films to 16. The tendency to grow continues in 2010 too: 17 Romanian feature-length fiction films and at least 7 documentary films were being produced or premiered. In the last year of this first five-year period, the numbers are still oscillating between 10 and 20, with 11 documentaries and 20 feature-length fiction films in production or meant to be premiered in 2011 (the year when Hungarian state film funding structures are undergoing serious readjustments).

In 2012, the first year of the second five-year period, we have 24 feature-length fiction films and 2 documentaries listed by *The Romanian Film Index* as being in production, and out of these at least 12 titles have reached the threshold of the movie-going domestic public's attention. The corrected numbers in the 2013-2014 *Romanian Film Index* list 20 premiered feature-length fiction film titles in the year 2013, and 36 such titles are listed as premiering in 2014, with 12 documentary or animation films listed as being in production. Adding these numbers up we arrive to a total of 50 to 60 feature-length fiction film titles listed yearly in production, most often directly financed through the mentioned CNC contests (including, obviously, also the co-productions). The similar publication issued in 2015 lists a number of 21 feature-length fiction film as having been premiered in 2014 (twice the average yearly premiere number in the similar period in Hungary: 10), together with 3 documentary titles and 37 other titles listed in various stages of production. The number of premiered feature-length fiction films in 2015 raises to 31, with 10 documentary titles also presented. In November 2015, a further number of 40 feature-length fiction film and 5 documentary film titles are announced as being in various stages of their production.

In the first five-year period of its EU-membership (2004-2009), Hungarian film production may be characterized by having at least 20, and at most 40 feature-length fiction films in production or premiering per year, with a hypothetical average of 31 such films annually – a number, however, which was last valid in 2011-2012. Since then, and certainly

⁴¹ The Romanian Film Promotion page, <<http://www.romfilmpromotion.ro/en/publications>> [accessed 18 November 2015].

due to the re-structuring of the Hungarian state-funding system, this hypothetical number of 30 feature-length fiction films, and an actual number of 20 features in production or premiering in a given year has dropped considerably: 13 in 2012, 10 in 2013, 9 in 2014, finally 7 premiered and 13 in production during 2015. These numbers lead us to a hypothetical average of 13 Hungarian feature-length fiction films produced per year in period 2010-2015 (the second five-year period following the accession).

Table 2. Number of films produced since EU-accession

year	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
HU	27	40	27	24	37	40	26	13	10	9	20
RO	6	14	16	17	20	24	56 (20+36)	58 (21+37)	71 (31+40)	n.d.	
year	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	

If compared to the 2007 data when 7 Romanian feature-length fiction film titles are listed as being in production, in 2013 we can speak about 50-60 feature-length fiction film titles that are in production in Romania (even if the number of delayed or suspended and recommenced productions is much higher currently in the Romanian than in the stricter Hungarian industry). The ten-fold increase in the number of feature-length fiction films related to national Romanian film production (not counting runaway productions, of course) leads us to a tally of films that is actually the half of such a major national production in Europe as the French one for example – with an average of 130 feature-length fiction films (with some amount of French input) being in production per year. While, as we have seen, in the case of the Hungarian cinema this is a drop somewhere between 50-75% (from 40 films produced in the peak years down to an average of 10 films, then up again to 20 in all in 2015), in the case of the bigger, yet still small national market of Romanian cinema, we can register the opposite tendency: a growth in the number of feature films in production or meant for premiere in a given calendar year from 7 (2007) to a hypothetical average of 55 feature films (2014-2015), a growth somewhere around 750%. These differences might be also attributed to the fact that Romanian film production – in spite of being a post-communist Eastern European cinema sharing many aspects with Hungarian film production – is

a numerically bigger market (see Table 1). Furthermore, also due to its historical trajectory as a national film producing entity different from the Hungarian model (both in the pre-communist and in the communist era), the Romanian cinema market is less saturated culturally than the Hungarian one, thus there is space for growth and development in various respects.⁴² This is decrease from the peak EU-framework year in Hungarian film production, when 40 titles appeared, to the more modest number of around 13 feature-length fiction films produced a year, with less than 10 reaching premiere. In the Romanian case, this is a simultaneous increase to 20-25 feature-length fiction films premiering a given year, with the same number in production, leading us to a total of 50-60 such productions a year. These might be also interpreted as the externally (transnationally) and internally (domestically) regulated re-alignments of small national cinemas in Europe. Thus, the current numbers perhaps reflect more accurately the filmmaking and film-distributing possibilities in these two specific Eastern European small national markets that are, however, also transnationally positioned thanks to the European Union founding and supporting contexts in feature-length fiction film production.

SMALL NATIONAL CINEMAS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THEIR DOMESTIC AUDIENCES

These two Eastern European cinema markets may be considered small to different extents. Concerning the domestic audience of domestic films, data from the 2005-2015 period show that a hypothetical average audience number for a Hungarian or Romanian feature-length fiction film might be placed somewhere between 5,000-30,000 viewers for

⁴² One needs to highlight the constant rise in the value of GNI per capita in the studied period in Romania, in contrast to the same variable stagnating in Hungary. The spectacular rise in the number of cinema attendances in the last five years, according to data published on The Romanian National Film Center (CNC) website, must be also mentioned: between 5 and 6 million in 2009, this reached 10 million attendances in the last measured year, 2014. See the CNC page, <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=442> [accessed 9 November 2015].

whole screening periods.⁴³ In the top 20 most viewed Romanian films presented in the CNC data statistics for the 2009-2013 period we find 6 domestic films which had more than 50,000 viewers, and for the 2014-2015 period we may add two more examples. As for the most successful Hungarian films of the Vajna-era (the 2010s), we find 4 films which have surpassed the “magical” 100,000 viewer threshold, with László Nemes’ *Saul fia* (*Son of Saul*, 2015) also having 66,532 official viewers in November 2015, the final date of the present research.⁴⁴ Now that we have an impression of the asymmetries existing in these two neighbouring Eastern European small national markets with regard to cinema audiences and their general predisposition and interest in films and cinema attendance, I would like to present the list of the 5 most viewed domestic films in the last three years in both cinemas.

Table 3. Top 5 Hungarian films in terms of audience numbers in the early 2010s⁴⁵

Title	Director	Number of film viewers
<i>Coming Out</i>	Dénes Orosz (2013)	141,760
<i>Liza, a rókatündér</i> (<i>Liza, the Fox-Fairy</i>)	Károly Ujj Mészáros (2015)	105,433
<i>Argo 2</i>	Attila Árpai (2015)	105,049
<i>Megdönteni Hajnal Tímeát</i> (<i>What Ever Happened to Timi?</i>)	Attila Herczeg (2014)	104,863
<i>Saul fia</i> (<i>Son of Saul</i>)	László Nemes Jeles (2015)	ca. 90,000

⁴³ However, according to the CNC data for the national audience numbers in cinemas: this has increased from 6,508,477 admissions in 2010 nationwide to 10,174,644 in 2014, so we are speaking about a very dynamic market in development. See the CNC page, <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=442> [accessed 9 November 2015].

⁴⁴ The film received the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film in February 2016 which boosted its domestic (regional) audience too: it has surpassed 200,000 domestic movie viewers.

⁴⁵ This top list have been synthesized by the author, based on official national movie audience data presented by The National Film Office in Hungary, <<http://nmhh.hu/filmiroda/>> [accessed 18 February 2015], The Hungarian National Film Fund (MNF), <<http://mnf.hu/en/>> [accessed 18 February 2015], and the *Est.hu* cultural program portal’s weekly box-office data, <<http://est.hu/mozi/toplista/#magyar/dt=2015.02.12>> [accessed 11 November 2015]. They are based on data that were accessible until 11 November 2015.

Table 4. Top 5 Romanian films in terms of audience numbers in the 2010s⁴⁶

Title	Director	Number of film viewers
<i>Poziția copilului (Child's Pose)</i>	Călin Peter Netzer (2013)	118,422
<i>Selfie</i>	Cristina Iacob (2014)	102,026
<i>Aferim!</i>	Radu Jude (2015)	76,622
<i>Despre oameni și melci (Of Snails and Men)</i>	Tudor Giurgiu (2012)	61,264
<i>De ce eu? (Why Me?)</i>	Tudor Giurgiu (2015)	58,423

It is comedies, as well as films engaged with contemporary history and politics that both Hungarian and Romanian domestic audiences are most interested in and are looking for if they choose to watch a domestic film – in spite of the evident dominance of what is called “American cinema” in both countries.⁴⁷ Four out of five most viewed Hungarian films in the period of study are comedies, although they belong to different subgenres.⁴⁸ *Coming Out* (2013) and *What Ever Happened to Timi* (2014) might be described as Hungarian screwball comedies centered on “courtship and rules of heterosexual behaviour” – as Thomas Schatz characterizes the preoccupations of the genre.⁴⁹ *Liza, the Fox-Fairy* (2015) could be characterized as a coming-of-age musical comedy somewhat reminiscent of Jean-Pierre Jeunet’s *Le fabuleux destin d’Amélie Poulain* (*Amélie*, 2001). Finally, the *Argo*-sequel (2014, the first part dating from

⁴⁶ This top list have been synthesized by me, based on official national movie audience data presented by the CNC page, <http://cnc.gov.ro/?page_id=187> [accessed 16 November 2015]), and the *Cinemagia* cultural program portal’s weekly box-office data, <<http://www.cinemagia.ro/boxoffice/>> [accessed 16 November 2015]. They are based on data that were accessible until 16 November 2015.

⁴⁷ See, for example, the *Cinemagia* cultural program portal’s weekly box-office data, <<http://www.cinemagia.ro/boxoffice/>> [accessed 16 November 2015].

⁴⁸ I deal with such aspects in detail in: VIRGINÁS Andrea. The “Hollywood-factor” in the most popular Hungarian films of the period 1996-2014: when a small post-communist cinema meets a mainstream one. In PITASSIO, Francesco – OSTROWSKA, Dorota – VARGA Zsuzsanna (Eds.). *Popular Cinemas in Central Europe: Film Cultures and Histories*. London – New York: I.B. Tauris 2016 (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ SCHATZ, Thomas. *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and the Studio System*. New York: Random House, 1981, p. 151.

2004) makes use of action-comedy elements. The only film on the top list of the 5 most viewed Hungarian films of the 2010s which is not a comedy is *Son of Saul* (2015), a formally innovative Holocaust film,⁵⁰ a film with strong international festival- and media hype.

Out of the five most popular Romanian films of the same period, two are contemporary-oriented films conceived in the arthouse key, social dramas dealing with the topic of corruption at personal and institutional levels: *Child's Pose* (2013) and *Why Me?* (2015). The other three films are made in a comedic vein, two with screwball-characteristics: *Of Snails and Men* (2012) engages in comically covering large-scale improvisations throughout the post-communist transition era, while *Selfie* (2013) is a tale of contemporary teenagers belonging to the Millennium-generation and their short, but tumultuous escape to the Romanian seaside. The last title on the Romanian top-list, *Aferim!* (2015) might be described as a historical Western with comical interludes, happening in a country full with surprises and improvisation.

The most viewed Hungarian films are highly fictitious: a homosexual guy happens to become heterosexual after an accident (*Coming Out*); a world-famous model happens to fall in love with her high-school male colleague on the 20th anniversary of their graduation (*What Ever Happened to Timi*); an effeminate man and an introverted single woman get magical evil capacities of seeing spirits and killing by thought (*Liza, the Fox-Fairy*); not to mention the local band of amateur and petty burglars, who, nevertheless, turn out to be much more successful than the world-famous Japanese mafia in person (*Argo 2*). To some degree *Son of Saul* is also predicated upon a strong sense of “what if”, requiring a high-level of spectatorial investment in believing, and thus going on (along) with the very specific rules of composition of the diegetic world. On the other side of the spectrum, we find the most beloved Romanian films of the last couple of years, with their common denominator being a very stubborn adherence to faithfulness to historical reality (the case of *Aferim!*), present social realities (*Child's Pose*),⁵¹ and the everyday

⁵⁰ “Holocaust film” was identified by Barry Langford as a new, post-classical film genre: “With pre-existing genres (such as the war/combat film) offering no viable parameters for the representation of industrialized mass murder, Holocaust films have generated their own recognisable representational conventions and narrative templates.” LANGFORD, BARRY. *Film Genre. Hollywood and Beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, pp. 264-265.

⁵¹ In his interviews the director, Călin Peter Netzer, repeatedly emphasized the importance of his own middle-class background, even as a source for his film’s interior

experience of people in the near past and present (*Of Snails and Men*, *Selfie*, and *Why Me?*).

Finally, out of the currently most popular five Hungarian films on the domestic market, one is generally considered an arthouse creation (*Son of Saul*), while *Liza, the Fox-Fairy* also has some arthouse flavour to it, with the other three more explicitly recreating the “dominant mainstream” features that Susan Hayward summarizes:

On the ideological front, the dominant filmic text in western society revolves round the standardized plot of order/disorder/order-restored. The action focuses on central characters and so the plot is character-driven. Narrative closure occurs with the completion of the Oedipal trajectory through either marriage or a refusal of coupledness.⁵²

In the case of the most popular Romanian films, two (*Child's Pose*, and *Aferim!*) have been identified domestically, but also on an international market as arthouse films, with the two films of Tudor Giurgiu (*Of Snails and Men*, *Why Me?*) also having arthouse reminiscences, although to a different degree. It is only one film out of the five, *Selfie*, which whole-heartedly embraces mainstream, commercial cinema aesthetics.

Thus we may conclude that the differences, but also the similarities between these two regionally interdependent and neighbouring small national cinemas can be highlighted if a grid of four variables is projected on the top list of the five most viewed films in the respective domestic markets in the 2010s. These variables are based on the following questions: is the film in the comical vein or not; is the film oriented towards representing past events or is its timeframe a present one; is the principle of building its diegetic world that of realism/verisimilitude in representation; and finally, is its canonical positioning that of an arthouse, or rather that of a mainstream production?

decor.

⁵² See HAYWARD, Susan. *Cinema Studies: Key Concepts*. London – New York: Routledge, 2001, p. 93.

AUDIENCE AND PRODUCTION SYSTEMS: CYCLES

The centrality of arthouse, auteur-driven, festival-circuit cinema is a norm accepted by small national funding establishments and critical discourses too, resulting in filmmakers and domestic audiences alike lacking a comprehensive, historically informed awareness of film genres. From the perspectives of artistic canons and/or marketing issues, this characteristic might be linked to the need to differentiate small national film production from globalized mainstream filmmaking based on genres. The centrality of arthouse cinema is also clearly a consequence of the limited conditions available to small national filmmakers. These limits become even more striking if we compare them to major national (such as Polish, French or British) or transnationally oriented, global film production contexts (Hollywood, Bollywood or Nollywood). European arthouse cinema in general has been explicitly positioned as situated at the farthest possible remove from Hollywood-produced, globally distributed mainstream genre cinema, and such a standpoint is evidently upheld by the central canonical formation of both Hungarian and Romanian cinemas as small national cinemas in Europe.⁵³

Both Hungarian and Romanian film industries had historical experiences with larger transnational markets – be that the culturally-linguistically defined German film production with centres such as Vienna or Berlin for the pre-communist Hungarian cinema, the relative possibilities of co-working and mutual distribution that the Eastern Bloc provided through such structures as the Comecon⁵⁴ and the Warsaw Pact,⁵⁵ or finally the strategically facilitated co-operations made possible by

⁵³ One could cite numberless opinions (scholarly and otherwise) to support such a generalization: in a recent interview with cameraman Máttyás Erdély responsible for László Nemes' *Son of Saul* “Hollywood” (exemplified by Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, 1993, or Michael Bay's *Transformers*-series, 2007-2017) gets mentioned throughout as “superficial”, “not true/faithful/fictionalizing”, “down one level”, “lacking in sensitivity”, the Other. BUJDOSÓ, Bori. Úgy kellett sírni, hogy ne mozogjon a kamera. In *VS. Hu*, 12 June 2015, <<http://vs.hu/magazin/osszes/ugy-kellett-sirni-hogy-ne-mozogjon-a-kamera-0610#!s0>> [accessed 16 June 2015].

⁵⁴ Comecon was created in January 1949 by the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Romania, joined in the same year by Albania, then in 1950 by the German Democratic Republic, then Mongolia (1962), Cuba (1972), Vietnam (1978), also assisted by Yugoslavia. See <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comecon>> [accessed 18 November 2015].

⁵⁵ The Warsaw Pact was founded in 1955 by the same members of Comecon.

the various European Union platforms and founding agencies. These experiences have been formative also for current cinema production and patterns of popularity in Hungarian and Romanian film. However, one must also point to a fundamental difference between Hungarian and Romanian cinema and film history in order to better understand the causes of current film popularity in these Eastern European markets. For example, Hungarian film industry was afforded the chance to know market-oriented, studio-based “Hollywood-style” filmmaking before the communist era, a possibility which Romanian film industry had only to a very limited degree. Thus the communist-era suspicion or, in the contrary, adaptation of wider-target studio filmmaking created different situations in post-communist Hungary and Romania, with repercussions lasting up to this day as far as the (non)acceptance of commercial, film genre philosophy is concerned, besides the dominant ideology of arthouse authorship. This text has been imagined as a possible examination of these long-lasting repercussions.

THE MISSING MIDDLE TRANSFORMATIONS AND TRENDS IN HUNGARIAN FILM COMEDIES AFTER POLITICAL CHANGE

Balázs Varga

The rapid and hectic political changes of 1989, which brought about the end of state socialism in Eastern Europe, also dramatically transformed the region’s screen industries. However, radical shifts and ruptures, usually caused by political change, are a recurrent feature of Eastern European cinema history. Such developments, whether taking place in 1945 or 1989, have profoundly changed the structure and trends of these cinema cultures, serving to alter, overwrite or reject the values, trends, and priorities of the previous epoch. And so the region’s film histories are usually narrated within a ruptured, discontinuous framework in which the central dynamics are political changes and the interconnection of different sectors of film culture – from popular to middle-brow and arthouse.

In the case of Hungarian film history, the determining and interwoven trends are specifically the local variations of the comedy-based popular and the historically- and politically-motivated art cinema. Subsequent phases of Hungarian film history can only be interpreted in relation to the connections of these traditions. Some eras have been dominated by one of the two – the 1930s by popular film culture, and the 1970s by politically-engaged auteur arthouse films – while others are characterised by a combination thereof, notably the 1960s, 1980s, and 2000s. Furthermore, the latter is best understood along social-cultural-political lines. Where the 1940s saw politically-motivated films occupy a prominent position alongside market-driven popular fare, the 1950s played host to a non-commercial socialist realist film culture that put the popular traditions of the 1930s to use in political-ideological propaganda.

Accordingly, this article analyses transformations in Hungarian popular cinema, especially those involving comedy after the political changes

of 1989, placing emphasis on longstanding questions of tradition, i.e. local film culture, and the new contexts of cultural globalization, which is to say cross-cultural flows and cross-border trends in popular cinema.

POPULAR CINEMA AND HUNGARIAN FILM HISTORY

Although not without its problems and difficulties, the term “popular” is widely used in Cultural Studies and Cinema Studies.¹ In the context of the cinemas of the former Eastern Bloc, the transformation and transition from state socialism to a market economy makes it more important to confront the hidden cultural-political dynamics and contradictions of this term; the connections between popular cinema, the market economy, commercialism, state control, dominant ideology, and cultural hierarchies. It is understandable that considerable disagreement exists about the limited utility of the term “popular cinema,” and especially the notion of genre cinema, which is far from interchangeable with popular cinema during state socialism.² In this article, I use the term “popular cinema” to refer to films aimed at a large audience; those using the codes, genres, and conventions of mainstream cinema.

The aforementioned ruptured history and master narratives of Hungarian popular cinema can be divided into three major phases. The first, from the 1910s to the end of World War II, favoured genre-based film production; the films made during this period were predominantly genre films, and Hungary boasted a powerful film industry not coincidentally referred to as “little Hollywood.” Gyöngyi Balogh summarised this “golden era” of Hungarian comedy thusly: “[w]hile Hungarian silent films had experimented with almost every existing genre, the choice of

genre in the Hungarian talkies was much more limited. After the success of *Car of Dreams*,³ the ruling genre of the 1930s became comedy.”⁴ The second phase, during the four decades of state socialism, radically altered the system of political and cultural preferences. Popular cinema was problematic, with films needing to fulfil political expectations. Gábor Gelencsér highlighted the nature of these changes quite pointedly, noting that, before World War II, Hungarian cinema had only boasted a tradition of popular filmmaking and comedies, but after the war politically motivated arthouse fare dominated Hungarian film culture.⁵

During state socialism, the authors of cultural policy renounced the tradition of the well-made and vigorous popular films of the 1930s and 1940s, but did not – and could not – reject popular culture, which is to say the culture “of the people.” Popular film and especially popular television were not absent from the cultural landscape at this point in time, but their cultural standing was low. Comedies, historical epics, and musical films maintained the traditions of Hungarian popular cinema during state socialism, although from a political and ideological perspective “pure entertainment” struggled until the 1980s. At this time, it was seen as suspicious for a filmmaker to want to make a successful, amusing film; a film needed to contain a social message – if only as a safety net – even if it was but a humble comedy.

Since the 1980s, it has not been deemed problematic for a filmmaker to make a popular film. However, the critical and professional standing of these films was on the decline until the late 1990s. It was during this third post-socialist phase, following the transition from state socialism to the market economy, that Hungarian cinema struck a new balance between auteur and popular cinema.

¹ Dyer, Richard – Vincendeau, GINETTE (Eds.). *Popular European Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 1991; Eleftheriotis, Dimitri. *Popular Cinemas of Europe: Studies of Texts, Contexts and Frameworks*. London: Continuum, 2001.

² Skwara, Anita. Film Stars Do Not Shine in the Sky Over Poland: The Absence of Popular Cinema in Poland. In Dyer, Richard – Vincendeau, GINETTE (Eds.). *Popular European Cinema*, pp. 220-231; Beumers, Birgit: Soviet and Russian Blockbusters: A Question of Genre?. In *Slavic Review*, vol. 62, no. 3 (2003), pp. 441-454.

³ A 1934 film by Béla Gaál, with the original title *Meseautó* (editor’s note).

⁴ Balogh Gyöngyi. History of the Hungarian Film, from the Beginning until 1945. In *Filmkultúra*, <<http://www.filmkultura.hu/regi/2000/articles/essays/balogh.en.html#gold2>> [accessed 7 August 2016].

⁵ Gelencsér Gábor. Trabi of Dreams. The Happiest Films of the Happiest Barrack. In *Filmkultúra*, <<http://www.filmkultura.hu/regi/1999/articles/essays/mesetrabant.en.html>> [accessed 7 August 2016].

GENRES IN POPULAR HUNGARIAN CINEMA

Scholarship dealing with the history of Hungarian popular cinema usually emphasises its relatively narrow range of genres, noting the absence of sci-fi and horror and the pre-eminence of middle-brow genres, especially comedy. In general, these arguments are relevant, at least with respect to the interwar period and especially to the 1930s. However, recent publications have revised canonical narratives of a golden age of Hungarian popular cinema, instead describing 1930s cinema in a more nuanced manner.⁶ These revisionist histories are all the more important because genre-based re-examinations might be useful tools with which to discuss post-socialist Hungarian film culture as well. After all, there are striking parallels between the interwar period and this country's contemporary popular cinema. Of course, the differences are no less clear cut, with the former characterised by a dynamic commercial film industry, and the contemporary film industry based on state support, and non-commercial, non-genre film culture. However, if we focus on the generic range on offer in both of these periods it is clear that comedies were a dominant form. The majority of recent Hungarian box office hits were comedies or generic hybrids boasting strong comic elements, although there have been commercially important historical films as well.

Table 1. Most popular Hungarian films (by admissions), 1990-2016

Title	Director	Year	Admissions	Genre
<i>A miniszter félrelép (Out of Order)</i>	András Kern – Róbert Koltai	1997	662 000	Comedy
<i>Szabadság, szerelem (Children of Glory)</i>	Krisztina Goda	2006	534 000	Historical
<i>Valami Amerika (A Kind of America)</i>	Gábor Herendi	2002	526 000	Comedy

⁶ On Hungarian interwar screwball comedies and crime films see Lakatos Gabriella. "Én olyan rettenetesen gyűlölöm, ahogy még nem szerettem senkit." A magyar screwball comedy 1931 és 1945 között. In *Metropolis*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2014), pp. 8-23. On comedies see Vajdovich Györgyi. Vígjátékváltozatok az 1931-1944 közötti magyar filmben. In *Metropolis*, vol. 18, no. 3 (2014), pp. 24-41.

<i>Csinibaba (Dollybirds)</i>	Péter Tímár	1997	501 000	Comedy / Musical
<i>Magyar vándor (Hungarian Vagabond)</i>	Gábor Herendi	2004	456 000	Comedy / Historical
<i>Sorstalanság (Fateless)</i>	Lajos Koltai	2005	449 000	Historical
<i>Valami Amerika 2 (A Kind of America 2)</i>	Gábor Herendi	2008	428 000	Comedy
<i>Csak szex és más semmi (Just Sex and Nothing Else)</i>	Krisztina Goda	2005	407 000	Comedy
<i>Meseautó (Car of Dreams)</i>	Barna Kabay	2000	305 000	Comedy
<i>Üvegtigris 2 (Glass Tiger 2)</i>	Péter Rudolf	2006	304 000	Comedy
<i>Üvegtigris 3 (Glass Tiger 3)</i>	Péter Rudolf	2010	294 000	Comedy
<i>A Hídember (Bridgeman)</i>	Géza Bereményi	2002	287 000	Historical
<i>Sacra Corona (Sacred Crown)</i>	Gábor Koltay	2001	255 000	Historical
<i>Egy szoknya, egy nadrág (One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers)</i>	Bence Gyöngyössy	2005	254 000	Comedy
<i>Saul fia (Son of Saul)</i>	László Nemes	2015	250 000	Drama / Historical
<i>SOS Szerelem (SOS Love)</i>	Tamás Sas	2007	239 000	Comedy
<i>Made in Hungaria</i>	Gergely Fonyó	2009	225 000	Comedy / Musical
<i>Sose halunk meg (We Never Die)</i>	Róbert Koltai	1993	210 000	Comedy
<i>Megy a gőzös (The Train Keeps a Rollin')</i>	Róbert Koltai	2007	209 000	Comedy
<i>A három testőr Afrikában (Three Guardsmen in Africa)</i>	István Bujtor	1996	208 000	Comedy
<i>9 és ½ randi (9 and a Half Dates)</i>	Tamás Sas	2008	201 000	Comedy

<i>A Napfény íze (Sunshine)</i>	István Szabó	2000	200 000	Historical
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The dominant role comedies play in contemporary Hungarian film culture is even more intriguing if we compare it to the 1980s. This decade was characterised by a much broader generic range, including animated films such as *Szaffi (The Treasure of Swamp Castle)*, 1985, dir. Attila Dargay), *Vuk (Vuk: The Little Fox)*, 1981, dir. Attila Dargay), *Vízipók-csodapók (Water Spider Wonder Spider)*, 1982, dir. Szabolcs Szabó), and *Macskafogó (Cat Catcher)*, 1986, dir. Béla Ternovszky); children's and family films such as *A szeleburdi család (A Harum-Scarum Family)*, 1981, dir. György Palásthy), *Suli-buli (Schooltime Blues)*, 1982, dir. Ferenc Varsányi), *Szegény Dzsoni és Árnika (A Duck-and-Drake Adventure)*, 1983, dir. András Sólyom), and *Gyerekrablás a Palánk utcában (The Palisade Street Kidnapping)*, 1985, dir. Sándor Mihályfy); musical films such as Gábor Koltay's *A koncert (The Concert)*, 1981) and *István a király (István, the King)*, 1984); crime comedies such as *A pogány madonna (The Pagan Madonna)*, 1980, dir. István Bujtor – Gyula Mészáros) and *Csak semmi pánik (Don't Panic, Please!)*, 1982, dir. Sándor G. Szőnyi – István Bujtor); satires such as *Te rongyos élet! (Oh, Bloody Life)*, 1983, dir. Péter Bacsó) and *Banánhéjkeringő (Banana Skin Waltz)*, 1986, dir. Péter Bacsó – Tamás Tolmár); and historical/heritage films such as István Szabó's *Mephisto* (1981) and *Redl ezredes (Colonel Redl)*, 1985), and András Kovács's *A vörös grófnő (The Red Countess)*, 1985). We cannot account for the absence of many of these genres from contemporary Hungarian cinema by merely citing simplified and generalised notions of a lack of money or shrinking state support, with for example family and children's films produced on significantly lower budgets than costume dramas and historical epics.

What is more, if we survey box office lists from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, it is clear that the most popular films in modern Hungarian film history have in fact been costume films, historical epics (spectacular literary adaptations), adventure films, and musical comedies.⁷ Thus, it seems as though comedy was a hegemonic genre only before 1939

⁷ These films were directed by veteran filmmakers such as Márton Keleti, Frigyes Bán, and Viktor Gertler who had experience in the pre-World War II commercial film industry. The only exception was Zoltán Várkonyi, a director of Hungarian historical epics and adaptations, who worked as a theatre director before starting his career in the Hungarian film industry after 1945.

and only after 1989; in the intervening state-socialist period, Hungarian popular cinema was characterised by a broader range of output.

(POST)SOCIALISM AND POPULAR FILM CULTURE IN HUNGARY

As noted above, Hungarian cinema under state socialism is usually portrayed as utopian for auteurs and arthouse fare, or, as Anikó Imre puts it:

films from the region have maintained strong aesthetic and thematic continuities with what had become fossilized as the “artistic character” of East European cinema – the Eurocentric male or masculine intellectual’s attempt to process national history in a sophisticated, self-reflexive, allegorical film style.⁸

The hegemony of politically-engaged arthouse filmmaking weakened in the late state-socialist period, however, with, for example, the 1980s ushering in something of a renaissance in popular film culture and genre filmmaking. This development was due partly to shrinking state budgets, which initiated new competition in the film industry. Yet, European cinema of the 1980s was also characterised by a new academicism, i.e. by the proliferation of more conventional forms of filmmaking. As András Bálint Kovács argues, this decade was marked by the “lure of professionalism.”⁹ On the one hand, the lure of or a fascination with professionalism saw film production shaped by quasi-market tendencies (popular films made with the help of successful state-owned companies). On the other, there was a distinct change in filmmakers’ attitude to well-made films and domestic audiences. Two additional tendencies may also help us better to understand Hungarian cinema in this decade. First, the rise of co-productions with the west, such as *Mephisto*, *Örökség (The Heiresses)*, 1980, dir. Márta Mészáros), *Miss Arizona* (1988, dir. Pál Sándor), and *Viadukt (Sylvester Syndrome)*, 1982, dir. Sán-

⁸ Imre Anikó. Introduction. In *East European Cinemas*. New York & London: Routledge, 2005, p. XII.

⁹ Kovács András Bálint. Nyolcvanas évek: a romlás virágai. In *A film szerint a világ*. Budapest: Palatinus, 2002, pp. 240-282.

dor Simó) represented the local critical-intellectual tradition of auteur cinema, but with a move toward European mainstream/middle-brow cinema culture. Second, was a surge of popular films, often inspired by western hits, that included *The Pagan Madonna* – a Hungarian version of the *Piedone*-films – and *Szerelem első vérig* (*Love Till First Blood*, 1985, dir. György Dobray – Péter Horváth) – an indigenous teen film patterned after *La Boum* (*The Party*, 1980, dir. Claude Pinoteau), which represented a partial turn to the domestic commercial market.

However, canonical histories of Hungarian film in the 1980s focus on radical auteurs such as András Jeles, Gábor Bódy, and Béla Tarr, and the so-called “Black Series.”¹⁰ This group of films, considered representative of the Hungarian arthouse scene of the late 1980s and early 1990s, comprises slow and rather depressing black-and-white films dealing with perennial topics like crime, sin, damnation, and punishment. The series was bookended by Béla Tarr’s *Kárhozat* (*Damnation*, 1987) and *Sátántangó* (1994), and boasted such films as *Szürkület* (*Twilight*, 1990, dir. György Fehér), *Céllövölde* (*Shooting Gallery*, 1990, dir. Árpád Sopsits), *Gyeregyilkosságok* (*Child Murders*, 1993, dir. Ildikó Szabó), *Árnyék a havon* (*Shadows on the Snow*, 1992, dir. Attila Janisch), and *Woyzeck* (1994, dir. János Szász).

Thus, in the 1980s, Hungarian cinema was characterised by growing scepticism of the modernist tradition of politically-engaged, activist filmmaking.¹¹ Of the diverging trends of the decade – radical auteurs such as Jeles, Bódy, and Tarr, a mainstream middle-brow film culture represented by István Szabó and Márta Mészáros, the western co-productions, and a new stream of popular cinema – only two survived the end of state socialism. Those were arthouse cinema, in the form of the ongoing Black Series, and new academism; both survived because the new state support system largely preserved the film studios of the state-socialist period.¹² By contrast, both popular cinema and genre experiments declined in the early 1990s; it was as if these films were lost amid the political and cultural transition.

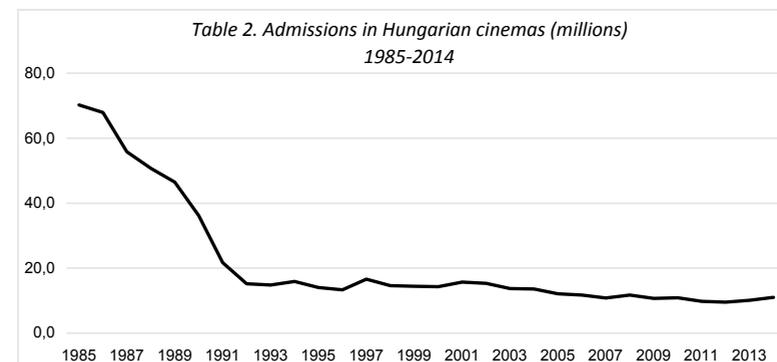
¹⁰ On the films of the Black Series see Bakos Gábor. A színhiány filmjei. A fekete széria forma- és stíluselmzése. In *Metropolis*, vol. 14. no. 4 (2010), pp. 36-44.

¹¹ The tradition of politically-engaged and taboo-breaking filmmaking in the 1980s was continued by a cycle of historical documentaries which dealt with Hungarian Stalinism in the early 1950s, and the 1956 revolution.

¹² On the transformation of the Hungarian film industry and support system see Varga Balázs. Take the Money and...? Questions of Self-governance in the Hungarian Film Industry. In *Illuminace*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2012), pp. 29-43.

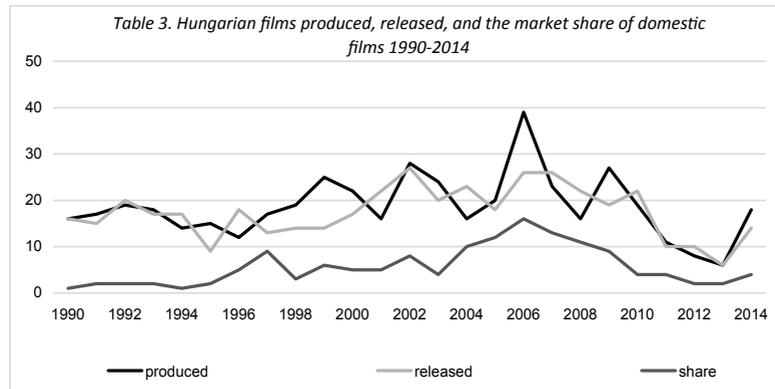
THE VIEW FROM THE “IVORY TOWER”

It is quite obvious that following political change, Hungarian cinema, not unlike other Eastern European film cultures, was faced with broad questions concerning tradition and continuation: which of the politically-engaged traditions of the arthouse and the interwar commercial cinema stood to survive? What might be the new directions for local film culture? While the political system changed rapidly, cultural preferences were slower to do so. Fundamental changes did take place in the distribution and exhibition sectors, however, and Hungarian films dramatically lost their audience during this period of political change.



(source: Hungarian Film Yearbooks)

Most filmmakers and critics blamed the poor box office performances of domestically produced films on Hollywood imports, the new “wild capitalist” rule of law, and conditions of distribution and exhibition. Only a few dissenters argued that in this radically changed political-social-economic context Hungarian films should or might offer something different than they had in the politically closed and commercially protected world of state socialism.



(source: Hungarian Film Yearbooks)

In 1990, the leading Hungarian monthly film magazine *Filmvilág* organised a roundtable discussion about the challenges and opportunities for the country's cinema. Its title, "Should we be professionals or free?" was telling.¹³ The majority of the participants harboured some reservations about "well-made" – in other words middle-brow or commercial popular cinema – and instead favoured the tradition of politically- and socially-committed arthouse auteur filmmaking. Thus, the "lure of professionalism" had weakened, especially among middle-aged directors who had started their careers under state socialism and who preferred the familiarity of tradition over commercial culture.

This is not all that surprising. After the political changes of 1989, Eastern European intellectuals and artists felt that the political and social traditions, functions, and positions of arthouse-auteur cinema should continue. There was also a broad consensus in both the Hungarian film industry and cultural life that these were the most – and perhaps even the only – important traditions in Hungarian cinema. In 1989 and 1990, not only did the euphoria of political change foster such feelings, but major European festivals heaped praise on highly political films, thus celebrating the taboo-breaking classics of Eastern European cinema. Where Jiří Menzel's *Skřivánci na niti* (*Larks on a String*, 1969), banned for some twenty years, won the Golden Bear at the Berlinale in 1990,

¹³ Profik legyünk vagy szabadok? Kerekasztal-beszélgetés. In *Filmvilág*, vol. 33, no. 6 (1990), pp. 3-8.

the previously banned Ryszard Bugajski's *Przesłuchanie* (*Interrogation*, 1982) and Karel Kachyňa's *Ucho* (*Ear*, 1969) both appeared in competition at Cannes.¹⁴ The release of these banned and shelved Eastern European pictures reinforced the post-Cold War stereotype of a politically committed, artistically inclined film culture repressed by the state.¹⁵ It was now clear that this was a case of justice done, of a chapter concluded, but certainly not of the opening of a new one.

However, the majority of Hungarian filmmakers wanted to move on in this way. Memories of late-1980s taboo-breaking historical documentaries and of brave political films remained clear. During political change, the everyday experience was one of the streets filled with book vendors, selling previously banned books and *samizdat* publications, and memoirs about the 1956 revolutions and Stalinisms. Moreover, in 1989, Géza Bözörményi and Lívia Gyarmathy's monumental historical documentary about the Stalinist work camp *Recsk 1950-53: Egy titkos kényszermunkatábor története* (*Recsk 1950-53: Story of a Forced Labor Camp*, 1988) received the European Film Award. It is no coincidence that in Hungary those who wanted to be "professionals" and were "market-addicted" chose to direct commercials instead of films.

Thus, the recognition or emancipation of popular films and commercial filmmaking was a slow and convoluted process whose main components were institutional and cultural.¹⁶ Institutionally, the turning points were represented by the advent of Hungarian commercial television, the opening of multiplex cinemas (events which coincided in 1997), and a change in legislation known as the "Hungarian Film Law," which was passed in 2004. The cultural factors comprised the appearance of a new generation of filmmakers, critics, and most evidently young audiences who wanted to see familiar stories and faces in Hungarian films. During the 1990s, the country's popular cinema tried to find the future

¹⁴ Katarzina Marcziniak interprets this as possible over-compensation, the critical hailing of offering a form of "Eastern exotica" to western audiences. See Marcziniak, Katarzina. How Does Cinema Become Lost? The Spectral Power of Socialism. In Närepea, Eva – Trossek, Andreas (Eds.). *Via Transversa: Lost Cinema of the Former Eastern Bloc*. Tallin: The Research Group of Cultural and Literary Theory – Estonian Literary Museum Institute of Art History – Estonian Academy of Arts – Estonian Semiotics Association, 2008, p. 23.

¹⁵ Berghahn, Daniele: *Hollywood Behind the Wall: The Cinema of East Germany*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005. p. 3.

¹⁶ On the institutional and cultural transformation of Hungarian popular cinema see Varga Balázs. Tradition and Modernization. Contemporary Hungarian Popular Cinema. In *Images*, vol. 13, no. 22 (2013), pp. 175-187.

in its past, through local comedy and cabaret traditions. In the 2000s, Hungarian popular film culture was “modernised,” and turned to more contemporary global production trends. The new generation of filmmakers that emerged at this time did not worry about elitist concerns nor did it try to revive outdated formulae. Rather, it wanted to make genre films based on contemporary trends, but transfer them to local Hungarian culture. In what follows, I survey this transformation, placing particular focus on comedies.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF HUNGARIAN COMEDIES

As in almost every European cinema, comedy has enjoyed a long, vibrant, and distinguished tradition in Hungarian film history. However, the style, universes, and star system of this country’s comedy have changed significantly in recent decades. Comedy as a mode – a manner of presentation, as Geoff King notes¹⁷ – affords filmmakers an opportunity to engage in social commentary and critical reflection. Satire, irony, absurd comedy, and dark humour is often associated with Eastern Europe. Charles Eidsvik has identified a local specificity in Eastern European cinemas, based on their distinctive approaches to reality and politics, arguing that “humor in totalitarian states often functions as, and therefore often gets treated as, an act of rebellion against state-sanctioned values and taboos.”¹⁸ Indeed, poking fun at glib ideological slogans, ridiculing socialist bureaucracy, and mocking the difficulties of everyday life is a common feature of the region’s comedies and satires, although gestures of loyalty and conformity are also apparent. In parallel with the over-politicised approach to Eastern European cinemas and histories, during state socialism, comedies were often understood as evincing an intersection of political criticism and affirmation. However, in reality, this situation is too complex and varied to be reduced to a se-

¹⁷ King, Geoff. *Film Comedy*. London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2002. p. 2.

¹⁸ Eidsvik, Charles. Mock Realism. The Comedy of Futility in Eastern Europe. In Horton, Andrew (Ed.). *Comedy/Cinema/Theory*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991. p. 91.

ries of binary oppositions including dissent and affirmation, subversion and domination, and liberation and manipulation.¹⁹

However, local cabaret traditions and the legacy of state-socialist political-social satire appear to have had a similar influence on the post-socialist transformation of Hungarian comedies. The early 1990s, and the slow resurrection of Hungarian comedies, is best viewed as a continuation of the preeminent trends of the previous decade, with Péter Bacsó’s political satires and István Bujtor’s crime comedies – *The Pagan Madonna, Az elvarázsolt dollár (The Enchanted Dollars, 1985)*, and *Hamis a baba (False Dolls, 1991)* – all made after the political changes. Moreover, almost all of the trends of the early 1990s can be traced to the 1980s. For one, most popular films were made by successful actor-directors such as István Bujtor, Dezső Garas, András Kern, and Róbert Koltai. Another argument in favour of continuity from the late 1980s to the early 1990s is the fact that two emblematic sets of films, Péter Tímár’s series of comedies and András Szőke’s amateur, low-budget, rural comedies emerged at this time. Where Tímár’s first hit, the grotesque political satire *Egészséges erotica (Sound Eroticism)*, was made in 1985, Szőke shot his early efforts at the very end of the 1980s. Tímár’s eccentric and visually stunning comedies and satires, and Szőke’s empathetic plebeian burlesque comedies *Vattatyúk (Cotton Chicken, 1989)* and *Kiss Vakond (The Little Mole, 1995)* are the clearest examples of new trends in Hungarian popular cinema of the 1980s. Thus, we could say that, by the end of the 1980s, all of the emblematic stars, directors, topics, and subgenres that would dominate the Hungarian film comedies in the 1990s were already established. As these trends were only cemented in the following years, we can in turn say that political change did not mark a new beginning, but rather that earlier trends grew stronger.

The most important characteristic of Hungarian comedies of the 1990s was the revival of “comedian comedy.” Comedian comedy or comedian-centred comedy is usually considered a specific tradition, form, or subgenre of film comedy built around famous comedians and their star performances. Steve Seidman, who analyses this tradition in Hollywood, highlights the extra-diegetic characteristics of such films, arguing that “comedian comedy grants the comedian a particular narrative stance that allows the articulation of these [extra-diegetic]

¹⁹ On the “binary metaphors” of socialism (and the Soviet regime), and on the problematic use of these terms see Yurchak, Alexei. *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

features.”²⁰ The most important features of comedian comedies are the show business origins of the comic actor/comedian/performer, which are supplemented with the extra-diegetic features of enunciation and self-reference. These films usually “reveal a structuring conflict between eccentricity and conformity.”²¹ The coherency of narrative, along with linearity and narrative motivation, is often rejected and replaced by the comedian’s performance. In contrast to traditional comedies, which are usually distinguished by a balance between the star and his or her role (i.e. comic acting), comedian comedies usually showcase acting styles that eschew realistic motivation. It is not the actor who has to fit with or into the role, but rather the comedian’s persona which dominates and transforms the characters.²² King adds some important notes to the dynamics of such comedies, arguing that, although the audience is offered the immediacy of the performance of the star comedians, and although these films “exist primarily as showcases for these performances,” it cannot be said that narrative development and narrative conventions are totally rejected.²³

Two enormously popular performers epitomise this period in Hungarian film comedy: Károly Eperjes and Róbert Koltai. Koltai found success in art films, popular television, and the theatre of the 1970s, and by the late 1980s he was one of the country’s most beloved stars of radio cabaret. Similarly, Károly Eperjes built his reputation in arthouse fare in the early 1980s, before enjoying success in comedies by the end of the decade. Both Koltai’s and Eperjes’s respective star personae and comedian performances contributed hugely to the success of their 1990s comedies. Eperjes played eccentric figures who are unable to settle down, notably in two films directed by Péter Tímár. However, the eccentricity of these films is due partly to the director’s personal style; his films are usually marked by such radical stylistic features as jump cuts and rapid montages, as seen in *Csapd le csacsi! (Make It, Silly!)*, 1991, dir. Péter Tímár) and *Csinibaba*. In the case of Koltai, the balance be-

²⁰ Seidman, Steven. Performance, Enunciation and Self-Reference in Hollywood Comedian Comedy. In Krutnik, Frank (Ed.): *Hollywood Comedians: The Film Reader*. London & New York: Routledge, 2003. p. 21.

²¹ Krutnik, Frank. A Spanner in the Works? Genre, Narrative and the Hollywood Comedian. In Brunovska Karnick, Kristine – Jenkins, Henry (Eds.). *Classical Hollywood Comedy*. New York & London: Routledge, 1995, p. 21.

²² Drake, Philip. Low Blows? Theorizing Performance in Post-classical Comedian Comedy. In Krutnik, Frank (Ed.): *Hollywood Comedians*, pp. 187-198.

²³ King, Geoff. *Film Comedy*, p. 32.

tween comedian performance and the diegesis is stronger than in the films of Tímár and Eperjes. Nevertheless, for Koltai, who usually played the lead in self-directed films, theatrical acting is also a prominent feature. He started his directorial career with a surprise hit, and alongside Tímár became one of the preeminent directors of the 1990s, usually portraying clumsy but lovable heroes; everyday figures trying to overcome politics, indifference, and boredom. On the one hand, he tended to play Švejk-esque characters such as the everyday men struggling through hard times in *Sose halunk meg* and *Csocsó, avagy éljen május elseje!* (*Mayday Mayhem*, 2001). On the other, he played strange, funny, and eccentric characters in films that take place in a contemporary milieu, including a teacher who falls hopelessly in love with his student in *Ámbár tanár úr (Professor Albeit)*, 1998) and the secretary of a minister in *A miniszter félrelép*.

The reappearance and popular appeal of comedian comedy in Hungarian productions of the 1990s might be explained by considering the specificities of these films. As King notes, the plots of comedian-centred comedies are usually organised around everyman characters

not usually noted for “star” qualities such as conventionally handsome looks or strong build. [...] As such, they might offer a more plausible basis for identification or allegiance on the part of the viewer. [...] They are less likely to be objects of desire or figures to whose status we might aspire as something superior, distant and exotic.²⁴

The Hungarian comedian comedy cycle continued with a spate of millennial remakes of classic interwar comedies that included 1999’s *Hippolyt* (dir. Barna Kabay – Katalin Petényi) and 2001’s *Car of Dreams*. This trend unfolded in part as a result of the aforementioned films being built around the well-liked characters and performances of Károly Eperjes and of Róbert Koltai. What is more, some conventions of comedian comedy – eccentricity, theatrical acting, breaking from realistic motivation – could be found in other successful comedies of the 2000s, such as the *Glass Tiger* trilogy (2001, 2005, 2010), *Hungarian Vagabond*, *Papírkutyák (Paper Dogs)*, 2009, dir. Bence Gyöngyössi), and *Szuperbojz (SuperBoys)*, 2009, dir. Barna Kabay). This feature therefore represents a

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

popular cultural tradition, and the legacy of local cabaret and entertainment culture in contemporary popular Hungarian cinema.²⁵

But the new millennium did usher in new developments in Hungarian comedy, most notably the new subgenre of romantic comedy. Among the most important examples of this trend are *A Kind of America*, *Just Sex and Nothing All*, and *S.O.S. Love*. These films modernised or at least altered the world of Hungarian comedies in line with contemporaneous global trends, especially those in Anglo-American romantic comedy.²⁶

Tight narrative development and a standardised plotline are signs of the growing importance of narrative and visual style in Hungarian cinema. In spite of comedian comedies' eccentricity and cabaret-connections, contemporary Hungarian comedies are based on dialogue, a balance between story and character, classical low-key acting, and situational humour. The typical milieu of their stories changed as well, with Hungarian romantic comedies invariably taking place in upper-middle-class settings where money is not an issue or problem. This shift dovetails with what Leger Grindon has argued about the basic plot of the subgenre: that constituent films treat romance as a personal matter and therefore not as a social phenomenon.²⁷ The protagonists are usually young people, typically in their 20s and 30s, well-established urbanites working in the media or show business as directors, producers, actresses, models, or radio journalists. Andrea Virginás, in an article on the challenges globalization has created for the Hungarian film industry and its popular cinema, rightly observes that

²⁵ On the everyman figures and their survival stories in the hectic historical-political period of 1960s Hungarian cinema see Tóke Lilla. Idiots on the Ball. Svejksim as a Survival Strategy in the East European Imaginary. In Náripea, Eva – Trossek, Andreas (Eds.). *Via Transversa: Lost Cinema of the Former Eastern Bloc*, pp. 157-175.

²⁶ Again, there are some parallels between contemporary Polish and Hungarian popular cinema, as the Polish commercial cinema of the 2000s is characterised by the (new) trend in globalized screwball comedies, based on Hollywood trends. Perhaps the most notable being *Listy do M (Letters to Santa)*, 2011, dir. Mitja Okorn), a smart Polish version of *Love Actually* (2003, dir. Richard Curtis). On Polish screwball comedies see Crickmar, Rohan. Love and Sensation. A Brief Examination of Some Trends in Polish Comedy Films since 2005. In *East European Film Bulletin* (2015), <<https://eefb.org/archive/march-2015/love-and-sensation-polish-comedy-films-since-2005/>> [accessed 7 August 2016].

²⁷ Grindon, Leger. *The Hollywood Romantic Comedy: Conventions, History, Controversies*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. p. 2.

[m]ore often than not these films revolve around show business, reminding one of classical Hollywood backstage musicals in addition to evidently building on the above-mentioned conventions of screwball comedies. They offer the viewer detailed examinations of how stage appearances, spectacles and (public) star identities are created out of private bodies and persons.²⁸

Identity creation and presentation, makeover stories, masquerade, and the conflicts between the assumed and “true” self are not only essential parts of screwball and romantic comedies,²⁹ they are in fact also fundamental elements of Hungarian interwar popular comedies, suggesting this cycle revolves around problems of identity. It does not follow that their upper-middle-class milieus would mean these films avoid social commentary, although their stories are usually presented in a seemingly utopian setting.³⁰ Their bourgeois milieus function primarily as a sheltering space for the loving couple. Although contemporary Hungarian romantic comedies share some important features with their Anglo-American counterparts, such as the replacement of relatives with friends, and their questioning of gender roles and stereotypes, their overall perspective is still firmly heteronormative.³¹ While the traditions of Hungarian cabaret-based comedies – theatricality and comedian comedy – were the most important elements

²⁸ Virginás, Andrea. The ‘Hollywood Factor’ in the Most Popular Hungarian Films of the Period 1996-2014: When a Small Post-Communist Cinema Meets a Mainstream One. In Ostrowska, Dorota – Varga Zsuzsanna – Pitassio, Francesco (Eds.). *Popular Cinemas in Central-Eastern Europe*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2016. Forthcoming.

²⁹ Grindon, Leger. *The Hollywood Romantic Comedy*.

³⁰ In her discussion of millennial romantic comedies made after 9/11 and the 2008 global economic crises, Betty Kaklamanidou convincingly shows how these films expose the importance of financial security and how the problems of romantic relationships are connected to the accumulated wealth of the couples. She argues that “the perfect heterosexual union is not simply based on love, respect, trust and support, but financial security – and even better financial affluence,” concluding that “in a post-9/11, post-2008 world, many mainstream romantic comedies serve as contemporary fairy tales which celebrate love in a world that does not.” Kaklamanidou, Betty. *Genre, Gender and the Effects of Neoliberalism. The New Millennium Hollywood Rom Com*. London & New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 152.

³¹ On the feminist critique of contemporary Hungarian popular films see Havas, Júlia Éva. Magyar romantikus vígjáték a 2000-es években. In *Metropolis*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2010), pp. 66-79.

in Hungarian comedies of the 1990s,³² the 2000s reinvigorated these trends with a little help from various global genres. Thus, we can say that, whereas the most important references for the 1990s comedies were Hungarian and popular cultural traditions, the situation changed in the 2000s thanks to what we might call the *Bridget Jones* effect.³³ Another difference was that while Hungarian comedies of the 1990s sat uneasily with trends in global cinema – much like the Czech comedies of the decade – subsequent entries closely reflected international patterns, much like the aforementioned cycle of Polish romantic comedies did. Just as 1990s Hungarian comedies' loveable, everyday heroes offered themselves up for nostalgic-ironic empathy and identification, their successors offered pedagogical instruction and stories of confidence-building in an era of unstable identities.

The style and organization of Hungarian comedies is far from uniform however. Their richness of scope is evident if we look at the different subgenres of comedies in contemporary Hungarian cinema. At the top of the list are romantic comedies like *Just Sex...*, *A Kind of America*, *S.O.S. Love*, and *Megdönteni Hajnal Tímeát (What Ever Happened to Timi?)*, 2014, dir. Attila Herczeg). There are, however, also variations, hybrids, and subgenres represented by buddy movies such as *Szőke kóla (Shortcut)*, 2005, dir. Ákos Barnóczky), teen comedies such as *Apám beájulna (Dad Goes Nuts)*, 2003, dir. Tamás Sas) and *Tibor vagyok, de hódítani akarok (Young, Dumb and Full of Love)*, 2006, dir. Gergely Fonyó), high school comedies such as *Álom.net (Dream.net)*, 2009, dir. Gábor Forgács), comedies of manners such as *Hippolyt* and *Car of Dreams*, and musical comedies such as *Made in Hungaria* and *Swing* (2014, dir. Csaba Fazekas), not to mention more complex hybrids like the adventure-comedy-road movies *Konyec – Az utolsó csekk a pohárban (The End)*, 2006, dir. Gábor Rohonyi) and *Kalandorok (Adventurers)*, 2007, dir. Béla Paczolay).³⁴

³² We could add another important characteristic, namely the musical parts which are an essential ingredient of Hungarian comedies from the 1930s to the early 1960s, and which were also commonplaces in the 1990s and 2000s.

³³ This can be observed even in the career of Koltai, whose last film *Magic Boys* (2012) is a domestic variation of the male stripper comedies *The Full Monty* (1997, dir. Peter Cattaneo), and *Magic Mike* (2012, dir. Steven Soderbergh).

³⁴ However, the number of domestically produced romantic comedies appears to decline in the 2010s. Thrillers seem to be an upcoming genre, with stories in isolated, heterotopic places, or non-places like car parks and gas stations, a reoccurring feature of films like *Parkoló (Car Park)*, 2015, dir. Bence Miklauzic), *Vikend (Weekend)*, 2015, dir. Áron Máttyássy) and *Kút (Gas Station)*, 2016, dir. Attila Gigor). The closed, utopian worlds of romantic comedies are now coloured by darker plotlines. For example,

The trends and tendencies in contemporary Hungarian comedy are not only characterised by notable genre hybrids, but also numerous crime comedies. However, paradoxically the typical Hungarian contemporary crime comedy has little to do with crime or with the conventions of the traditional crime film. These films do not tell the story of an investigation and a crime, nor is the detective a central figure. Rather, they focus on the criminals and their clumsy and unskilful actions. In the generic context of the crime film, these are best described as caper movies.³⁵ While the representative Hungarian crime comedy of the 1980s and its likeable hero was Ötvös Csöpi from István Bujtor's *Piedone*-films, in the 2000s it is Attila Árpai's 2004's *Argo* and Tibi Balogh's gang of petty criminals who appear therein. The comic element in these films is usually derived from the comedian performances, and herein lies the link to the 1990s comedian comedies, with examples including Árpai's *Argo 1-2* (2004, 2015), *Kész cirkusz (Bedlam)*, 2005) by Zsombor Dyga, *Kútfejek (Pumpheads)*, 2006) by Iván Kapitány, *Paper Dogs* by Bence Gyöngyössi and *Fekete leves (Black Soup)*, 2014) by Erik Novák. As with the romantic comedies' cross-cultural connections, Hungarian caper movies are closely related to Guy Ritchie's films, and can therefore also be compared to Aleksei Balabanov's Russian crime comedies and to recent Polish crime comedies like Olaf Lubaszenko's *Chłopaki nie płaczą (Boys don't Cry)*, 2000). By virtue of central elements and motifs such as petty criminals and swindlers, along with a social milieu of underdogs, impoverished workers, the unemployed, and other lower class figures, these caper comedies are strongly connected to another significant group of contemporary Hungarian popular films: a cycle of social comedies about the grotesque adventures of groups of underdogs that included *Glass Tiger 1-3* and to some extent *Kontroll (Control)*, 2003, dir. Antal Nimród).

What Ever Happened to Timi is narrated by a grotesque, underclass figure who calls himself a jerk and a moron, and represents the contemporary eruption of gross out comedy in romantic comedies. *Liza, a rókatündér (Liza, the Fox-Fairy)*, 2015, dir. Károly Ujj Mészáros) boasts a crime plot, and gallows humour darkens its comedy.

³⁵ Caper films, much like heist movies, concentrate on a group of people planning and executing a robbery. Unlike heist films, however, caper movies usually boast some comic elements. See Wilson, Ron. *The Left-Handed Form of Human Endeavor: Crime Films during the 1990s*. In Dixon, Wheeler W. (Ed.). *Film Genre 2000: New Critical Essays*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2000. 143-160.

LOST IN TRANSITION

Regarding the social milieus in which they take place, contemporary Hungarian popular films like extremes. Romantic comedies concentrate on the upper-class and show business, social comedies and caper movies the lower classes. The social rules they follow are simple: well-to-do milieus are linked with romance, and low social status with trickery – romantic plotlines are not missing from caper movies by chance. Instead of foregrounding romance, social comedies and caper movies usually employ a group of unattached males. Romantic comedies and social comedies (capers) share a vision of an unchanging social order. In the case of romantic comedies, there is no reason to change, as the protagonists have all the material goods they desire. Their motivation is strictly emotional: to find love and form a romantic union – unemployment or impoverishment is no danger to them. However, stories of social climbing or cross-class romance are rare. Similarly, in the case of social comedies, the protagonists have no legal, institutional, or social opportunities through which they may transcend both their lower class status and deprived social milieus. Thus, crime and unexpected windfalls are the only ways such characters might change their lives. Contemporary Hungarian popular films portray a fragmented and closed society, one offering little chance of social and economic upward mobility. The rich get richer, and the poor can hit the bigtime, but only serendipitously or through crime.

Something is missing however. What else? The middle – the middle-class as a social milieu and the middle-brow as a cultural register. Perhaps this at least partly explains the lack of audience appeal for contemporary Hungarian popular films. These films actually fail to provide familiar stories and characters with whom such viewers as members of a middle-class audience with little interest in radical auteurs, gross-out comedies or hybrid crime comedies could relate. Identity and difference are of crucial importance in contemporary Hungarian comedies; the key question is, in the absence of familiar places, narratives, and heroes, with whom can we identify, and who will get to know us?

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ON-DEMAND SPECTATORSHIP: EIGHT CONCEPTS FOR THE ERA OF DIGITAL DELIVERY

Chuck Tryon

This paper is an attempt to map some of the current tendencies affecting the film and media industries during a time of profound change across the globe, primarily by focusing on how new distribution modes have become central to concepts and practices ranging from textual analysis to the participatory cultures of audiences who work to create meanings within these texts. Distribution has historically received less attention than other areas of research; however, with the rise of streaming video, scholars and audiences alike have become actively aware of how digital delivery affects not just our access to content, but also how, when, and where we watch. Although it is tempting to overstate the effects of these moments of transition, it's also clear that distribution practices are changing radically, and with that, we are encountering a rapidly evolving media culture marked by increasing fragmentation and by individualised viewing experiences. In turn, streaming video-on-demand (SVoD) services such as Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu are making content choices based on the perceived needs of their customers. However, given the economic, cultural, and political differences across different countries, it's certainly a challenge to talk about distribution practices, but I think that these regional distinctions also make this process of mapping distribution all the more urgent, especially given that Netflix launched in several countries across Eastern Europe while I was writing this paper. This paper will identify eight key "concepts" that can open up a conversation about the implications of digital delivery for the film and television industries. By framing my analysis in terms of concepts, I am seeking to identify and unpack a small number of terms that I argue have significant explanatory power when we talk about digital delivery. These concepts are devices for describing, categorizing, and defining major trends in and beliefs about digital delivery. They are an attempt to make sense of what is often a rapidly moving target, as practices, tastes, and corporate goals evolve.

At the risk of overstating things a little, digitalisation has profoundly altered our experience of watching both film and television, prompting us to rethink all aspects of the production-distribution-exhibition-consumption chain and compelling us to look at each moment in this process. In fact, the changes in film and television distribution, at least in the United States, have been swift and dramatic. With some significant exceptions (such as sports and the news), TV viewers are now far less likely to watch shows as they are being broadcast. Instead, TV is frequently consumed asynchronously, often through video-on-demand services such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon or HBO Now or through network websites such as CBS.com, allowing viewers to watch shows off the broadcast schedule, although there is the significant risk that these episodes will be removed from streaming catalogues, often without little to no warning. Further, instead of new episodes being broadcast on a weekly basis, Netflix and Amazon have experimented with models in which an entire “season” or cycle of episodes are released simultaneously, allowing viewers to consume multiple episodes of the show over the course of a single evening. In fact, the very concept of “seasons” of TV series now seems obsolete. Digital delivery has affected the film industry as well. Digital projection in theaters has provided the film industry with far greater control over how films are distributed, allowing studios and theaters to control — and monitor — when and how often a digital copy of a movie has been screened. In fact, for both film and television, digital delivery has been tied to new modes of control aligned with what Ted Striphas, drawing from Henri Lefebvre, has called a “society of controlled consumption,”¹ one that is driven by increasing standardisation and efficiency in order to reduce costs for producers and distributors and to provide them with greater ability to monitor and control the consumption experience. However, while digital delivery has allowed the movie industry to streamline the distribution process and to impose further control over how, when, and where we access movies, it has also, arguably, opened up new opportunities for independent filmmakers to make and distribute movies outside of traditional channels, through practices such as crowdfunding and crowdsourcing, although even these practices have been appropriated by studios and others working within the media industries.

¹ STRIPHAS, Ted. *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 7.

In fact, independent filmmakers have been able to take advantage of these social media tools to cultivate alternative financing and distribution models. The changes in the home video market in the United States have been even more dramatic. In October 2015, the last remaining video-rental store closed in my home city of Raleigh, North Carolina — a metropolitan area consisting of more than two million people. The availability of subscription video-on-demand services such as Netflix have more or less eliminated the video store as a type of inexpensive film and TV library and replacing it with a system that is far more fragmented and ephemeral, one in which catalogues of content are highly unstable and subject to the whims of the market. It is still astounding to me that an institution so entrenched in U.S. popular culture has disappeared so quickly. For decades, video stores anchored suburban strip malls, served as hubs of activity in small towns, and even provided aspiring movie buffs with access to a cinematic education, but as digital delivery made physical media less relevant, video stores quickly — and quietly — disappeared.² Meanwhile DVD and Blu-Ray sales in North America declined dramatically between the years of 2008 and 2015, with digital copies doing little to match the decline in physical media sales. But even while these changes seem to invite the perception that film and television have been revolutionised, there are still significant forms of continuity between the past and present. Furthermore, the transition into digital delivery has been uneven, and practices that are commonplace in North America and parts of Europe may be somewhat less common elsewhere for reasons that are political, economic, and cultural.

But as digital delivery becomes the dominant media form, it has become more productive to see film and TV as simply “content” within a wide distribution culture. In fact, it has become increasingly difficult to separate these media into different categories. We download movies at home and, in some rare cases, watch television shows in theaters or other public spaces. Both movies and television are in most cases produced digitally, and we consume both film and television in a wide variety of formats and screens, our viewing choices often driven by convenience, rather than by aesthetic preference (something that is especially true for younger viewers). We have now reached the point

² For the most authoritative version of this history, see HERBERT, Daniel. *Videoland: Movie Culture at the American Video Store*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

that digital delivery should be regarded as a type of medium. When we go to Netflix, Amazon, or Hulu to access a movie or TV show, we are ultimately following the same process — flipping through menus, creating queues, rating movies or TV shows, and so on. To paraphrase David Bordwell, films and television shows have become files, with the result that many of our historical and theoretical models of medium specificity have become untenable.³ Instead, our experience is largely defined by the mode of delivery. When writing about digital delivery as a medium, I draw from the work of media historian Lisa Gitelman, who has argued that we should define media not just as the technologies that enable communication but the social protocols that determine their use.⁴ These new practices are defined by social, political, and economic factors, and digital delivery has generated new ways of funding, accessing, consuming, and sharing media. With these definitional questions in mind, I will now turn to the eight concepts that I see as most adept at explaining our current media moment.

1. LOCATION

First, I think it's important to acknowledge that location matters, perhaps more than any other concept in this era of digital delivery. SVoD services have been adopted by movie and TV consumers in a wide range of countries and regions. However, streaming services have not been fully or equally integrated across the globe. To some extent, the growth of streaming video has been shaped by political, legal, and economic variables, including factors such as the European Union's Digital Single Market, which has, perhaps unintentionally, had the effect of protecting major producers, including Hollywood studios while making it difficult for independent producers, including many native film producers, to compete. But location plays a significant role in how Netflix and other services are consumed. For example, when I initially composed this paper in October 2015, the VoD service, Netflix, was available in 55 countries; however, weeks after I visited Slovakia, Netflix

³ BORDWELL, David. *Pandora's Digital Box: Films, Files, and the Future of Movies*. Madison: Irvington Way Press, 2012.

⁴ GITELMAN, Lisa. *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2006, p. 5.

expanded to over 150 countries, following quickly on its entrance into parts of Asia, including Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. Notably, as of December 2016, they were still negotiating with the Chinese government to obtain a license that would allow them to operate there. But adoption of subscription video services is also shaped by other regional factors, such as cost and perceived value. In fact, the number of titles available through Netflix's catalogue has varied widely. In 2012 for example, Netflix had over 10,000 titles in the U.S., but its Canadian service offered only 3,000. Within sections of Eastern Europe, Netflix has faced criticism, in part because they did not offer subtitles or dubbing in native language for many of their movies and TV shows. This creates a significant divide — typically along generational lines — between users who are fluent in English and those who are not. Netflix also struggled to achieve widespread adoption in parts of Latin America, in part due to significantly lower broadband penetration rates in those countries. In turn, Netflix and other SVoD services have faced pressure to include more local content to complement the Hollywood fare generally available through the service. Finally, services such as Netflix have engaged in processes of geoblocking that prohibit users from accessing content where they are technically unavailable, a significant limitation that creates lags between regions of the country that have access and those that do not. A number of scholars have highlighted the ways in which geoblocking interferes with fan practices, excluding some fans from experiencing a new TV series at the same time as their friends and fellow fans in neighboring countries. These forms of geoblocking actually have the effect of encouraging piracy, or at the very least, making fans in certain regions feel excluded from the wider media culture.⁵

2. BINGE VIEWING

While streaming video must be understood within these geographic contexts, it is important to emphasize that streaming video also alters television's relationship to time. Subscription video-on-demand services, such as Netflix, have "packaged" the television text through stream-

⁵ LOBATO, Ramon — MEECE, James (Eds.). *Geoblocking and Global Video Culture*. Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2016.

ing archives that encourage users to watch episodes consecutively, especially through sustained periods of watching consecutive episodes, a practice that has popularly become known as “binge watching.” This new mode of consuming media has a number of implications for media scholars and TV audiences alike. Notably, Derek Kompare uses a material metaphor to describe this transition, suggesting that streaming sites have become our “shelves.”⁶ Similarly, Amanda D. Lotz describes VoD services as “programming banks” that could promote more personalised viewing patterns that may not conform to a linear programming schedule.⁷ Thus, television has been transformed from something that is a linear, broadcast text into a “packaged” text, one that can be consumed at whatever schedule the viewer chooses. This produces what might be called an instant mode of media consumption, one that is encouraged by Netflix’s practice of releasing an entire season of a series simultaneously. This latter mode has been central to Netflix’s promotional strategies since it began licensing and distributing original TV series and has been used to emphasize the overlapping promises of prestige, plenitude, participation, and personalisation.⁸ In fact, Netflix has become a crucial participant in this process of revaluing the practices of “binge viewing.” Where binge viewing was once viewed as something negative or anti-social, it is now promoted as something healthy and positive, an indication that television *is* getting better and television audiences are getting smarter, claims that are based on a wide range of assumptions, including cultural taste, genre preferences, and even definitions of what counts as “intelligent” television.

But while binge viewing does change the way we watch TV, it is important to recognize the ways in which this transformation is caught up in marketing hype, in efforts to promote binge viewing as a pleasurable activity, one that is aligned with intelligent and engaged audiences. Again, Netflix has played a significant role in defining on-demand spectatorship. The cornerstone of this promotional strategy was a “Sponsor

⁶ KOMPARE, Derek. Streaming as Shelving: The Media Past in the Media Future. In *Flow TV*, vol. 19, no. 11 (2014), <<http://www.flowjournal.org/2014/05/streaming-as-shelving/>> [accessed 20 November 2016].

⁷ LOTZ, Amanda D. *The Television Will Be Revolutionized*. New York: New York University Press, 2007, p. 59.

⁸ TRYON, Chuck. TV Got Better: Netflix’s Original Programming Strategies and the On-Demand Television Transition. In *Media Industries*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2015), <<http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/126>> [accessed 20 November 2016].

Content” article written for *Wired Magazine* by anthropologist Grant McCracken.⁹ In the article, McCracken offers a narrative in which audiences have now become accustomed to the practices of watching TV shows more attentively and, therefore, TV producers are now able to create content that rewards this type of attention. As a number of observers have pointed out, bingeing usually implies a lack of control. The *Wired* article, however, reframes the practice of watching multiple consecutive episodes of the same TV show as “feasting,” a term that implies not only a clearer sense of intentionality but also a healthier selection of content. Bingeing suggests junk food, while feasting is more aligned with gourmet tastes. McCracken’s TV Got Better essay goes a step further, suggesting that attentive, upright audiences — as opposed to passive couch potatoes — are in some sense responsible for the sharpened storytelling of the on-demand TV era. McCracken even asserts that innovative TV storytelling was “increasing cognition” in its audience. Such causal claims are fraught with major assumptions not just about the ability of new technologies to cause audiences to behave in a certain way but also, as I will argue in more detail later, these claims are marked by assumptions about who is using streaming video and how they are using it. In fact, given the vast numbers of TV shows and movies that are produced and even streamed on an annual basis, it would be impossible to generalize about them. Mixed in with shows that are associated with quality television are dozens of stereotypical sitcoms, reality shows, and countless niche programs designed to appeal to a very limited audience. Finally, by focusing on so-called quality television, we may pay less attention to more casual uses of streaming video, especially its role as an “electronic babysitter” for entertaining young children.

3. COMPLEXITY

That being said, digital delivery has given rise to another change in television storytelling: the increased reliance on and popularisation of complex storylines. Jason Mittell, author of the most authoritative ac-

⁹ McCracken, Grant. TV Got Better. In *Wired Magazine*, 15 May 2014, <<https://www.wired.com/partners/netflix/>> [accessed 7 February 2016].

count of “complex TV” defines it as using “a range of serial techniques” with the underlying assumption “that a series is a cumulative narrative that builds over time, rather than resettling back to a steady-state equilibrium at the end of every episode.”¹⁰ Although narrative complexity predates the rise of streaming video by decades, Mittell is attentive to the fact that the ability to “package” television episodes, whether through bound volumes of DVDs or through streaming video, significantly alters the experience of serial narratives because viewers are granted far more control over when and how they watch.

Although I am skeptical of some of the claims about digital delivery’s ability to transform entertainment, it has fostered a media climate in which complex storytelling can thrive. To some extent, this is due to the fact that digital delivery has vastly expanded the sheer amount of content available at any given time, allowing producers to create content that will address the interests of a narrow, but often highly enthusiastic, audience. Netflix, in particular, has created shows that seem explicitly designed to exploit the experience of binge viewing. *House of Cards* (2013-), their cynical Shakespearean political drama, dispenses with the typical “recap” scenes at the beginning of new episodes, instead launching directly into the narrative. Single episodes do not have to conform to a specific time length because they are not being shoe-horned in to an hour-long time slot. Episodes also do not have to follow the narrative arcs imposed by commercial breaks. Netflix’s reboot of *Arrested Development* (2003-06; 2013-) also employed some innovative storytelling features in that each episode of the “season” retold the same event from the perspective of thirteen different characters, a detail that only became clear after watching several episodes of the show. Notably, the serial format has given rise to a vast proliferation of nonfictional storytelling, especially around the true-crime genre, with series as diverse as the aptly named podcast series, *Serial* (2014), HBO’s *The Jinx* (2015), and Netflix’s *Making a Murderer* (2015), all tracing the complexities of various crime stories. Complexity functions here not just as a narrative device but also as a form of political sense-making, using the narrative underpinnings of forms such as the melodrama — as defined by Linda Williams — to engage in forms of institutional critique of the police, the courts, elected officials, and the media.¹¹

¹⁰ MITTELL, Jason. *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.

¹¹ WILLIAMS, Linda. *On The Wire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

4. LICENSING

However, while digital delivery services such as Netflix (and to a lesser extent, Amazon, Hulu, and YouTube) have been promoted as “innovative” because of their ability to provide unique content that might not have appeared on broadcast television or in movie theaters, these services are also largely built on the recirculation of licensed content, movies and TV series that were obtained from other providers. Netflix and other VoD services have become the equivalent of cable TV syndicators, the location where production companies can get additional value for their content after it is originally broadcast or after its theatrical run is completed, that is, after it has exhausted its value in other distribution windows. In fact, although Netflix promotes itself as being the source of innovative programming, such as *House of Cards* or *Orange Is the New Black* (2013-), the vast majority of its content and most of its spending is dedicated to licensed content, including recent television shows and film catalogues. According to a recent Morgan Stanley analysis, only 17% of Netflix’s spending is devoted to original content, while approximately 30% went to majors including Disney, Fox, CBS, and NBC Universal, among others.¹² Hulu also serves largely as a site where TV fans can catch up on episodes of TV shows they missed when they were first broadcast, although they have, in recent years, purchased rights to a relatively substantial catalogue of films, including streaming rights to the Criterion Collection. In other cases, sites such as Fandor and Mubi have also become vital participants in fostering a global cinephile audience by licensing the rights to a selection of international arthouse films. The foundational anecdote to describe the mission of these sites comes from Efe Cakarel, the founder of Mubi, who famously lamented the fact that he could not obtain legal access to Wong Kar-Wai’s *Faa yeung nin wa* (*In the Mood for Love*, 2000) while he had an extended layover at the Tokyo airport.¹³ Fandor and Mubi operate under a curatorial logic in which they obtain temporary streaming rights to these

¹² SEITZ, Patrick. Netflix Price Increase Leads to Stock Price Target Hike. In *Investor’s Business Daily*, 12 October 2015, <<http://www.investors.com/news/technology/click/netflix-earnings-preview-morgan-stanley-raises-price-target/>> [accessed 7 March 2016].

¹³ Quoted in FILERI, Paul. Beta Male: The Auteurs’ Efe Cakarel Interviewed. In *Film Comment*, vol. 45, no. 1 (January/February 2009), <<http://www.filmcomment.com/article/beta-male-the-auteurs-efe-cakarel-interviewed/>> [accessed 7 March 2016].

films, providing their subscribers with a guided tour through world cinema. However, while these “arthouse” services have received the most scholarly attention, it’s also worth noting that other niche VoD services have also entered the market, including (in the U.S., at least), the Urban Movie Channel, which caters to African-American audiences. Thus, it seems not only possible but highly likely that digital delivery will not produce a singular “celestial multiplex” but will instead replicate what we already see on cable television: an assortment of content providers that all provide access to a selection of content, which they can provide either through monthly subscription rates, advertising fees (in the case of Hulu), or through à la carte purchases. This has been, perhaps, the biggest myth of the on-demand era. When digital delivery first became technologically feasible after YouTube launched in the mid-2000s, it was read in terms of Chris Anderson’s utopian concept of the “long tail,” which argued that the digital delivery — built on the premise of virtually unlimited shelf space — could provide users with a similarly unlimited number of choices when it came to content.¹⁴

As a result, licensing agreements have led to a situation in which no single VoD service provides access to a relatively complete catalogue of classic films or even recent Hollywood films. During the video store era, you could rent VHS tapes and, eventually, DVDs relatively cheaply, a practice that was protected by a provision in U.S. copyright law known as the First Sale Doctrine, which allows people who purchase copyrighted material to rent or sell their copy of a text. But in the streaming era, distributors have far greater control over the rights to films and TV series. In fact, Netflix and other VoD services are essentially like cable syndicators that purchase rights to a movie or TV series temporarily. As a result, these movies and TV shows can disappear with little notice as licensing deals expire. One recent example of this was the expiration of the deal between Netflix and the premium cable TV station Epix, which is owned by the movie studios Paramount, MGM, and Lionsgate. The deal had originally provided Netflix with exclusive rights to dozens of recent films, including *The Hunger Games* (*The Hunger Games*, 2012, dir. Gary Ross; *The Hunger Games: Catching Fire*, 2013, dir. Francis Lawrence; *The Hunger Games: The Mockingjay — Part 1*, dir. Francis Lawrence; *The Hunger Games: The Mockingjay — Part 2*, 2015, dir.

¹⁴ ANDERSON, Chris. *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*. New York: Hachette, 2006.

Francis Lawrence) films. Such licensing agreements make it far more difficult to obtain access to anything resembling a complete database of Hollywood and global cinemas. Unlike the video-store era, in which film and TV fans could browse shelves of DVDs or VHS tapes, the ability to discover new titles on streaming video is constrained by the limited catalogues of each individual subscription service. Thus, although the promises of the “long tail” have suggested that digital delivery will provide us with access to more content, that content is increasingly hidden behind pay walls, creating an increasingly fragmented film and television culture.

5. WINDOWS

Media content is not just restricted spatially. It is also restricted temporally. Rights expire over time. The discrete time periods when a movie or TV show is available on a platform is known within the media industries as a distribution “window,” and these windows help to manage the value of movies and TV shows, ensuring that their maximum profitability will be protected. During the DVD-era, entertainment journalist Edward Jay Epstein documented a subtle, but notable reduction in the “window” between a movie’s theatrical premiere and its release on DVD.¹⁵ During the VHS era, the standard window was six months; however, as studios sought to take advantage of the sell-through potential of DVDs, this window gradually shortened to three to four months and sometimes less. In particular, studios were concerned about selling DVDs for summer blockbusters during the Christmas holiday season. However, as the sell-through marketplace for DVDs has collapsed, the debate over distribution windows has shifted along with it. By 2013, studios were increasingly focused on creating a “retail window” that would allow them a few weeks or months to sell DVDs without having to worry about competing with the American video-rental kiosk service Redbox, which allows customers to rent DVDs for approximately \$1 per day, or with VoD services such as Netflix or Hulu, which provide users with incredibly cheap access to a catalogue of movies and TV

¹⁵ EPSTEIN, Edward Jay. *The Big Picture: Money and Power in Hollywood*. New York: Random House, 2006.

shows, weakening the ability of distributors to sell movie tickets and DVDs.

The most dramatic shift has involved the collapse of the window between theatrical release and video-on-demand. As early as 2007, the Independent Film Channel (IFC) was releasing titles simultaneously in theaters, on DVD, and through on-demand platforms. Similarly, Mark Cuban, co-owner of Landmark Cinemas, Magnolia Pictures, and the HD Net cable channel, released Steven Soderbergh's 2006 film, *Bubble*, simultaneously on multiple platforms, a strategy that led most theatrical chains to refuse to screen the film. This so-called day-and-date distribution strategy has recently been revived in the controversy over Netflix's distribution of Cary Fukunaga's art film, *Beasts of No Nation* (2015), which was released to theaters at the same time the film was posted on the streaming video service. Notably, the normally secretive Netflix actually released data about how many people viewed *Beasts of No Nation*, reporting that the film was streamed more than three million times worldwide, a significant total for a low-budget film. However, although it was well reviewed, most of the major theatrical chains — AMC, Regal, Carmike, and Cinemark — refused to show the film. In fact, the film reportedly grossed approximately \$50,000 in 31 theaters during its opening week.

So what does this mean? First, the theatrical release was likely done to make the film eligible for Oscars and other awards, as well as to generate more critics' reviews and the publicity that comes with them. That said, for Netflix, even a brief theatrical release could add value to the movie, in part because playing in theaters would more likely ensure that the film would get widely reviewed by film critics who might ignore something released exclusively on a streaming platform. From this perspective, Netflix's experiment might be regarded as a success, one that illustrates that compelling content could attract a significant global audience. But while the film did receive a number of awards, including the Screen Actors Guild award for Best Actor (to Idris Elba), it was virtually ignored by the Oscars, an event sponsored by the MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America). This "snub" was widely attributed to the conservative (and potentially racial) biases of an older voting bloc, but it might also have reflected the sentiments of an industrial culture that was protective of more properly "theatrical" films, movies that followed a traditional release schedule.

6. DATA

The discussion of *Beasts of No Nation* also illustrates the role of digital delivery in facilitating the emergence of what might be called the monitored spectator, a viewer whose behavior, tastes, and practices are incessantly tracked and analyzed. Such surveillance is often treated as a benign activity that would allow VoD services to adjust their recommendation algorithms in order to create a more personalized viewing experience; however, the data accumulated on the monitored spectator can also be used to create taste profiles about individual spectators and their viewing practices, part of a culture of Big Data, in which information can be mined for a wide range of purposes. Netflix reports that it is able to log literally hundreds of millions of what it calls "events," — decisions to pause, fast-forward, or stop watching a video, among other interactions with the Netflix interface — on a daily basis, providing them with a massive pool of data that could be used not simply to determine which shows are most popular or which shows a particular viewer might like but also could potentially be used to inform programming or even storytelling decisions. Journalist Andrew Leonard, for example, offers an especially sinister portrait of Netflix's use of data analysis in order to assess how, when, and where people are watching. In fact, Leonard points to the decision to obtain the rights to *House of Cards* as being the direct result of the company's use data analysis. Citing data provided by Netflix, Leonard reports that the company detected a strong correlation between people who enjoyed the original British series and fans of the actor Kevin Spacey and the director David Fincher, and goes on to suggest that the decision to invest \$100 million in the series was shaped by the company's awareness of this potential demand.¹⁶ Such concerns about Netflix's use of data become a little more complicated, however, when we recall, as Timothy Havens has pointed out, that Netflix did not actually produce the first season of the show but instead purchased rights to an existing property, suggesting that Netflix did not script the series according to its algorithms as Leonard's comments imply, but instead recognised from its data that

¹⁶ LEONARD, Andrew. How Netflix is Turning Viewers into Puppets. In *Salon*, 1 February 2013, <http://www.salon.com/2013/02/01/how_netflix_is_turning_viewers_into_puppets/> [accessed 7 March 2016].

House of Cards — and other shows in its originally programming lineup — could appeal to a wide audience.¹⁷

But, even while Netflix's use of data may have little effect on their creative decisions, the dystopian vision of the dominance of data continues to retain enormous power. For example, Derrick Harris of GigaOm spelled out just how much data Netflix is collecting and which kinds of information might shape how the company addresses its users through its interfaces and recommendation algorithms. In examining its millions of users, Netflix was able to sift through 30 million plus "plays" per day, as well as all uses of pause, rewind, and fast-forwarding features, 4 million user ratings per day, and 3 million searches per day, as well as information on the geographic location of the user and the time and day of the week in which specific content was viewed. As Harris observes, Netflix was able to learn (among many other things) that people are more likely to watch TV shows during the week and a larger number of movies on weekends. In addition, they picked up on the patterns of binge viewing that helped give rise to their decision to release all thirteen episodes of the first "season" of *House of Cards* simultaneously, a strategy that was replicated with *Arrested Development* and *Orange Is the New Black*.¹⁸

Beyond the substantial privacy concerns, for Leonard, this shift threatens to lead to a situation in which recommendation algorithms do all the work of casting movies and creating storylines designed to have mass appeal. And more chillingly, Leonard argues that companies that use this data will have the ability to "know more about us than we know ourselves, and will be able to craft techniques that push us toward where they want us to go, rather than where we would go by ourselves if left to our own devices."¹⁹ Like Leonard, I do have concerns about how this data might be used. However, such comments ignore the ways in which users can choose to resist, question, or otherwise subvert the meanings promoted not only within a specific text but even within the algorithms itself. Shared accounts continue to vex Netflix's recommendation algorithm, and users may consume content for

¹⁷ HAVENS, Timothy. Media Programming in an Era of Big Data. In *Media Industries*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2014), <<http://www.mediaindustriesjournal.org/index.php/mij/article/view/43>> [accessed 7 March 2016].

¹⁸ HARRIS, Derrick. Netflix Analyzes a Lot of Data about Your Viewing Habits. In *GigaOM*, 14 June 2012, <<https://gigaom.com/2012/06/14/netflix-analyzes-a-lot-of-data-about-your-viewing-habits/>> [accessed 7 March 2016].

¹⁹ LEONARD, Andrew. How Netflix is Turning Viewers into Puppets.

a wide variety of reasons. In this regard, I am far less concerned about how data might inform creative choices than I am by the potential for this data to be used to add to the ability to monitor individuals as they consume movies and TV shows.

7. REBOOT

These questions about content have also contributed to the rise of the "reboot," the cultural form that, I argue, best explains our current moment within the media industries. I first began thinking about the reboot as keyword a couple of years ago when I contributed to a special issue on 3-D film for the journal *Convergence*.²⁰ At the time, I was attentive to the fact that movie franchises such as *Spider-Man*, *Superman*, and *Batman* were being relaunched with new actors and new directorial visions, often just a few years after a prior version of that franchise had run its course. In most cases, these films would dutifully go back to the origin story, retelling once again stories of radioactive spiders or murderous supervillains. Of course, the use of "recycled ideas" in Hollywood films is nothing new. Scholars ranging from Janet Wasko to Anne Friedberg have discussed remakes and sequels as crucial components of the Hollywood marketing machine.²¹ Reboots provide a way to navigate the increasingly cluttered landscape of digital delivery by providing familiar characters, storylines, and story worlds but repackaged for the contemporary audience, often by dressing them up with nostalgia for past iterations of that text and the era in which it originally appeared.

The reboot has become an increasingly prominent strategy of television, both in its broadcast and streaming models. Netflix alone has rebooted multiple TV shows, including cult classics such as *Arrested Development*, *Mr. Show* (2015-), *Wet Hot American Summer* (2015-) and *The Gilmore Girls* (2016-), as well as the popular family sitcom *Full House* (1987-1995), which is now being reborn as *Fuller House* (2016-). The *Full*

²⁰ TRYON, Chuck. Reboot Cinema. In *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 19 (November 2013), pp. 432-437.

²¹ See WASKO, Janet. *Understanding Disney: The Manufacture of Fantasy*. London: Polity 2001, and FRIEDBERG, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

House and *Gilmore Girls* reboots, in particular, seem linked to a sense of nostalgia for what appears to be both a more innocent time (the 1980s and 1990s) and to the more innocent worlds of the family sitcom. Meanwhile, network series such as *The X-Files* (1993-2002; 2016-), *Twin Peaks* (1990-91; 2016-), and *Heroes* (2006-2010), as *Heroes Reborn* (2015), have been relaunched with varying degrees of success, in this case due to the fan cultures for these shows that have continued to thrive online. To illustrate how the reboot has become such a vital industrial strategy and cultural form, we can look at the show *Arrested Development*, which originally aired in the United States on Fox during the Fall 2003 season before it was cancelled in February 2006. Although the show received almost universal critical acclaim, that critical success did not translate into popularity, and *Arrested Development* finished as the 120th most popular show during its first season, numbers that would not significantly change over the show's three seasons. During the network era, this likely would have ended the Bluth family's story; however, an energetic fan base, combined with the availability of the show on DVD, helped to keep the show in the cultural consciousness, as fans consumed the show in syndication and eventually on Netflix. Later, as Netflix began seeking out original content for its subscription service, it agreed to produce fifteen new episodes of the show, which it began filming in August 2012, with all episodes of the new "season" released on May 26, 2013, throughout North America and parts of Europe. Notably, based on the perceived success of the reboot, Netflix has arranged to produce a fifth season of the show that would come out in early 2016, nearly three years after the previous season was completed, a timeline that differs radically from the typical seasons associated with a broadcast television model. Thus, Netflix could allow the producers and cast of the show — including Jason Bateman, Jeffrey Tambor, Jessica Walter, Will Arnett, Tony Hale, Portia de Rossi, and David Cross — to work around their schedules. Thus, while the reboot may help to satisfy the need to create content that is easily marketable to older audiences hoping to relive aspects of their favorite shows, the flexible distribution formats of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon, also allow them to produce new seasons of a show on a flexible schedule that will allow all of the lead actors to participate.

8. CHILDREN

Much of the commentary on digital delivery and on practices such as binge viewing has focused on relatively "hip" or sophisticated audiences, who are depicted as voracious consumers of diverse and complex content. However, such a focus tends to ignore many of the more commonplace and casual uses of digital delivery by families with young children, in particular. The reliance on rebooting older movies and TV shows indicates that many viewers are seeking "safe" or familiar content that may serve as the entertainment equivalent of "comfort food," something familiar that will speak to viewers' nostalgia for movies and TV shows associated with their childhood or with ostensibly simpler times. While this type of nostalgia is often based upon naïve assumptions about a sanitised version of the past, it remains attractive for many viewers.²² In fact, some critics have documented a trend among teenagers in the U.S. of watching re-runs of older shows such as the 1990s sitcom, *Friends* (1994-2004), which likely began broadcasting before many of them were born and which they may have already seen on syndication.²³ In this regard, it's important to note that digital delivery may simply be offering us some new ways of watching older, recycled content. Although most studies of streaming tend to focus on so-called quality content, it is important to note that one of the main drivers of streaming adoption has been content that is designed for young children. In fact, children's content has been crucial to the home entertainment business in the United States for decades. Media business expert Jeff Ulin highlighted this point in the first edition of his groundbreaking book, *The Business of Media Distribution*, in which he pointed out that videos — originally on VHS and eventually on DVD — were a significant value to busy parents seeking out an electronic babysitter.²⁴ Parents could plop their young children in front of a TV set with a movie and immediately gain a few minutes of free time. More

²² For a discussion of how college students navigated these forms of nostalgia during the DVD era, see KLINGER, Barbara J. *Beyond the Multiplex: Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, pp. 135-190.

²³ CHEN, Cathaleen. Why is *Friends* Still So Popular? In *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 January 2016, <<http://www.csmonitor.com/The-Culture/2016/0114/Why-is-Friends-still-so-popular>> [accessed 7 March 2016].

²⁴ ULIN, Jeff. *The Business of Media Distribution: Monetizing Film, TV, and Video Content in an Online World*. New York: Focal Press, 2009.

crucially, children are more than willing to watch the same movie again and again — as any parent who has memorised the dialogue to multiple episodes of *Dora the Explorer* (2000-) can confirm. In fact, in the U.S., this willingness to revisit the same characters prompted studios such as Disney and Fox to produce dozens of direct-to-video sequels for some of their videos.

Thus, it should be no surprise that children have been a major focal point in the era of streaming video. Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon have all spent heavily not only on acquiring children's content but also in producing content for kids, including new episodes of *Veggie Tales* (1993-) and *The Care Bears* (1985-88; 2016-), as well as an original series, *The Adventures of Puss in Boots* (2015-), based on popular characters from the Shrek franchise. Similarly, Amazon has licensed content from Nickelodeon, including *Dora the Explorer*. In addition, Netflix has created a special children's section that allows parents to protect children from inadvertently clicking onto a show targeted toward adults. The use of SVoD as a type of electronic babysitter is enticing, in no small part because these platforms are not dependent on advertising, allowing parents to shield them from being exposed to ads. Of course, Netflix also benefits from creating a section for kids because it allows them to collect even more data about how their customers are using their service, while also habituating children into using SVoD, rather than watching television through traditional formats. They can, for example, make judgments about when children are more likely to watch and, more crucially, filter out children's content in order to make more targeted recommendations to the adult users of Netflix's service. This emphasis on the profitability of children's content might offer a partial explanation for why HBO opted to purchase the right to broadcast new episodes of the children's educational TV show, *Sesame Street* (1969-) and to prohibit new episodes from being shown elsewhere for nine months. *Sesame Street* historically had been part of an egalitarian mission to make educational content available for free to poor and minority students, placing them on more equal footing with their peers. As many critics have noted, the HBO deal defies this stated mission, making poorer families (who might not be able to afford a \$10 per month HBO fee on top of the regular cable subscription) into second-class citizens who would get new episodes of the show several months after their peers. However, fewer people have explored the implications of the deal for HBO. In fact, the deal is consistent with HBO's aspirations to turn HBO Now into a pre-

mier streaming service on par with Netflix and Hulu. And by buying the rights to the most popular children's show in history, HBO seems to be acknowledging the value of children's programming as a tool for attracting subscribers. Streaming provides parents of young children with a wide selection of content available at the click of a mouse. This is certainly true in my own experience. Our iPad has become the go-to device for entertaining our toddler when we need a break (or when we're not fully awake), and our Amazon and Netflix streaming histories have become increasingly cluttered with children's shows. As a result, our toddler, like many children of her generation, has a completely different concept of watching television, one that is completely disconnected from the "programmed flow" that TV scholar Raymond Williams described many years ago.²⁵

CONCLUSION

As a way of concluding, I wish to turn back to the idea of *controlled consumption*. As Striphos reminds us, controlled consumption entails not just the process of monitoring and even regulating consumer practices but also the attempt to create artificial limits such as planned obsolescence, or in the case of streaming video, limitations on when, where, and how we can legally access media content. Leaving aside the substantial issue of media piracy, digital delivery provides media conglomerates with even greater control over their media properties and how and where they circulate. This can be illustrated by the recent announcement by CBS that they plan to revive the classic sci-fi TV series, *Star Trek* (1966-), for yet another generation of fans, with the first episode set to appear in early 2017. However, after the premiere episode is broadcast on network television in the U.S., subsequent episodes of the series would not be broadcast on the TV network and would only be available in the U.S. through CBS's VoD service, CBS All Access. Such a distribution strategy would essentially require fans of the show to subscribe to CBS All Access — currently \$6 per month — in order to see the show legally. CBS's strategy perfectly illustrates the logic of control

²⁵ MITTELL, Jason. TiVoing Childhood. In *Flow*, vol. 3, no. 12 (2006), <https://www.flow-journal.org/2006/02/tivoing-childhood/> [accessed 7 November 2016].

as it intersects with many of the key concepts shaping the future of digital delivery, specifically the attempt to create exclusive windows that will define when, where, and how long the series will be available. Furthermore, they are taking a familiar property and extending its life in a new format, rebooting it for new audiences. Unlike U.S. network TV, where ratings dominate and CBS would be concerned about attracting the largest audience for each of their shows, the attempt to drive consumers to subscribe to their All Access service is defined by attracting the largest number of subscribers, and they are unconcerned (or at least less concerned) about how many people watch. These processes of control help to produce additional value for CBS and allow them to control the conditions of how the series will be watched.

Thus, while digital delivery has been promoted as liberating consumers by offering them more choice and greater convenience, these promises are in many ways illusions. Although the promises of the long tail have emphasised the infinite storage made possible by the Web, this narrative does not take into account the political and economic modes of control that restrict and regulate access to movies and TV series. As media critic Todd Van der Weff has argued,

[f]iguring out what is and isn't available on various streaming services is less about searching and more about following elaborate business transactions. [...] It's not hard to imagine a future where you're subscribed to half a dozen streaming services and paying just as much as you might for cable right now — and you still don't have access to everything you want.²⁶

In essence, we have all become invested in the processes of industry churn, forced to keep track of what might have been obscure business transactions that had little connection to the daily practices of watching television series and movies. And what appears to be settling into place after cinema's reinvention and television's revolution threatens to exclude people who lack the media literacy or the financial flexibility to navigate this new media landscape. In the U.S., at least, media audiences have almost never been this fragmented and have rarely faced such complexity when it comes to making choices about paying for content. While the digital delivery has been sold as revolutionizing

²⁶ VAN DER WEFF, Todd. Why Streaming Will Never Live up to Home Video. In *Vox*, 12 November 2015, <<http://www.vox.com/culture/2015/11/12/9724306/streaming-problems-netflix-hulu>> [accessed 7 March 2016].

content and choice by providing us with more flexible ways of watching TV and movies, make no mistake that it is being sold, often at a much higher price than ever before.

FESTIVALS GONE DIGITAL – A CASE-STUDY OF NETCINEMA.BG AND THE ONLINE EUROPEAN FILM FESTIVAL IN BULGARIA

Maya Nedyalkova

Online distribution, especially in the context of the European film industry, is often conceptualised as “an initiative”, “a collaboration”, and an alternative way to bring diversity and challenge competition from Hollywood.¹ The language of experimentation and uncertainty, used to describe online film circulation, is, perhaps, linked to the unpredictability of developments within the medium and the limitations of the respective national markets. It certainly corresponds well with the difficulties that Bulgarian film has faced historically as well as with the lack of success for the first local video-on-demand (VoD) platform.

The unstructured changeover to an open market economy which began in 1989 sent the Bulgarian film industry into a serious crisis, created administrative and institutional chaos, and left domestic film in an unequal competition with Hollywood. Without state regulation, appropriate film business education, and international contacts, film professionals proved ill-equipped to face the trends of international commercialization governing the global film trade. The balance between state and private funding shifted with the change in political regime in Bulgaria. Together, with the disintegration of the vertically integrated film industry, this affected the possibility for financial sustainability of the sector.² The most challenging aspects of the transition to democracy for the Bulgarian film industry included the loss of domestic infrastructure and funding. Eighty-eight major cinema halls were sold, which maintained cinema-related activities for not more than five years

before swiftly being turned into bingo halls and shopping malls.³ After privatization, the national market fell under the control of newly-established exhibition companies Rainbow, Sunny, and Alexandra, which favored Hollywood productions.⁴ The festival circuit provided exposure to critics’ circles but rarely secured distribution within the country.⁵ As a consequence of major changes in the distribution network, for almost two decades Bulgarian film disappeared from cinemas, ultimately losing its audiences.

The situation has since improved through the implementation of appropriate national legislation in 2003, which regulated participation in international co-production, and Bulgaria’s 2007 accession to the European Union, which secured the free flow of capital and labour. A new generation of commercially-savvy and internationally-oriented filmmakers has emerged, attracting both mainstream and festival attention with their work.⁶ However, Bulgaria remains a small national cinema, as defined by Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie.⁷ Spanning 110,550 square kilometres, with a population of just over 7 million, gross domestic product per capita (as estimated in 2010) of \$14,021 (or €10,789.99) and a history of political and economic struggles, Bulgaria proves to be a country with a small market and limited financial resources.⁸ I speculate

¹ See: *The European VoD Network*, <<http://www.eurovod.org/>> [accessed 16 September 2016].

² MANOV, Bojidar. Bulgarian Cinema Today: Seventeen Years after the Changes. In *Kino Kultura*, Special Issue 5: Bulgarian Cinema, December 2006, <<http://www.kinokultura.com/specials/5/manov.shtm>> [accessed 21 September 2016]

³ SPASOV, Radoslav. Ubiistvoto Na Balgarskoto Kino. In *Spisanie Kino*, no. 1 (2003), pp. 35-39, p. 38.

⁴ IORDANOVA, Dina. Canaries and Birds of Prey: The New Season of Bulgarian Cinema. In BELL, John D. (Ed.) *Bulgaria in Transition: Politics, Economics, Society & Culture After Communism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998, pp. 255-280.

⁵ IORDANOVA, Dina. *New Bulgarian Cinema*. N.p.: College Gate Press, 2008, pp. 9-11.

⁶ Some of the recent successful Bulgarian productions include *Misiya London (Mission London)*, 2010, dir. Dimitar Mitovski), *Love.net* (2011, dir. Ilian Djevelevkov), *Operatsiya Shmenti Kapeli (Operation Shmenti Capelli)*, 2011, dir. Ivan Mitov), *TILT* (2011, dir. Viktor Chouchkov), *Stapki v pyasaka (Footsteps in the Sand)*, 2010, dir. Ivaylo Hristov), *Kecove (Sneakers)*, 2011, dir. Valeri Yordanov – Ivan Vladimirov) and *Iztochni piesi (Eastern Plays)*, 2009, dir. Kamen Kalev). According to information released by the Bulgarian National Film Centre and the box office website boxofficemojo.com, each of these films attracted between 17,881 and 376,843 viewers (Bulgarian National Film Centre page, <http://www.old.nfc.bg/bg/finansirane/balgarski_filmi.html> [accessed 6 December 2015]; Bulgaria Yearly Box Office Results (2002), <<http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/bulgaria/yearly/>> [accessed 6 December 2015]).

⁷ HJORT, Mette – PETRIE, Duncan J. *The Cinema of Small Nations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007, p. 4.

⁸ Global Finance Magazine – Bulgaria GDP and Economic Data. In *Global Finance Magazine* (2014), <<http://www.gfmag.com/global-data/country-data/bulgaria-gdp-country-report#axzz2DcPALjLQ>> [accessed 13 September 2015].

this context necessitated the search for “alternative” and “experimental” distribution through festival and online channels.

Influenced by Jeffrey Ruoff, I view festivals as living organisms which comprise communal affairs and transnational business opportunities. On the margins of the commercial industry, festivals nourish arthouse, independent, activist, subject-, and region-specific cinema.⁹ As such, they necessitate a special kind of management which takes into consideration their open system, their cyclical nature, and participation-driven transformation. As Alex Fischer observes, operational continuity is more important than the number of premieres or special guests. Most contemporary film festivals are pre-occupied with maintaining their media presence, cultural relevance, and business functionality in a field of increased competition and financial uncertainty. Building alliances with other events and people, getting the timing and location right, conveying an identifiable function, securing legitimising affiliations, providing incentives for participants, and controlling resources ensure the successful run of a film festival.¹⁰ Additionally, the development of online distribution channels has created new platforms for festival cinema – which are even easier to access and more transnational in scope than traditional events. The rest of this chapter examines netcinema.bg – a Bulgarian video-on-demand (VoD) website started in 2011 – which participated in Streams, the Online European Film Festival in 2013. I situate both initiatives within Marijke de Valck’s exploration of the effects of convergence and digitisation on the festival network and Dina Iordanova’s idea of digital disruption. I argue that the Internet could provide an alternative distribution model for festival cinema in Bulgaria but there is still a practical problem of reaching the right audience and achieving sustainable development. Thus, I will briefly expose some of the barriers preventing the growth of the Bulgarian, and, by extension, European, digital market.

The Bulgarian video-on-demand website netcinema.bg launched in 2011 with an innovative campaign for the first popular domestic feature distributed online, *Love.net* (2011, dir. Ilian Djevelekov).¹¹ In 2013

⁹ ROUFF, Jeffrey. *Coming Soon to a Festival Near You. Programming Film Festivals*. United Kingdom: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012, pp. 17-18.

¹⁰ FISCHER, Alex. *Sustainable Projections: Concepts in Film Festival Management*. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012, pp. 42-50, p. 54, p. 58, pp. 70-80.

¹¹ See NEDYALKOVA, Maya. *Transnational Bulgarian Cinema: Pieces of the Past, Present and Future* (dissertation: University of Southampton, 2015), pp. 178-179.

the site participated in the second edition of Streams: The European Online Film Festival. It was presented through the EuroVoD platform, a collaborative European video-on-demand network, specializing in European arthouse films and independent cinema.¹² In its second edition, Streams included films from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Iceland, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK, featuring a variety of genres and topics. From mid-November to mid-December, the films were available across all participating platforms. A jury, comprised of film critics and bloggers, representative of each of the contributing countries, awarded prizes for the best entries.¹³ Thus, in theory, Streams portrayed a collaborative effort between European countries, aiming to uncover new opportunities for disseminating their festival pictures through digital distribution. A practical evaluation of Bulgaria’s participation in Streams suggests that online festivals hold the potential to change the way the film industry functions but only when part of a larger network and under the right management.



Fig. 1. Promotional banner for Streams 2013, <<http://elementpictures.ie/wp-content/uploads/streams-2013-headerpic-v05-de.jpg>> [accessed 14 February 2016].

Digital distribution of festival cinema has a number of benefits. De Valck argues that digitisation provides new channels for distribution and

¹² *The European VoD Network*, <<http://www.eurovod.org/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹³ Uchastvame v onlain festival na evropeiskoto kino. In *TechNews.bg*, 17 November 2013, <<http://technews.bg/article-63786.html#.VT7Q0pOD8zw>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

exhibition of niche content.¹⁴ This idea was first articulated by Chris Anderson who, in 2006, introduced the theory of the Long Tail. Anderson maintains that business and culture have re-evaluated their focus on a relatively small number of mainstream products and markets which stand at the head of the demand curve. With the rise of online retailers and the fall of production costs, lack of shelf space no longer determines which cultural products are deemed financially viable. Anderson claims that consumer interest is shifting towards the diversity of niche products in the tail of the demand curve instead.¹⁵ This proves beneficial for the proliferation of events like the European Online Film Festival. With no expenses for hosting an event, Streams could easily overcome the limitations of physical space. Because the online festival was not confined to a particular geographical location, it was also not limited to niche local audiences. Streams held the potential to attract larger numbers of European film buffs across the participating territories instead. So, in theory, online distribution and exhibition can extend the scope and reach of a film festival.

This, in turn, alters the place of the film festival within the industry as well as the way in which it is organized and operated. Iordanova perceives new technologies as disruptive to the traditional system of film circulation, featuring distinct windows of exhibition and viewing formats. The proliferation of online distribution platforms presents opportunities for “transborder flows of niche and peripheral content”.¹⁶ The Internet invites direct interaction and removes the need for intermediaries, thus, cutting costs.¹⁷ Iordanova observes that this proves particularly useful to independent, documentary, foreign and arthouse films since the move towards digital distribution makes them less dependent on institutional support or big distributor companies.¹⁸ This fundamentally changes the role of the festival circuit. Iordanova notes:

¹⁴ DE VALCK, Marijke. Finding Audiences for Films: Festival Programming in Historical Perspective. In RUOFF, Jeffrey (Ed.). *Coming Soon to a Festival Near You*, pp. 25-40, p. 37.

¹⁵ ANDERSON, Chris. *The Long Tail, In a Nutshell*, <<http://www.longtail.com/about.html>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

¹⁶ IORDANOVA, Dina. Digital Disruption: Technological Innovation and Global Film Circulation. In IORDANOVA, Dina – CUNNINGHAM, Stuart (Eds.). *Digital Disruption: Cinema Moves On-Line*. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2012, pp. 1-31, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

[i]n the traditional distributor-dominated set-up, the film festival was outside the distribution chain and seen as pre-cursor to distribution itself: a film would screen at festivals in the hope of striking deals that would get it through to distribution. In the new disintermediated set-up, however, the film festival becomes a key element of the film’s circulation. Once it has become a site for direct exhibition of cinema, a festival also receives the chance to network closer with other festivals, a development that is greatly facilitated and enhanced by the appearance of technological means that enable coordinated streaming of the same content to multiple festivals.¹⁹

So, online film festivals such as Streams seem to possess the potential to disrupt the traditional model of festival film distribution in Bulgaria where companies like Alexandra Group currently hold a monopoly over theatrical circulation and exhibition. A major domestic distributor and owner of the Arena multiplex chain, featuring eleven cinemas in Bulgaria, Alexandra predominantly favors Hollywood products, while Alexandra Films, the distribution arm of the company, officially represents Columbia Pictures, Warner Bros Entertainment, and Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation for Bulgaria.²⁰ Once the distribution rights to big-budget American blockbusters are obtained, Arena cinemas, in turn, program and promote them. This integration of distribution and exhibition minimizes costs and maximizes profit. However, it also creates a particularly challenging environment for the distribution of small-budget local and foreign pictures. Functioning outside of the restrictions of traditional distribution and exhibition, online film festivals can help pictures surpass the need to secure a deal with the likes of Alexandra across Europe. In theory, Streams can provide an international audience and reach for its participating titles.

Cross-border online co-operation also makes the film festival circuit more sustainable. Expanding across online platforms could help festivals maintain their functions throughout the year and create collabora-

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰ DONEV, Aleksandar. Da Razprostranyavash Balgarski Filmi – Misiya Nevazmozhna. In *Spisanie Kino*, no. 6 (2007), pp. 42-44; KOZBUNAROVA, Aleksandra. *Sobstvenitsite na kinata “Arena” otvoryat nova veriga restoranti*, 10 November 2015, <http://www.capital.bg/biznes/kompanii/2015/11/10/2646689_sobstvenicite_na_kinata_arena_otvariat_nova_veriga/>, [accessed 30 March 2016].

tive schemes with other events.²¹ After the end of Streams 2013, small budget European festival films such as *Entre les bras* (*Step Up to the Plate*, 2011, dir. Paul Lacoste), *Chercher le garçon* (*Meet Me in Real Life*, 2012, dir. Dorothee Sebbagh), *Nice Guy* (2012, dir. Pascal Bergamin), *Mary & Johnny* (2011, dir. Samuel Schwarz and Julian Grünthal), *Mama Illegal* (2011, dir. Ed Moschitz), *De leur vivant* (*Living Afterwards*, 2011, dir. Géraldine Doignon), *Leg ihn um – Ein Familienfest* (*Change It – A Family Feast*, 2012, dir. Jan Georg Schütte), *Mikro eglima / Kleine Verbrechen* (*Small Crime*, 2008, dir. Christos Georgiou), *Silence* (2012, dir. Pat Collins) and *Tim Robinson: Connemara* (2012, dir. Pat Collins) remained a constant part of the catalogue of netcinema.bg.²² The convergence between festival cinema and online distribution was beneficial both for films exhibited and for the development of the Bulgarian VoD platform itself. Indeed, the films in the 2013 repertoire exhibited an interesting mixture of small to modest budget festival films. However, the Bulgarian VoD website is yet to secure distribution deals with more high profile European festival pictures.

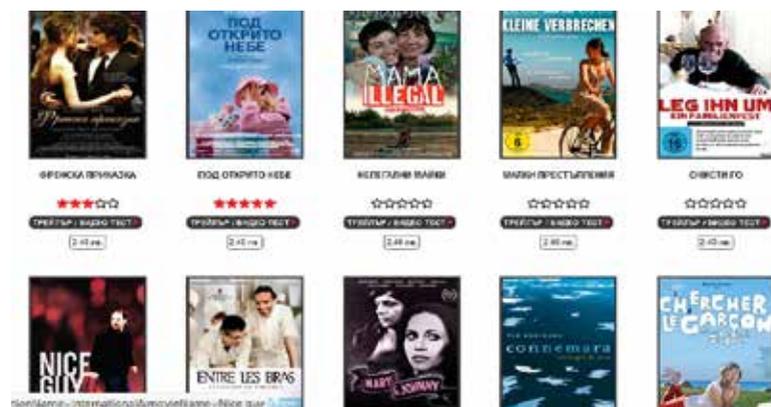


Fig. 2. Part of the netcinema.bg catalogue, <<http://netcinema.bg/content/Чуждестранни-1744-106.html>> [accessed 14 February 2016].

In its essence, Streams perfectly illustrates possible future developments for the festival circuit and online distribution. It was a pan-European initiative that avoided the pressures of competition with tradi-

²¹ DE VALCK, Marijke. *Finding Audiences for Films*, pp. 37-38.

²² *Netcinema.bg*, <<http://netcinema.bg/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

tional festivals by moving into the digital realm and utilizing the appeal of niche content and new technologies to attract viewers. Nonetheless, de Valck wonders whether a certain level of rebranding is necessary to attract the increasingly technologically-savvy audiences. She predicts that by inviting more spectator feedback and participation, festivals will necessarily move away from the tastes of individual programmers and towards a bigger selection of film choices. This, in turn, should contribute to a more democratic and transparent festival circuit.²³ De Valck's observation holds true of the Bulgarian edition of the online festival. Streams requires better promotion and more audience engagement strategies to establish itself in the Bulgarian market-place. In 2013 the emphasis on featuring a jury of film critics, instead, signified that the European Online Film Festival valued professional opinion over audience choice. Streams also faced the barriers of traditional distribution. The lack of support from a big distributor, at least in Bulgarian territory, likely resulted in limited publicity for the event. The multitude of online articles dedicated to the commencement of the digital festival were not followed through with further analysis of its development. The lack of publicized statistics on the number of views accumulated in Bulgaria invites pessimistic assumptions about the success of Streams on the netcinema.bg platform. I speculate that the limited visibility and attraction of the European Online Film Festival in Bulgaria stem from a disturbed notion of community, a lack of continuity between the different editions and a need for standardization across different platforms. Janet Harbord suggests that by moving online, festivals lose a part of their appeal, which constitutes the notion of a shared event and communal experience.²⁴ A unique characteristic of festivals is their participatory nature. Space, time and geographical limitations create an exclusive event out of a traditional festival. They establish a sense of community among the professionals and audiences in attendance. When this idea is undermined, due to the inclusive and democratizing influence of new technologies, a festival loses part of its charm. The intimate community, which is created by participation in such an exclusive event, is compromised. Online festivals need to adopt explicit strategies for audience interaction and to create continuity between

²³ DE VALCK, Marijke. *Finding Audiences for Films*, pp. 37-38.

²⁴ HARBORD, Janet. *Film Festivals-Time-Event*. In IORDANOVA, Dina – RHYNE, Ragan (Eds.). *Film Festival Yearbook: Volume 1: The Festival Circuit*. St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2009, pp. 40-48.

separate editions in order to regain their ability to forge personal links with and among their participants.

In its 2013 publicity for Streams, netcinema.bg focused on the participation of Bulgarian titles – *Love.net* and *Podslon (Shelter, 2010, dir. Dragomir Sholev)* – across the other European VoD platforms.²⁵ The rhetoric of the promotional article served to report the event as a reason for national pride but did not invite active involvement or a sense of European community. Coupled with the lack of face-to-face interaction, an official award ceremony or celebrity presence, the online festival failed to entice the curiosity of domestic audiences.²⁶ The only interactive marketing strategy related to Streams 2013, in Bulgaria, was the contest to win free online tickets for the event by answering a trivia question about the latest European Film Academy Awards.²⁷ This underlines the need for more active promotion, engagement and curation during the online film festival. As de Valck observes,

[i]n the contemporary aggressive environment, where commercial producers and programmers turn to strategies of affective branding, spectacular aesthetics and populist content, it is [...] not enough to make festival films available online. Festivals need to draw attention to the alternative titles and provide sociocultural environment where viewers are stimulated to watch and contemplate these films.²⁸

In light of de Valck's argument, Streams failed to create a special environment for the circulation and consumption of its content. It lacked "an 'expert' frame that [could] function as both portal and guide to the films on offer."²⁹ For instance, there was no special section dedicated to previous, current or future editions of the event on the netcinema.bg website. No information was given regarding the distributed awards or the titles that had proven most popular with online audiences. There was no special publicity, in the form of interviews with directors and stars or published film reviews. There was not even a forum for users to

²⁵ Uchastvame v onlain festival na evropeiskoto kino.

²⁶ DE VALCK, Marijke. "Screening" the Future of Film Festivals? A Long Tale of Convergence and Digitization. In *Film International*, vol. 6, no. 4 (2008), pp. 15-23.

²⁷ Specheli sas "Streams" – onlain festival na evropeiskoto kino (koi specheli). In *Operation Kino*, 11 December 2013, <<http://operationkino.net/>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

²⁸ DE VALCK, Marijke. "Screening" the Future of Film Festivals?, p. 20.

²⁹ Ibid.

discuss the films that they have seen. Thus, the European Online Film Festival did little to create a festive atmosphere and invite active participation.

Another factor that prevented Streams from gaining influence as part of the transnational European film industry was the lack of standardization. The structure and development of the VoD platforms involved signified the need for a coordinated vision and a shared future mission. The official website – www.streamsfilmfestival.com – listed the contributing VoD platforms but provided no history of their collaboration or additional information on individual events. While the general Streams website at least mapped out its affiliations, the Bulgarian netcinema.bg featured no links to the rest of the VoD platforms or hints at the general initiative. This undermined the formation of a sustainable online festival network. The European Online Film Festival missed out on accumulating prestige by referring to previous editions and creating a sense of continuity. Perhaps as a result of its poor performance and lack of audience engagement, the main website is down at the time of writing this article.

Streams exemplified the difficulties of replicating the festival experience online. Traditional film festivals generate economic, social and cultural impact for their affiliated locations and participants. A local event like the Sofia International Film Festival, for instance, features a co-production market (Sofia Meetings), professional workshops, networking opportunities, thematic events, combined distribution and exhibition initiatives as well as audience development programmes. Started in 1997 as a thematic music film festival, since 2003 it has featured an international competition for first and second films. The festival reflects on pan-Balkan themes and promotes cross-border collaborations through its international affiliations. It features partnerships with the European Audiovisual Entrepreneurs development and networking producer organisation, Cannes Producers Network, the Europa Distribution network of independent film distributors, Thessaloniki International Film Festival's co-production forum Crossroads, the Mediterranean Co-production Forum, the Mediterranean Film Institute and the business platform of the Moscow International Film Festival – Moscow Business Square. Thus, the Sofia International Film Festival helps participating directors overcome the limitations of non-mainstream film production in the context of contemporary European filmmaking and

encourages local audiences to engage with alternative content.³⁰ The Bulgarian edition of the European Online Film Festival achieved none of this. In fact, there was little emphasis on monetization, business development or audience interaction, rendering the online festival not too dissimilar to a rather limited online catalogue of recent European titles. It completely ignored the idea of festivals as a social and economic events.

A possible role-model for Streams could prove to be myFrenchFilmFestival which was founded in 2011 and continues to provide up-to-date information on French and world cinema, in addition to its annual online competition. It is an initiative of Unifrance, an organization of several hundred film professionals, promoting French films around the world and managed by The National Centre for Cinema and the Moving Image (Le Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée) at the French Ministry of Culture.³¹ The fact that the online festival exhibits strong institutional links guarantees sustainability and continuity. Sponsored by French multinational car manufacturer Renault, Swiss-based luxury watch, jewelry and accessories company Chopard, French/Swiss clothing company Lacoste and Apple's online media broadcaster iTunes, myFrenchFilmFestival secures both regular financing for its awards and media exposure by association with famous transnational brands. It is also supported by a variety of media across different countries, including Telefilm Canada, TV5 Monde, Eurochannel, *Le Monde*, *So Film* and *Variety*. This ensures the adequate promotion of the online event. The website is accessible in eleven different languages, including English, Chinese and Arabic, in an attempt to maximize its potential audience and convey an environment of inclusiveness and cosmopolitanism. The aim of the online event is to increase exposure for emerging directors and showcase the diversity of French production from a young generation. Web audiences around the world vote for a selection of ten short films and ten features by first- or second-time directors which have already been released in French theaters but have not gained distribution abroad. This initiative provides emerging directors with global visibility. The fifth edition of the online French film festival took place from 16th January to 16th February 2015 and recorded 560,000 screenings from 207 territories via myfrenchfilmfestival.com and 26 partner plat-

³⁰ See NEDYALKOVA, Maya. *Transnational Bulgarian Cinema*, pp. 144-167.

³¹ The uniFrance Films page, <<http://en.unifrance.org/corporate>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

forms. The numbers were up from 380,000 in 2014.³² MyFrenchFilmFestival provides the antithesis to Streams, setting a positive example for media collaboration and audience engagement. While the online festival appears to be among the most successful in its field, future developments in technology and technophile audiences will show whether it manages to gain a more substantial share of the global film market. Video-on-demand distribution faces challenges not only in the context of festival cinema but on a more general level. In 2014, a report on the fragmented European VoD market was carried out for the European Commission by the Belgium digital research center iMinds. It studied the possibility of the creation of a digital single market in Europe, investigating the origins of the companies, participating in digital distribution, their willingness to go beyond the traditional territorial and language borders, the diversity of the content on offer and current consumption patterns.³³ The research established that across the European countries there were a number of businesses involved in VoD, including television channels (TF1, BBC), content producers/film distributors (Universciné), telecom operators (Telefonica), targeted content aggregators (Netflix), video sharing websites (Dailymotion), audiovisual archives and public support funds (DFI's involvement in Filmstriben). Just like netcinema.bg, these services were reluctant to share exact statistics regarding their online audience reach.³⁴ While spending on audiovisual content through online platforms and services rose to 1.2 billion euro in 2011, the selected interviewed parties admitted that they struggled to establish the right revenue model and settle controversies over changes in release windows.³⁵ Not all European countries benefited from cross-border initiatives. Language differences and geo-location further fragmented the market. There was a lack of legislative harmonization across the EU (in particular, discrepancies related to varying age ratings or differing tax systems) and an increasing worry that large players that are linked to US companies (like Google, Apple and Netflix) are potential competitors and even game changers. Piracy was often

³² *Successful Edition of the 5th MyFrenchFilmFestival.com*, <<http://www.myfrenchfilmfestival.com/en/newsitem?newsitem=13484>> [accessed 23 September 2015].

³³ DE VINCK, Sophie – RANAIVOSON, Heritiana – VAN ROMPUY, Ben. *Fragmentation of the Single Market for On-Line Video-on-Demand Services: Point of View of Content Providers*, European Commission, 2014, <ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/document.cfm?doc_id=6355> [accessed 23 September 2015].

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2, p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3, p. 14, p. 16.

cited as a persistent challenge. Users accessing content online were not necessarily willing or used to paying.³⁶ So, despite indications that the market for VoD services in Europe was expanding, its shape and size remained unclear.

Similar concerns accompanied the European Union's Digital Single Market (DSM) Strategy, first proposed in 2010 and re-addressed in 2015 and 2016. Devised in an effort to overcome market fragmentation, limited cine-literacy and legal uncertainties within the European Union, the policy currently invites pessimism from the film guild.³⁷ Professionals worry that the new legislation, promoting portability of content at the expense of geo-blocking, could undermine the principle of territoriality. Currently European filmmakers license their work on an exclusive basis country by country throughout the continent and this arrangement forms their main source of financing.³⁸ This cautious approach to online distribution in Europe could serve to illustrate why the Streams festival did not obtain visibility or a substantial audience following. Despite the effort to forge cultural and business links across borders, the online event was subject to highly fragmented economic and cultural realities.

Online film distribution initiatives like netcinema.bg face a number of legislative, industrial and practical problems, part of the larger audiovisual environment. What becomes clear is the need for operational flexibility, heightened audience awareness and innovative marketing. Similarly to academics like Iordanova and de Valck, current VoD companies emphasized the importance of localized marketing strategies and tailoring of the offer towards specific countries. Marketing was considered an important cost element by interviewees of the iMinds report. Pricing strategies were described as influenced by the business relationships struck by the VoD offers. The importance of branding for

³⁶ Ibid., p. 3, p. 17.

³⁷ BLANEY, Martin. MEPs Make Recommendations on Digital Single Market Strategy. In *Screen Daily*, 23 November 2015, <<http://www.screendaily.com/news/meps-make-recommendations-on-dsm-strategy/5097228.article>> [accessed 15 February 2016].

³⁸ ROXBOROUGH, Scott. European Film Industry Reacts to Digital Single Market Proposals. In *The Hollywood Reporter*, 9 December 2015, <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/european-film-industry-reacts-digital-847175>> [accessed 15 February 2016].

the take-off of the VoD service was highlighted during the conducted interviews.³⁹ The report infers that,

[s]imply putting content out there is not enough to translate this to an increased diversity of consumption [...] In a world of infinite choice, guiding signs become increasingly important. Social media, personalized recommendation and search technologies in this sense have a crucial impact on the discovery and selection of audiovisual works by the audience. For European content, the key question is whether this potentially better fit between content supply and audience preferences will result in the increased circulation and consumption of non-national European audiovisual works.⁴⁰

Questions of diversity and accessibility remain prominent as VoD businesses in Europe develop and grow. The report investigates making the shift towards collaborative projects and distribution of transnational media products, which are also initiatives at the heart of the Streams festival. From what has been discussed so far, digital distribution emerges as a factor likely to shape the future of the transnational film industry in Bulgaria.

Despite its poor management and the underdeveloped state of the European VoD market, I believe Streams held the potential to revolutionize the way festival cinema is distributed in Bulgaria. Successful initiatives like myFrenchFilmFestival suggest that there is potential room for growth in the field. Iordanova notes that new technologies and improved logistics help festivals operate in a more or less coordinated manner, gaining power and visibility through becoming direct and instantaneous access points for new content. Online co-operation limits real-life competition; practitioners no longer need to invest in traveling from one exclusive festival event to another.⁴¹ To achieve greater recognition and to capitalize on its advantage of accessibility, Streams needs to maximize its points of contact with audiences and film professionals. Perhaps future collaboration with established traditional festivals like the Sofia International Film Festival could validate its local ambitions. What remains clear is that VoD initiatives like netcinema.bg need more

³⁹ DE VINCK et al. *Fragmentation of the Single Market for On-Line Video-on-Demand Services*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁴¹ IORDANOVA, Dina. *Digital Disruption*, p. 19.

interactive initiatives and better marketing. At the time of writing, the website is in the process of digitising older pictures and building a catalogue of Bulgarian films, organized by topics and genres. This could raise more awareness about its future involvement with domestic film culture. No additional investment has been made in Streams, because it remains difficult to secure long-term programming and sponsorship for the online event. With Day-and-Date release pending in the near future for Bulgaria though, it would prove intriguing to follow the progress of netcinema.bg and evaluate whether it causes shifts in mainstream and festival Bulgarian cinema.⁴²

⁴² Netcinema – alternative na piratstvoto s HD kachestvo. In *Dnes plus*, 5 March 2015, <<http://www.dnesplus.bg/News.aspx?n=702803>> [accessed 24 September 2015].

(HI)STORIES OF SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA

Nevena Daković

“The history of cinema is the history of the power to create history”

Jacques Rancière¹

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the blurred and redefined borders between documentary and fiction footage in post-socialist Serbian films investigating the country’s socialist past. The chosen films – Mila Turajlić’s 2010 *Cinema Komunisto*, Marta Popivoda’s 2013 *Jugoslavija, kako je ideologija pokretala naše kolektivno telo (Yugoslavia or How the Ideology Moved our Collective Body)*, and Andrej Aćin’s 2012 *Valter: Mit. Legenda. Heroj (Valter: Myth. Legend. Hero)* – are afforded different degrees of attention. The chapter focuses on Turajlić’s film, using the others as secondary examples to argue for the emergence of a coherent body of docu-fiction films about socialism in the post-socialist period. These hybrid narratives symptomatically explore the history of SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) – its birth, crises, and decline under the rule of Josip Broz Tito, both deconstructing facts and constructing fictions. Palimpsestically placed one above the other, history-fiction and memory-facts shape the texts of mediated history and cultural memory.

Rancière’s quote cited above highlights the crucial operations cinema performs both in writing the past and inviting us to think about the fascinating role films and other images play in shaping (cultural) memory and historical narratives, in this case the violent passage from socialism to post-socialism. As a significant turning point, this shift left many voids and lacunas of the past to be filled in accordance with the needs of a contemporary post-Yugoslav, post-socialist, and post-national era. These gaps are filled in a multitude of ways, such as by positing official or revised (hi)stories, memory narratives, “mediated public history,”² or remembrance presented in cinematic or pop-cultural texts, all of

¹ Director’s note on *Cinema Komunisto* (2010), <<http://www.cinematikomunisto.com/background/>> [accessed 28 January 2016].

² TOSH, John. *The Pursuit of History*. London: Routledge, 1984, p. 12.

which enable the past to circulate in both the present and the future, and both across and among generations.

History and memory are often the subject of films made after 1992 in the former Yugoslavia. Such films problematize and rearticulate the official history of the socialist past advanced by the “national cinema classics,” investing in new narratives and discourses. In these “post-” times, such a project similarly means the development of new genres including “historiographic metafiction,”³ the nostalgia film,⁴ the memory-making film,⁵ and the narrative of trauma. These combine fiction and documentary footage in a manner reminiscent of the oeuvre of Dušan Makavejev and the editing practices of Kino Klub Beograd.⁶

The montage tradition and history-memory lamination are continued in the films of the memory boom of (Yugo)socialism, confirming the created (hi)stories to be narrativisations, reconstructions, and (re)imaginings of the past in present time; “[e]very moment we remember we also interpret, reinterpret and change our past from the present moment,” writes Clarence Mondale.⁷ The narrativisation of the history of the former Yugoslavia often slips from the mists of nostalgia into the research of trauma. Shocking or catastrophic events, suggest Claudio Fogu and Wulf Kansteiner, have occupied an increasingly central location in collective memory since the 1980s, while “the legacy of relatively benign events is only rarely considered in contemporary studies of collective memory.”⁸ A succession of staggering events – from Tito’s death to civil wars – provides us with a privileged vantage point from which to reconsider the past in an attempt “to establish the historical

record of the events [...] and the desire to facilitate collective remembrance and mourning.”⁹

The urge to articulate and explore trauma and to facilitate memory buckles under the nostalgic weight of the texts, as both trauma and nostalgia are the statutory areas of memory – both its texts and narratives. Nostalgia represents a desire to repeat the unrepeatable and to materialize the immaterial; the Fitzgeraldian unhealed wound; eternal anguish and pain (*la fêlure, l’angoisse*) opened by the unfulfilled desire for places or times idealised to the point of utopia, not necessarily ideological or political but certainly emotional and psychological. The impossible desire is essentially the desire to return to the past (to the time of SFRY), as nostalgia nurtures the feeling of the irreparable loss felt with the mere passage of time. Cinema allows for the multiplication of nostalgia as the primary experience of the loss. As we compensate by reliving the past by watching the film, so is added a secondary nostalgia we feel after the end of the screening: the loss of the time we spent watching the film.

A fitting analysis of the complex and multi-layered film texts cited above requires a broad, interdisciplinary theoretical approach involving Memory Studies – already itself an interdisciplinary field – as well as psychology, psychoanalysis, visual text theory, Marxism, semiology, and narratology.

INDELIBLE SHADOWS

One of the first films to investigate the myth of Yugoslavia and its leader – generously combining fiction and documentary material, and coincidentally the last film produced in the former Yugoslavia – was 1992’s *Tito i ja (Tito and me)*, directed by Goran Marković. It comments ironically on the 1950s cult of personality through an amalgam of fiction and documentary footage used in sequences depicting the film’s young hero Zoran dreaming about Tito still as history’s most celebrated, benign, and benevolent dictator. The functions of the archival material used therein are twofold: it provides a framework for the nation’s present and past (hi)stories, and it provides a particular hue to the world of

³ HUTCHEON, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988.

⁴ JAMESON, Fredric. *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.

⁵ ERLI, Astrid. Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory. In ERLI, Astrid – NÜNNING, Ansgar (Eds.). *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, p. 396.

⁶ DAKOVIĆ, Nevena. *Studije filma: ogledi o filmskim tekstovima sećanja*. Beograd: FDU, 2014, pp. 79-91.

⁷ MONDALE, Clarence. Conserving a Problematic Past. In HUFFORD, Mary (Ed.). *Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994, p. 15.

⁸ FOGU, Claudio – KANSTEINER, Wulf. The Politics of Memory and the Poetics of History. In LEBOW, Richard Ned – KANSTEINER, Wulf – FOGU, Claudio (Eds.). *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006, p. 286.

⁹ Ibid.

individual and collective dreams and memories. In the documentary shots of Tito's travels around the world – especially in the exotic, Third World countries of Africa and Asia – an omniscient God-like narration is replaced by Latin-American arrangements of Yugoslav folk songs such as *Lepe ti je Zagorje zeleno* (a song originating from the region of Tito's birth). Vivid and dynamic music "defamiliarising" the original footage posits Yugo-socialism as akin to a social masquerade tailored for the *plaisir* and *jouissance* of a political elite. It emphasizes the similarities between Tito and the dictators of unstable Latin American "banana republics" or the presidents of new Balcan states analogously dubbed "tomato republics."

Only three years later, the documentary-edited sequences of Emir Kusturica's *Underground* (1995) would reveal the eroded myth, nevertheless wrapped in an ironic fairy tale reverberating with nostalgia and melancholy. For many who faced the breakup of the country, wars, the economic crash of the 1990s, and eventually NATO bombings, Tito's rule came to be seen as a period of wealth, stability, and happiness. This two-faced remembrance announces the inscription of history into myth and of memory into fairy tale, further reinforced by the film's ambiguous ending. On a floating island, the heroes begin the epilogue with "once upon a time there was a country" (i.e. Yugoslavia) that they would remember with smiles, sorrow, and tears. However, the documentary sequences bring in the other, ironic facet of this tearful past. The musical (leit)motif of the famous Nazi song *Lili Marleen* accompanies both the original footage of the 1941 invasion of Yugoslavia and Tito's funeral in 1980, interpolated in the fiction; not just alluding to, but also asserting, such (probable) historical similarities. The convergence and closeness of these two historical events – the strong emotional reactions of the population both to German invaders and Tito's last rites – allows for this clear yet subtly formulated film's claim that such an enduringly beloved leader was just another figure in an historical procession of great dictators.

Another film, Jovan Todorović's 2012 *Beogradski fantom* (*The Belgrade Phantom*), frames a local legend about a phantom driver in 1970s Belgrade with documentary shots of Tito's visit to Cuba for the Summit of Non-Aligned countries, turning "the joyride into the political rebellion."¹⁰ Similarly, as with *Cinema Komunisto*, documentaries from the

¹⁰ SUDAR, Vlastimir. Jovan Todorović: *The Belgrade Phantom* (*Beogradski Fantom*, 2009). In *KinoKultura*, Special issue no. 8: Serbian Cinema, August 2009, <[past are combined with contemporaneous material such as interviews about these events. In addition, Todorović reaches for these reconstructed fictional parts in order to fashion a comprehensive and coherent narrative.](http://www.ki-</p>
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CINEMA KOMUNISTO: HISTORY AND MEMORY

"What time is it? / Time for Revolution!"

Cinema Komunisto

Cinema Komunisto tells the tale of SFRY from its birth in 1945 to its breakup in 1991, as presented through a history of its cinema, comprising carefully chosen archive footage, documentary shots, feature fiction films, newly shot interviews, stills, photographs, graphics, intertitles, capitations, and images of historical places, all tightly interwoven into the text as a *lieux de mémoire*.¹¹

The French historian Pierre Nora introduced the term "places of memory" to convey the place where memories crystallize and are written; places that need not be physically realized, but are rather mediated by images. Film images, as the ultimate embodiments of the spaces and times of another world, fill the void of memories, by inserting visual narratives in the place of missing or deleted surroundings (*milieux de mémoire*), thus becoming the semantic space spreading from the time of a historical event to the time of the actual memories. *Lieux de mémoire* therefore metaphorically refer to the film as a mediated public history and cultural memory text interlaced in a dialectical interplay of documentary and fiction. Film as a time-space media, even more so, transforms into an all-encompassing *lieux du passé* ("places of past") – both *lieux de mémoire* and *lieux d'histoire* ("places of history"). Saving the past at a time when "there is little left of it," *Cinema Komunisto* quite literally brings together various memory sites: historical, as well as those of cinematically or otherwise institutionalized memory, while

nokultura.com/specials/8/belgrade.shtml [accessed 28 January 2016].

¹¹ NORA, Pierre. Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire. In *Representations*, Special issue no. 26: Memory and Counter-memory, Spring 1989, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928520>> [accessed 10 January 2016].

the whole of the text becomes the place of the constructed memory narrative.

Watching the film, Barthes' spectator-author walks along and through a line of cinematic *lieux de mémoire* (the Avala film production company, film sets, the Hotel Metropol) and real *lieux de mémoire* ("House of Flowers" [Kuća cveća],¹² and a monument dedicated to the 1943 Battle of Neretva) as the discovery of meeting points with the past becomes a revelatory experience. "By its persistence in the present, the landscape gives visible testimony to what cannot be represented in the voice," argues Libby Saxton; "In turn, voice excavates a past entombed in the landscape and hidden from the sight."¹³ The relationship between the characters talking in the foreground and the scenery in the background conjures a notion of history and memory as activation and as a bank of data stored in the landscape. It is a reach analogous to the concept of memory as "a grasp at the past from the new present"¹⁴ or a choice from the past that "is necessarily a matter of continuous negotiations among all interested parties"¹⁵ placed across and between generations of film directors and spectators. These entangled themes are listed chronologically in segments entitled: *Introduction, New Yugoslavia, IB / The Tarzan Triumphs, Leka, Military Museum, Sit and Wait, Nema problema!, Ruins, Chasing Films, Brioni Connection, Neretva, Being Tito, Tito's Triumph, and Last Film / Epilogue: Taking the Pictures of the Wall*. The cinematic *fil rouge* for all of these, beside Tito as a film fan, is his projectionist Leka Konstantinović who discreetly but nonetheless smoothly and emotionally orchestrates the overall narration. The other figure successfully piercing through time and suturing the worlds is one of Tito's emblematic fiction *doppelgangers*, the actor Velimir Bata Živojinović. In the scenes at the Military Museum on Kalemegdan, Bata appears both as himself and the hero of Red Western fiction, evoking a number of real partisan (super)heroes led by Tito. He is the perfect symbolic image of the great leader and the real revolution, one transferred onto the silver screen which he further effortlessly leaves to return to the realm of facts and displaced memories.

¹² The Mausoleum of the first president of SFRY Josip Broz Tito (editor's note).

¹³ SAXTON, Libby. *Haunted Images: Film, Ethics, Testimony and the Holocaust*. London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2008, p. 32.

¹⁴ ASMAN, Aleida. O metaforici sećanja. In *Reč*, no. 56 (1999), p. 125.

¹⁵ MONDALE, Clarence. Conserving a Problematic Past, p. 15.

The choice of the interview subjects – Stevan Petrović, Veljko Despotović, Bata Živojinović, Veljko Bulajić, and Gile Đurić – uniting as it does the historical and cultural memory dimensions of the text, sustains the twofold notion of film analysed as the "localizable signifying discourse," and as a social phenomenon that includes "economic and legislative infrastructure, studio organization, technological invention and innovation, biographies of creative personnel" as well as "audience and critical response, ideological and cultural impact of the film, star mythology [...] architectural and cultural context of movie viewing, and so on."¹⁶

The fiction-documentary pastiche of *Cinema Komunisto* puts in practice Makavejev's established formula of allowing for the interchangeable roles of diverse footage. Divested and ripped off from its original context, the footage acquires different and inverted roles – the fiction turns into documentary, documentary footage into fiction. The fiction of popular culture becomes another kind of document of the past, just as a set of signifiers is emptied of the references to the (f)actual past to be filled with those of docu-fiction. The narration develops by neat suturing of the visual materials with or without an audio component, working either as commentary or illustrations. Thus, the images of fiction are accompanied by the (audio) commentary of the invisible witness or participant, the one whom they "illustrate." Scenes from Fadil Hadžić's 1964 film *Službeni položaj (Official Position)* cover the talk of Gile Đurić about his fall from power, and Branko Bauer's 1962 *Prekobrojna (The Overnumbered One)* illustrates the remembrance of the youth work actions. Conversely, the seams and frictions of various footage and interviews eliminate the expected voiceover, assuring a compact narrative and adequate narration. The juxtaposed editing of documentary footage of the closing film of the final Festival in Pula, and scenes from Bahrudin Čengić's 1967 feature fiction film *Mali vojnici (Little Soldiers)*, showing the end of the hunt for the little intruder with the gas mask under the blazing sun, stands as a powerful and outstanding prediction of the devastation of the war about to come.

¹⁶ RODOWICK, David. *The Virtual Life of Film*. Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 2007, p. 17.

CINEMA KOMUNISTO: TRAUMA AND NOSTALGIA

Cinema Komunisto embodies a symptomatic Janus-faced attitude toward Yugo-socialism as a mixture of the totalitarian paradigm and various nostalgias. Yugonostalgia, as a desire for a return to the time, space, and ideology of the former country overlaps with Titostalgia¹⁷ and normalostalgia,¹⁸ which Teofil Pančić defines as the emotional response to a Yugoslav past in the form of a desire to go back to what we considered for decades to be normal life. All of these are nurtured by the feeling of irrecoverable loss – of SFRY, its history, its cinema, its way of life – and a constant longing to once again experience the past, even if only through ephemeral cinematic images.

On the other hand, the vision of life under a totalitarian regime imposes a necessity to act out trauma,¹⁹ understood as “related to repetition, and even the repetition-compulsion” or “a tendency to relive the past” – without any distance – in the present. It is performed well in the scenes of traumatic place, “with many meanings, as the sense of historization comes to its edge,” as Jan Assmann writes,²⁰ the destroyed bridge over the river Neretva, which is also a commemorative site of great battle²¹ and an authentic film setting. As the presskit for *Cinema Komunisto* puts it

A special moment was the shoot on the Neretva river in Bosnia, where we found ourselves in the middle of a pilgrimage of both veterans from the actual historical battle and extras from the recreation of the battle on film. In a kind of bizarre double world, reality was turned into fiction, and fiction back into reality.²²

¹⁷ VELIKONJA, Mitja. *Titostalgija*. Beograd: XX vek, 2010.

¹⁸ Pančić, Teofil. Knjiga smeha i pamćenja. In *Vreme*, no. 699, 27 May 2004, <<http://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=379992>> [accessed 2 February 2016].

¹⁹ LaCAPRA, Dominick. *Representing the Holocaust: History, Theory, Trauma*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1996.

²⁰ ASSMANN, Jan. *Religion and Cultural Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006, p. 287.

²¹ “The Battle for the Wounded” or the “Battle of Neretva” was fought during February and March 1943 (editor’s note).

²² Director’s note on the making of *Cinema Komunisto*, <<http://www.cinemakomunisto.com/background/>> [accessed 3 February 2016].

In the scene, history is made palimpsestically²³ – in the sense of a surface constantly written over – through the intermittent placement of the layers of the traumas of reality and fiction. The memories of the veterans and extras are the utterances about real, experienced traumas. These extras do not only speak about “the trauma of the shooting of the film,” but rather implicitly articulate the trauma initiated by the revisionist attitude toward anti-fascism and World War II. The latter belongs to cultural memory as a powerful social testimony about the changed status of history and past. The documentary footage is blended with scenes from Veljko Bulajić’s 1969 film *Bitka na Neretvi* (*Battle of Neretva*), which analogously could be seen as acting out trauma through fiction. A similar shining through of deep nostalgic-traumatic layers is evident in the film’s promotional tagline. The periphrastic paratext pairs a dedication from Kusturica’s 1995 *Underground* (“To our fathers and their children [...] once upon a time there was a country”) with Dragojević’s tongue-in-cheek reworking from his 1996 film *Lepa sela, lepo gore* (*Pretty Village, Pretty Flames*): “This film is dedicated to the film industry / cinema of a country that no longer exists.” The tagline of Turajlić’s film – “This is the story of a country that no longer exists except in movies” – becomes an example of an *in memoriam*, as the first example of the memory genre.

The past transforms into various narratives by virtue of the simple fact of its being seen through camera lenses in the clip from Božidar Nikolić’s 1993 film *Tri karte za Holivud* (*Three Tickets to Hollywood*). At first, we see the characters carrying Tito’s bust, placing it on a pedestal, and posing for a photography, all through the objectivity of the apparatus, with the slogan “Tito – Partija” (“Tito – The Party”) arched over them. The gaze of the cinematic apparatus focuses and reverses the image from the 1950s as at the same time the 2010 film slogan “Tito – The Communist Party – Cinema” emerges through the soft focus. The final photograph instantaneously changes into a concrete and metaphorical realization of a number of Bergson’s memory terms: focusing, *la mémoire-image* or *l’image-souvenir* as embodiment of true and pure memory.²⁴

Furthermore, being an object of the look of the camera, the scenes from the old films acquire new meanings. After the initial sequence

²³ GENETTE, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in Second Degree*. Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997.

²⁴ BERGSON, Henri. *Matière et mémoire*. Paris: Flammarion, 2012.

of edited shots from the old films, the camera looks directly into the light of the projector, reveals the spectator beside it, and subsequently follows the direction of his gaze to an animated map showing the break-up of the former Yugoslavia. An "obituary shot" boasting dates of birth and death is followed by a "citation" from Bahrudin Čengić's 1971 film *Uloga moje porodice u svetskoj revoluciji* (*The Role of my Family in the World Revolution*) of a group of people holding a photograph of a meeting at Yalta, where the geopolitical map of the new Europe was drawn up. The image of the "film gang" gathered around the photo in both the frame and the shot suggests that the (hi)story of the country born at this meeting would be told through the stories of those people from the image within an image.

(HI)STORIES OF THE GRAND-CHILDREN OF SOCIALISM

Cinema Komunisto is part of a larger group of diverse media texts building the history and memory of the socialist era. It includes Igor Stojmenov's 2009 *Partizanski film* (*Partisan Movie*), the TV series *Robna kuća* (*The Department Store* [2009-]), *SFRJ za početnike* (*SFRY for Beginners* [2012-]), and *Titova kuhinja* (*Tito's Cuisine* [2013-]), Mrđan Bajić's virtual museum *Yugomuzej* (*Yugomuseum* [1998-2007]), and a number of exhibitions such as 2013's *Živeo život* (*Long Live Life*) and 2014's *Velika iluzija ili Tito i 24 miliona metara filmske trake* (*La Grande Illusion or Tito and 24 Million Meters of Film Stock*).

Each of these offer the stories of the past derived from critical or revisionist or nostalgic perspectives, imbued with an overt fascination for archives, storytelling, theories, and visuals, which thickens into diversely elaborated visions of life in SFRY. The very first of the works was the randomly structured *Partisan Movie*, which was made as an introduction for the film programme and screened at the Motovun Film Festival. It listed all of the cultural moments and themes without any preconceived idea, instead simply evincing an intuition about the richness and actuality of its topic. Benevolently, it could be seen as a distant and rough draft of *Cinema Komunisto*, albeit one focused on a distilled theme: the history of the only authentic genre of Yugoslav

cinema – the partisan film. However, this film scarcely manages to convert the fiction into docu-fiction, even less than in the refined archive documentary. The concept of linearly-patched documentary footage, as the illustration of the various statements made by the contemporaries of the events, is aped in the TV series *SFRY for Beginners* and in the superficial *Tito's Cuisine*, both made in rapid response to the popularity of the heroes of the past.

When it comes to the unstable territory of the prosthetic memory and official history, Marta Popivoda and Andrej Aćin stand at opposing ends of the spectrum. In *Valter*, Aćin manages thematically to close the circle with a return to the partisan epic. The film's full title of *Valter: Myth. Legend. Hero* charts the *optiques* through which is examined a multifaceted phenomenon comprised of myth, history, and popular culture. It puts together the roughly sutured pieces of the puzzle that is Valter: mysterious agent and dangerous witness whose assassination is organized by the new government, world renowned pop cultural icon, and, again, emblematic role of actor Velimir Bata Živojinović. Along the way, Aćin and scriptwriter Vuk Ršumović fail to fulfil the credo "When the legend becomes fact, *print* the legend," made famous by John Ford's *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962). Eager to deconstruct the myth, they attempt to transcend a simple human story with a message for all eternity – via the hidden history to the reconstruction of the myth – but do not succeed in doing much at all. This rather loose story is not helped by the poorly matched interviewees whose competence, style of speech, and argumentation varies. Their diversity, against all expectations, does not provide a multi-perspective portrayal of Valter but instead only manages to expose the poor structure of the narration and the hyper-fragmentation of the narrative. The most exciting line of inquiry about the identity, life, and historical role of Valter is left without a convincing answer, while the film remains emotionally dry and incoherent as a documentary. The documentary footage from the present, occasionally interspersed with the scenes from Hajrudin Krvavac's 1972 cult fiction film *Valter brani Sarajevo* (*Valter Defends Sarajevo*), does not sustain the obtrusive metaphor of comparative efforts invested in the forging of the steel, the casting of the bust of Valter, or the piecing together of the true (hi)story of this enigmatic figure of World War II. At the other end of the spectrum to Aćin's awkward but affectionate story stands the "experimental documentary" *Yugoslavia or How the Ideology Moved our Collective Body* by Marta Popivoda. This film

uses other means to target an elite circle of fans and connoisseurs, as demonstrated by its informal statement:

In dramaturgical terms, the film combines the theoretical concepts of social choreography and social drama, transposing them into film language. Through this directorial gesture, Popivoda explores a genesis from Richard Sennett's thesis – when ideology becomes a belief, it has the power to activate the people and their social behaviour – to the thesis of Renata Salecl – at some point people in Yugoslavia had only a belief in belief: they didn't believe in communist ideology anymore, but believed others did.²⁵

The (hi)story of Yugoslavia is told here in slowly edited scenes of mass performances acknowledged as the means by which ideology manifested in public space. The golden era of SFRY is (re)told in footage about youth work actions, May Day parades, and celebrations of the Youth Day.²⁶ The chronicle of the announced breakup of the country is given in scenes of the 1968 protests, student and civic demonstrations in the 1990s, and the 5th of October revolution, among others. This linearly structured tale follows the disappearance of the worn out utopia of communism and the naissance of the radically altered ideas of the European Left.

The flow of images is underpinned by a trembling voiceover, one reverberating with intimate confessions and remembrance, one implied to be that of the author herself, and one that turns the film into autobiography and autofiction. With the help of these emotional and very private comments, the exclusive archival material languidly writes a personal and generational life story so as to be recognized as autofiction under the disguise of autobiography. Serge Doubrovsky defines autofiction as an intimate story that comes close to resembling the novel, the autobiography, the diary, or the memoirs, one written "with style" in order to meet the demands of the new format. He writes: "[w]e

²⁵ Film *Marte Popivode na 63. Berlinalu / A Film by Marta Popivoda Will Premiere at the 63rd Berlinale*. In *TkH Newsletters*, 2 March 2013, <<http://www.newsletters.tkh-generator.net/node/176>> [accessed 23 January 2016].

²⁶ Youth Day – Dan mladosti – was celebrated on 25 May as the birthday of President Josip Broz Tito (although Tito was actually born on May 7, 1892). In the weeks preceding this date, a Relay of Youth ran around the country. Representatives of youth carried a baton with a symbolic birthday message through all major cities, ending in Belgrade where the baton was delivered to Tito (editor's note).

have to transform life into the story, fiction to make the reader more interested."²⁷ Furthermore, the fiction *is* style, and what really "separates autofiction from autobiography is work on the form" recognizable in specific directorial procedures.²⁸

In Popivoda's film, style and form are based on edited documentary footage being paired with a voiceover narration that is intended to invoke diaries and memoirs. The occasional disappearance of the voiceover brings the film close to the muted trauma expressed in the documentary images of the highly affective ontology of the body in mass performances. The historical trauma – inscribed in the (auto)biographies of the state, generationally, and in the author, individually – is uttered through the pale and tense body of ballet dancer Sonja Vukićević in visible spasm. Her body, looking tired and injured, anticipates the battered and exhausted body of a Yugoslavia that would finally be broken and brought down.

The whole era is cinematically – and oxymoronically – seen either with nostalgia for glory days and happy lives or as a locus of the trauma and revolt of some other generation. Mila Turajlić's film reflects the two *zeitgeists* – the golden age of SFRY and the present day post-socialism making history and memory – as two periods that elegantly coalesce. In different ways than its predecessors, while setting the rules for the epigones, it satisfies the national and collective longing for memory, identity (re)building, and pop cultural rephrasing of the past, brilliantly articulating a shift from "film about history" to a "memory-making film" while maintaining something of both approaches.²⁹

VOICES OF THE SOCIALIST PAST

"When the imagination stays silent, the facts speak aloud"

Lea i Darija (Lea and Darija, 2011, dir. Branko Ivanda)

²⁷ DOUBROVSKY, Serge. *Fils*. Paris: Gallimard, 2001.

²⁸ CARRIER-LAFLEUR, Thomas. *L'aventure de l'autofiction, cinéma et littérature*, <<http://www.autofiction.org/index.php?post/2010/10/04/Thomas-Carrier-Lafleur>> [accessed 23 January 2016].

²⁹ ERLI, Astrid. *Literature, Film, and the Mediality of Cultural Memory*, p. 396.

The analysis of the films conducted above suggests that the complex task performed by the narratives of the socialist past of SFRY in post-socialist time – impregnated by nostalgia and trauma, by history and memory – is achieved through the further development of the docu-fiction form. Although present in the former Yugoslav cinema since the revolutionary 1960s, as exemplified by the practice of Kino Klub Beograd, the blending of fiction and documentary footage accrues new meaning and significance in the films of the 2000s.

Docu-fiction effortlessly weaves in real historical figures and actual events with elements of fiction. Carefully intertwined in the unique text, they render it difficult if not impossible to discern the dominant structuring principle, i.e. whether the fiction is completely determined by previously deconstructed facts or whether the whole construction cautiously hides the supremacy of the reconstructive fiction which itself shapes and determines the choice of the docu-footage. Consequentially, these critically and ironically shaped texts question the position of the text on the evolutionary trajectory from reconstructive fiction of history to deconstructive facts of memory. The docu-fiction resides around the midpoint between the two.

The combination of diverse footage allows the text successfully to play various – versatile and complex, active and passive – roles in the creation and reconstruction of the national past. The films actively recreate the national history, but also passively overwrite cultural memory – previously codified through popular culture – while gracefully switching between these processes. Although the collective memory is essentially ahistorical, even anti-historical, the films manage to provide a different kind of history. “History with a capital H [is] fabricated by historians,”³⁰ while the unofficial, mythical one belongs to different (film) authors. Playing along historical and memory strands, cinema enables us to fill in the “landscapes of loss,”³¹ as well as to recreate the lost landscapes of socialism as collective history or individual memory; to replenish the two with facts and imagination. “When the imagination is silent, the facts speak aloud” and vice versa; when in post-socialism the facts are insufficient, the imagination animates the traumatic and nostalgic fiction of socialism.

³⁰ ANDREW, Dudley. *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 294.

³¹ GREENE, Naomi. *Landscapes of Loss: The National Past in Postwar French Cinema*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

ŁÓDŹ AS A CENTRAL EUROPEAN POST-CINEMATIC CITY, AND THE TOURIST GAZE

Ewa Ciszewska

In recent years, studies on film tourism destinations within the broader context of tourism studies have broadened their scope to include non-Western cities. This chapter looks at the post-socialist city of Łódź in Poland, whose cinematic imaginary has become dominated by an universal mode of perception, characteristic of Western modernity, known as the tourist gaze. To make my case, I will draw on John Urry's notion of the tourist gaze and on Anne Freidberg's idea of theming. I shall apply these conceptual frameworks to the modes of representing the cinematic values of Łódź with particular reference to their material signs which can be seen in the public space. I will argue that the notion of the cinematic values of Łódź is highly influenced by the commercially motivated, hierarchised, and decontextualising tourist gaze which is often detached from everyday practices and site-specific qualities. The tourist gaze works alongside the practice of thematising Łódź as a city of film, since both these activities are based on the principle of commercialising images and experiences. Case studies of tourist products and commercial initiatives using cinematic denominators will serve to demonstrate how local film history is being re-written to fit into the global tourist formats (such as a “Walk of Fame” or a series of statues of fairy tale characters) or to enhance the symbolic values of post-cinematic venues. I will also address the phenomenon of Łódź being thematised as a city of film with a view regarding the prospect of film tourism. Finally, by choosing to concentrate on the post-socialist city of Łódź, I wish also to contribute to the ongoing discussion on Western-inspired modernisation and the post-socialist heritage of the former Eastern Bloc and to opening up new perspectives for potential comparative studies.

A TOOLBOX: THE TOURIST GAZE AND THEMATISING

The title of John Urry's influential book – *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*¹ – begins with a term characteristic of the modern Western perspective of seeing the world. The tourist gaze has become a tool for describing the dominant model of the relationship between people and their environment, particularly in the concepts referring to the postmodern world and the conditions of liquid modernity.² As has been pointed out in the commentaries of the observers of this phenomenon, the universal presence of the tourist gaze does not prescind its historical, geographical, social, and cultural variations, since at every instance the gaze reveals the class, gender, and ethnic conditions determining the subject of the gaze.³ But irrespective of where and in what environment they occur, the representations formed in the tourist mode have common indicators, namely homogenisation, decontextualisation, and mystification.⁴ The nature of the tourist experience is firmly anchored in the visual character of the world around us.⁵ The birth of photography and its mobilised descendant, i.e. cinema, perfectly coincided with the needs of developing mass tourism.⁶ Photography and cinema not only have made it possible to enjoy virtual journeys: they have also served as a source of inspiration for embarking on real ones in the real world, expanding thus the scope of the tourist experience by adding to it some new and hitherto inaccessible dimensions. With reference to the Eastern European cinema, one can observe the tourist imagination in action both in film texts and beyond, namely in such contexts as the substance of urban spaces, the strategies implemented by city authorities, and the commercialisation of elements summoned up from urban traditions. The former approach

¹ URRY, John. *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London: Sage, 1990. Updated version: URRY, John – LARSEN, Jonas. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2011.

² BAUMAN, Zygmunt. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity, 2000.

³ KRISTENSEN, Lars – MAZIERSKA, Ewa – NÄRIPEA, Eva. Gazing at the Baltic: Tourist Discourse in the Cinema of the Baltic Sea Countries. In: MIKKONEN, Simo – SUUTARI Pekka (Eds.). *Music, Art and Diplomacy: East-West Cultural Interactions and the Cold War*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2016, p. 50.

⁴ ALBERS, Patricia C. – JAMES, William R. Travel Photography: A Methodological Approach. In *Annals of Tourism Research*, no. 15 (1988), pp. 154-155.

⁵ URRY, John – LARSEN, Jonas. *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, p. 14.

⁶ Ibid., p.155.

was adopted by Ewa Mazierska, Eva Närripea, and Lars Kristensen, who revealed the tourist gaze at work in a series of fiction and nonfiction films from the 1960s and early 1970s depicting various Baltic cities, including e.g. Gdańsk in *Do widzenia, do jutra* (*Goodbye, Till Tomorrow*, 1960, dir. Janusz Morgenstern).⁷ A special case of films designed with the tourist gaze in mind are co-productions of a certain type: these are the result of a creative process riddled with numerous instances of negotiating meanings, and of an attempt at reconciling the multifarious (and often contradictory) expectations of the parties involved. One of such films is the first Polish-Czechoslovak co-production of the post-war period, namely *What Will My Wife Say to This?* (*Zadzwoncie do mojej żony / Co řekne řena*, 1958, dir. Jaroslav Mach). The film recounts the journey of a Czechoslovak journalist traveling to Poland: the tourist gaze erases the post-war image of Warsaw in ruin, one which flew in the face of aesthetic canons, and disavows the working class character of Łódź by portraying it instead as an artists' enclave.⁸

In this article, I will be tracing the tourist gaze, particularly the gaze of the tourists who are keen on the cinematic aspects of Łódź, but I shall not refer to film texts, but rather to the urban tissue: buildings and other architectural forms. I will discuss the strategies of the commercialisation of the cinematic heritage of Łódź and the attempts at offering tourist products related to the cinema. In order to present a coherent image based on my observations, I will use a theoretical framework founded on the concept of thematising described by Anne Freidberg.⁹ Initially, thematising was mainly a feature observable in consumer spaces: from shop windows to commercial complexes. Today, the processes of performing and immersiveness are not only modes in which one may experience consumer spaces – they also provide a means to discover and experience urban space. According to Anne Freidberg, the “theatricalised landscapes” based on the principle of thematising become

⁷ KRISTENSEN, Lars – MAZIERSKA, Ewa – NÄRIPEA, Eva. Gazing at the Baltic: Tourist Discourse in the Cinema of the Baltic Sea Countries.

⁸ CISZEWSKA, Ewa. Socialist Film Co-productions. The Case of Polish-Czechoslovakian Film Co-production *What Will My Wife Say to This?* (1958) by Jaroslav Mach. In: DON-DZIK, Michał – PABIŚ-ORZESZYNA, Michał – ZAJĄC, Bartosz. *The Cinema of Central Europe in Multicultural Perspective*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015 (forthcoming).

⁹ FRIEDBERG, Anne. ... więc jestem. Kupujący-widz i przeistoczenie poprzez zakupy. In REWERS, Ewa (Ed.) *Miasto w sztuce – sztuka miasta*. Kraków: Universitas, 2010, pp. 585-595 (trans. by Blanka Brzozowska).

a variation on the theme of cinema.¹⁰ The principle borrowed from cinema is the “assemblage of attractions” which can be seen, among other instances, in the way the products are staged: how they become detached from their origin and the process of production, and, all at the same time, “play” the roles of various objects in the consumerist scenarios pursued by the client. The anonymous urban and consumer spaces often pose as places and as such they are explored with the use of a set of stereotypes which make up part of the repertoire of tourist imagination.¹¹ Thematising, peculiarising, manipulating spacetime, or pastiche are the fundamental reservoirs of the simulation of places; all these features are characteristic of the tourist gaze.¹² The client/tourist is attracted by the expanding field of activities related to a given place. When seen in this way, the category of consumer objects is not limited to the products bought in stores, but also includes performances, events, exhibitions, or contests.¹³

THE FILM-THEMATISING OF THE POST-CINEMATIC CITY OF ŁÓDŹ

The most common practice in fostering the attractiveness of a city is to explore one particular theme, characterised by appropriate sets of stereotypes and representations forming part of the repertoire of tourist imagination. This thematising, by means of the tourist imagination, transforms a city into a theme park; it is a remarkable fact that thus it

¹⁰ FRIEDBERG, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 120.

¹¹ BRZOZOWSKA, Blanka. Mieszkańcy jako turyści – rola wyobraźni turystycznej w kreowaniu przestrzeni miejskiej. In LORENC, Iwona – SALWA, Mateusz (Eds.) *Konteksty sztuki, konteksty estetyki. Przestrzenie późnej nowoczesności*. Łódź: Oficyna, 2011, pp. 281-282.

¹² RITZER, George. *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption*. 3rd edition, Los Angeles – London – New Delhi – Singapore – Washington DC: SAGE Publication & Pine Forge Press, 2010, pp. 95-117 (Chapter 5: Reenchantment: Creating Spectacle through Extravaganzas and Simulations).

¹³ MAKOWSKI, Grzegorz. *Świątynia konsumpcji. Geneza i społeczne znaczenie centrum handlowego*. Warszawa: Trio, 2003, p. 65.

becomes a place which starts to address the needs of both tourists and inhabitants, who are increasingly fastidious as consumers.¹⁴

The urban space of Łódź is organised by two types of tourist imagination: one evokes the industrial past of the city,¹⁵ whereas the other is focused on cinema. These two types of imagination do not compete with one another. What is more, in some cases they are mutually supportive and expand the sets of representations.¹⁶ Cinema and textile manufacturing no longer represent an economic capital of vital importance for the city as they used to be in communist times. They do, however, constitute a powerful symbolic currency and have an impact on the attractiveness of the city for tourists, as argued by Maciej Kronenberg with regards to the monuments of industrial heritage.¹⁷ Currently, film and factories which can be seen in promotional campaigns, corporate logotypes, and architectural projects refer to the old good days when the city heavily depended on these two sectors of its economy for its financial and symbolic legitimisation. At the same time – with a particular emphasis on cinema – they function as tokens of international prestige.

Film and film heritage feature in the official strategic documents of the city, and as such they constitute an element in the positioning of Łódź as a creative town.¹⁸ Blanka Brzozowska, who analysed the implementation of the concept of creativity in Łódź, argues that the guidelines described in the strategic documents are more often followed by the autonomous commercial institutions and urban grassroots movements

¹⁴ BRZOZOWSKA, Blanka. W temacie zabawy – zabawa tematem. Ludyczność tematykowania w środowiskach konsumpcyjnych. In *Dyskurs Pismo Naukowo-Artystyczne ASP we Wrocławiu*, no. 13/14 (2012), p. 85.

¹⁵ BRZOZOWSKA, Blanka. Mieszkańcy jako turyści..., pp. 279-290.

¹⁶ WIEWIÓRSKI, Jakub. *Triumf Ziemi obiecanej*. Łódź: Muzeum Kinematografii w Łodzi, 2016.

¹⁷ KRONENBERG, Maciej. *Wpływ zasobów dziedzictwa przemysłowego na atrakcyjność turystyczną miasta. Przykład Łodzi*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2012.

¹⁸ Mentioned in two documents approved in 2012: *Strategia zarządzania marką Łódź na lata 2010-2016*, <<http://www.kreatywna.lodz.pl/page/123,dokumenty-zwiazane-z-strategia.html?id=55>> [accessed 9 September 2016], and *Strategia Zintegrowanego Rozwoju Łodzi 2020+*, <<http://uml.lodz.pl/miasto/strategia/>> [accessed 8 September 2016].

than by the administration of the city.¹⁹ As will be demonstrated below, the transformation of the film heritage is observable mainly in activities of a commercial nature. The promotional strategy of the town rests primarily on its industrial heritage, as can be seen in the recent plans to name the streets in the newly constructed and prestigious New Centre of Łódź after the families of factory owners. In August 2016, Konrad Klejsa, a film scholar from Łódź, has prepared a petition urging the city administration to name the streets after film directors (Wojciech Jerzy Has, Krzysztof Kieślowski, Andrzej Munk, Jerzy Kawalerowicz) and actors (Jan Machulski), but the outcome of it is as yet uncertain. The history of the cinema industry in Łódź has laid a solid groundwork for the local film-related tourist imagination. During communist times, Łódź was home to the Feature Film Studio (Wytwórnia Filmów Fabularnych), the Educational Film Studio (Wytwórnia Filmów Oświatowych), the Se-ma-for Film Studio, and, at present, Opus Film which produced the Oscar-winning film *Ida* (2013, dir. Paweł Pawlikowski). Łódź provided the background for numerous Polish films and several international productions.²⁰ The image of a film city is further enriched by the activities of such institutions of culture and film education as the Film Museum, the National Film School, and the Central Office for Film Education.

As far as tourist products are concerned, the presence of film in the urban space has taken the internationally recognised shape of a walk of fame and a sculpture trail. The year 1998 saw the opening of the Łódź Walk of Fame in Piotrkowska street, the main street of the city, which is composed of stars with the names of actors, directors, camera operators, film critics, and film scholars connected with Łódź during their studies or artistic career. The source of inspiration was the Hollywood Walk of Fame, but as opposed to its American counterpart, the Łódź version does not include the hand or foot prints of the artists (the coastal town of Międzyzdroje, home to the Festival of Stars, has a walk of fame with hand prints of the stars placed on the pavement). It is not by coincidence that the stars are situated near the Grand Hotel, another place with strong connections to cinema, since for many years

¹⁹ BRZOZOWSKA, Blanka. "Creative City" as a Brand – The Case of Łódź. In *Creativity Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1 (2016), <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3846/23450479.2015.1112312>> [accessed 9 September 2016].

²⁰ See CISZEWSKA, Ewa. Łódź filmowa. In KARPIŃSKA, Grażyna Ewa (Ed.). *Antropolog w mieście i o mieście. Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne*. Łódź-Wrocław: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, 2012.

this was a place for Polish artists working at the Feature Film Studio (29 Łąkowa Street) to stay the night. In the view of Michael Goddard, the mediating of the film history of Łódź by the Walk of Fame leads to the following result: the idea which was supposed to be promoted by this product became parodied and musealised.²¹ Thus, the Walk of Fame becomes a list of Polish film personages, most of whom did not make it to cross the threshold of Hollywood, in spite of what the adoption of the model of stars with names might suggest.



Fig. 1. The star of the director Janusz Morgenstern in the Łódź Walk of Fame, fot. Aneta Bochnacka

In addition to the Łódź Walk of Fame, Piotrkowska street is also home to part of another tourist product, namely the Łódź Fairy Tale Route. It is a sculpture trail composed of nine statuettes representing characters from animated films produced in the Se-Ma-For Film Studio. Its organisers claim that "the main goal of the project is to promote the rich film heritage of Łódź (the brand of 'Cinematic Łódź'), with an emphasis on

²¹ GODDARD, Michael. Unravelling "HollyŁódź": The Industrial and Cinematic Imaginary of Łódź. In RASMUS, Agnieszka – CIEŚLAK, Magdalena (Eds.), *Images of the City*. Newcastle upon Tyre: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, p. 329.

the accomplishments of the Łódź school of animation.²² The statuettes of fairy tale characters are scattered in various places in Łódź: Ćwirek Sparrow in front of the entrance to the Palm House, the cats Filemon and Bonifacy in the courtyard of the Film Museum, and Pik-Pok Penguin near Fala, a municipal water park. The first statuette to be unveiled was Miś Uszatek (literally: Teddy Floppy-Ear), a fairy tale character also known outside of Poland, which stands near the entrance to the Tourist Information Point at 87 Piotrkowska street.²³ The initial idea was to place a star dedicated to Miś Uszatek on the pavement of Piotrkowska street in a similar vein to the Hollywood Walk of Fame, where fictional characters such as Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck have their own stars bearing their names. The members of the committee of the Łódź Walk of Fame quashed this initiative arguing that it was incompatible with the serious character of the project.

²² See <<http://www.bajkowa.lodz.pl/nodes/type/bajkowy-szlak>> [accessed 8 September 2016].

²³ Miś Uszatek is known in Finland as Nalle Lupakorva, in Japan as Oyasumi Kuma-chan. In Finland Miś Uszatek popularised the idea of baking potatoes in the bonfire, which was portrayed in one of the episodes of the series. Conversation with Zbigniew Żmudzki, <http://www.dzieciwlodzi.pl/editor/reading_room_sections/wywiady-z/reading_rooms/lodz-bajkowa-12> [accessed 8 September 2016].



Fig. 2 The Floppy Bear on Piotrkowska street, fot. Aneta Bochnacka

The Łódź Fairy Tale Route may be legitimately treated as an offshoot or a local transformation of the trend which promotes erecting plinthless life-size monuments, usually portraying the typical representatives of a city or figures important for the local community. The most common variety of this trend is a figure of a man sitting on a bench, or a chair, or in an armchair, or standing casually on the pavement. The Gallery of Famous People from Łódź is one manifestation of this trend; it is similar in

this particular respect to other galleries of this type which can be found in other cities in Poland and abroad, in that the bench statues belong unquestionably to the world of art and the world of men. They represent poets (Julian Tuwim), novelists (Władysław Reymont), musicians (Artur Rubinstein), theatre directors (Stefan Jaracz) and the founders of the industrial character of the city (Karol Scheibler, Izrael Poznański, Henryk Grohman).²⁴ The conspicuous absence of women from the Gallery of Famous People from Łódź goes in parallel with the other notable absentee: the film world. Despite the abundant share of great directors, actors, or camera operators from Łódź, which is so clearly demonstrated in the Łódź Walk of Fame, none of them features as a figure placed on a bench in the public space inviting the passers-by to sit next to it. The exclusion of filmmakers from the official municipal memory of people representing the city's identity may be explained by the opinion of the supposedly inferior cultural status of cinema, an opinion which has haunted this art since its very beginning. This problem may be perhaps attributed to the fact that, as opposed to the figures now commemorated in the Gallery, some of the potential candidates are living persons and their biographies as well as their attitude towards Łódź are not so easy to mould into the mythologised image of the city. It might also become evident that in many cases the connections of a given person with Łódź, demonstrated in the Łódź Walk of Fame, were rather tenuous and illusory.

Both these projects, the Łódź Walk of Fame and the Łódź Fairy Tale Route, are examples of tried and true formulas for tourist products which are well-established on a global scale; the Walk of Fame is particularly closely associated with the film industry. The tourist products discussed above make use of the images of actors and fairy tale characters with a view to presenting the cinematic tradition of Łódź, and in particular the importance of the city for Polish film art and film culture and the origins of animated film characters which can be traced to Łódź. Presumably only some figures can be recognised by the average tourist (especially those portraying more specialised professions such as set design or film criticism). A visitor from abroad may well recognise even fewer, such as Andrzej Wajda or Pola Negri. The form of the statuettes of the Łódź Fairy Tale Route invites the enlivening of the public space; for instance in winter the figures are dressed with wooly hats

²⁴ KARPIŃSKA, Grażyna Ewa. Pomniki bez cokołów – realizacje przedstawiające mężczyzn. In *Journal of Urban Ethnology*, vol. 11 (2013), pp. 105-116.

and scarves. The observations of how tourists react to the statuettes on Piotrkowska street lead to the conclusion that Miś Uszatek is treated with more affection than the people commemorated in the Walk of Fame. The teddy is a particularly likeable companion with whom to have a "selfie" photograph; it also invites interactive initiatives taken mainly by the city inhabitants, such as dressing the figure in seasonally appropriate attire. In a similar vein to the bench statues, the affinity with the sculpture is embedded in the idea of the monument; as such this affinity is not an iconoclastic act, but a gesture of affection.



Fig. 3. The cat Bonifacy next to the entrance to the Film Museum, fot. Aneta Bochnacka

The examples analysed above indicate that the thematising of Łódź as a city of film is characterised by the use of globally recognisable standardised attractions, a feature which deprives the subject matter of its specific values. Paradoxically, the Hollywood model of a walk of fame leads to caricaturing and musealising the represented artists instead of increasing their visibility. The stars, as Patricia C. Albers and William James would have it,²⁵ decontextualise filmmakers; they divorce them

²⁵ ALBERS, Patricia C. – JAMES, William R. *Travel Photography: A Methodological Approach*.

from their original culture of production, one which certainly was not based on the Hollywood model. Even though the marketing strategy of Łódź does emphasise the cinematic Łódź as an important brand, the tourist products offered by the city as well as its other undertakings do not necessarily reflect a conviction about the importance of the values and traditions of Łódź related to film. Filmmakers are conspicuously absent from the Gallery of Famous People from Łódź, which is composed exclusively of poets, writers, pianists, and theatre directors. The committee of the Łódź Walk of Fame ruled out the possibility of honouring fictional characters with stars dedicated to their name (as opposed to their Hollywood counterpart). Thus the formats constitute a hierarchised narrative about the actants of the cinematic Łódź, where pride of place is given to fiction filmmakers (the nonfiction genre in the Walk of Fame is represented solely by Władysław Starewicz and Zbigniew Rybczyński).

DOES FILM-THEMATISING SELL?

In the context of the cinematic thematising of the city, it is important to consider whether and in what way this practice is a factor in the development of an increase in the number of tourist. Film tourism, until recently, was considered to be a niche market similar to military, space, or diving travels, but is, today, one of the most vividly developing branches of cultural tourism with a remarkable impact on mainstream tourism.²⁶ Film tourism, also referred to as film-induced tourism, is not only about visiting the locations portrayed in film or television ("on-location tourism"), but also includes such phenomena as traveling to places connected with film stars, visiting film studios and theme parks, or following the traces of film protagonists ("off-location tourism").²⁷ As illustrated in the work of Stefan Roesch, one of the important activities of film-inspired tourists is traveling to the locations of film production

²⁶ TOMALA, Karolina – FABER Florence. Film Tourism. In PAPHANASSIS, Alexis (Ed.). *The Long Tail of Tourism: Holiday Niches and Their Impact on Mainstream Tourism*. Wiesbaden: Gabler Verlag, 2011, pp. 149-158.

²⁷ BEETON, Sue. *Film-induced Tourism*. Clevedon – Buffalo – Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005; updated version: BEETON, Sue. *Film-induced Tourism*. 2nd edition. Buffalo – Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2016.

– in his book he accompanies film location tourists on their journeys to understand the impact films can have on their lives.²⁸ The most popular places and attractions for such tourists are connected with well-established film brands such as the world of Tolkien, Star Wars, Harry Potter, or James Bond.²⁹ At the same time, cities and landscapes which have provided the background for a significant number of films are attracting numerous visitors; hence the film-tourism popularity of Paris and the boom of Great Britain as a tourist destination for visitors from India owing to a remarkable number of Bollywood films shot in England.³⁰ Characteristically, the research into the impact of film on tourism is carried out most often with reference to those scarcely populated areas which have few tourist attractions other than those derived from film. According to Sue Beeton, "tourism in cities does not create the same level of impact (positive as well as negative) owing to their existing population size, infrastructure and site hardening."³¹ Another difficulty in the study of film tourism is the indistinguishable character of film tourists resulting from their immersion in the city's community³² and the uncertainty in drawing a distinction between film and cultural tourism.

In urban contexts, film tourism is propelled by walking tours related to the biographies of characters from films or television series. One result of this trend is the popularity of the New York route dedicated to Carrie Bradshaw, a character from the series *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), which takes the visitors to cafés, restaurants and (above all) luxury shops patronised by Carrie. In this model, the expected activity of the tourist is reduced to incentives geared to buying more and more new products, which simultaneously become souvenirs of a tourist experience. A Polish equivalent of Carrie Bradshaw would be the thirty-year old Magda M. (from the series *Magda M.*, 2005-2007): her female fans, who refer to themselves as "magdamaniacs", follow her traces in Warsaw.³³ Another example is the staggering career of Amélie Poulain:

²⁸ ROESCH, Stefan. *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists*. Bristol – Buffalo – Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2009.

²⁹ BEETON, Sue. *Film-induced Tourism*, 2005, pp. 81-90.

³⁰ TANSKANEN, Tanja. *Film Tourism: Study on How Films Can Be Used to Promote Tourism* (bachelor's thesis: Laure University of Applied Sciences, 2012), pp. 44-51.

³¹ BEETON, Sue. *Film-induced Tourism*, p. 109.

³² Ibid.

³³ KOSCHANY, Rafał. Niewidzialne miasta? Przypadek filmu polskiego. In REWERS, Ewa – SKÓRZYŃSKA, Agata (Eds.) *Sztuka – kapitał kulturowy polskich miast*. Poznań: Wy-

her fictional biography has led to the outright mythologisation of the bar where she worked and the part of Montmartre where the bar is situated. Interestingly, film characters with morally questionable traits can also become character-brands and, as such, have an impact on the shape of film tourism. A case in point is Walter White (a.k.a. Heisenberg) from the series *Breaking Bad* (2008-2013). The tourist trail organised in Albuquerque, New Mexico is situated in otherwise humdrum places and landscapes of little or no interest, but it portrays the illegal activities of the protagonist drug producer who constantly changed the location of his mobile laboratory and frequented numerous insalubrious places. As observed by Rodanthi Tzanelli and Majid Yar, it is an increasingly popular strategy that places become thematised through the use of such film and television productions which refer to violence, crime, and death. An ambiguous theme thus becomes the prime mover in strengthening the appeal of places which in themselves have nothing that could be used to design a tourist product aimed at a commercial success.³⁴

Łódź, as a film set, does not count as a tourist attraction of the city. The local city guides were asked if they knew of any films shot in Łódź: by way of response they mentioned only two titles – Andrzej Wajda's *Ziemia obiecana* (*The Promised Land*, 1974) and a series produced by Polish Television titled *Komisarz Alex* (*Commissaire Alex*, 2011-2016) about a dog working for the police.³⁵ It has to be noted that Łódź provided the background for about 150 films and television series.³⁶ It was indeed symptomatic that the publication of *Przewodnik po filmowej Łodzi* (*A Guide to Cinematic Łódź*)³⁷ was accompanied by film screenings so that guides and tourists alike got to know the references to films included in the programmes of walking tours. Most films and television series with

dawnictwo UAM, 2010, p. 425.

³⁴ TZANELLI, Rodanthi – YAR, Majid. *Breaking Bad, Making Good: Notes on a Televisual Film Industry*. In *Mobilities*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2014), < <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2014.929256> > [accessed 8 September 2016], pp. 1-19.

³⁵ The TV series is an adaptation of the Austrian series *Kommissar Rex* produced in 1994-2004 and its Italian version *Il commissario Rex* produced since 2008.

³⁶ Two guide books are devoted to Łódź film locations: *Przewodnik po filmowej Łodzi* by Aleksandra Jonas, Maciej Kronenberg, and Marta Wawrzyniak published by the Centre of Initiatives for the Development "Regio" in 2010 and *Spacerownik. Łódź filmowa* by Joanna Podolska and Jakub Wiewiórski published by Biblioteka Gazety Wyborczej in 2010.

³⁷ JONAS Aleksandra – KRONENBERG, Maciej – WAWRZINIAK, Marta. *Przewodnik po filmowej Łodzi*. Łódź: Centrum Inicjatyw na rzecz Rozwoju "Regio", 2010.

Łódź in the background date back to communist times and as a result they are hardly recognisable for younger audiences and even less so for tourists from abroad. Nowadays the tourist potential of films has already been taken into consideration in the early stages of film production.³⁸ An illustration of this approach can be found in the promotional campaigns prepared by the Łódź Film Commission which emphasised the townscape of Łódź as a background in films shot recently in the city such as *W ciemności* (*In Darkness*, 2011) by Agnieszka Holland and *Powidoki* (*Afterimage*, 2016) by Andrzej Wajda.

A survey carried out in a group of city guides (20 people out of 250 holders of the official license to work as a guide in Łódź) demonstrates that guided tours focusing on the theme of cinema are few and far between, despite the fact that most guides appreciate the film heritage of the city as an important element of the tourist potential of Łódź.³⁹ There was a total of ten guides who did guide walking tours concentrating on cinema; the Film Museum and the Film School were the most often visited places during such tours (as declared by all guides who offered film-related walking tours). The data obtained from the survey corresponded with the results of the analyses of tourist circulation in the city of Łódź and the Łódź region in 2009-2011.⁴⁰ The collected information indicates that tourists visited only two places related to film heritage: the Film Museum (15% of the surveyed visitors in 2009, 8,9% in 2010 and 13,7% in 2011) and the Film School (1,6% in 2009, 0,5% in 2010; no data available for 2011). These surveys were not aimed to track down the places related to film heritage and as a result they do not

³⁸ ROESCH, Stefan. *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists*, pp. 220-233.

³⁹ KRONENBERG, Maciej. *Turystyka filmowa w Łodzi: potencjał – produkt – perspektywy*. In CISZEWSKA, Ewa – KLEJSA, Konrad (Eds.) *Kultura filmowa współczesnej Łodzi*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Biblioteki PWSFTviT, 2015, pp.147-160. Maciej Kronenberg was the author of the questionnaire.

⁴⁰ This research was conducted via questionnaire (following the standardised direct interview technique) in places frequented by tourists and in lodging facilities in Łódź. The sample size in the consecutive years amounted an average of 1,100 people. For more information on this issue see: WŁODARCZYK, Bogdan (Ed.). *Ruch turystyczny w Łodzi i województwie łódzkim w 2011 roku*. Łódź: Regionalna Organizacja Województwa Łódzkiego – Instytut Geografii Miast i Turyzmu Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2012; WŁODARCZYK, Bogdan (Ed.). *Ruch turystyczny w Łodzi i województwie łódzkim w 2010 roku*. Łódź: Regionalna Organizacja Turystyczna Województwa Łódzkiego, 2011. WŁODARCZYK, Bogdan (Ed.). *Ruch turystyczny w Łodzi i województwie łódzkim w 2011 roku*. Łódź: Regionalna Organizacja Województwa Łódzkiego – Instytut Geografii Miast i Turyzmu Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2012; in the years 2012-2015 research was not conducted.

offer a response to the question of other film-related locations. When asked for the places in Łódź which they considered to be most popular for visitors, the respondents referred to Piotrkowska street; the survey, however, did not include questions about the visibility of the Łódź Walk of Fame, the Łódź Fairy Tale Route or the former cinema buildings, all forming part of this thoroughfare.

The investors operating in Łódź have noticed the lack of recognisable film-related figures connected with the city. The initial idea of the company OPG Property Professionals, which constructed the Art Modern residential area and sold the apartments located on the premises, was to brand the venture with film-related names connected with Łódź.⁴¹ The idea materialised only in the form of billboards with images of Pola Negri and Rudolph Valentino inviting interested parties to contact the developer. The plans for further thematisation of the area are focused on the concept of the “cultural icons of the 20th century” rather than the “great cinema figures connected with Łódź.” As a result, the entrances to the building will be named after Ernest Hemingway, Mark Twain, and Coco Chanel.

Brand marketing based on film-related figures has only just appeared in Łódź. In March 2016, the city saw a promotional campaign for the television series titled *Bodo* (2016-...; the series has been commissioned by Polish Television). A part of the campaign was a “Walking Tour in the Footsteps of Bodo”: the participants visited places connected with the actor Eugeniusz Bodo and locations in which the series was shot. To some extent, the walking tour resembled the tours in the footsteps of the characters from *Breaking Bad*, since it was composed of typical elements of cultural tourism such as pieces of information about historic buildings, famous figures connected with the city, and works of art exhibited in the public space. The inclusion of the fictional film world in the experience of the real city (as well as the distinction between the two, which gradually fades away) is addressed to the tourists, but even more so to the inhabitants.

Another interesting example of thematising the city of Łódź as a film city (geared for commercial gain) is the history of the hotel Stare Kino Cinema Residence. It can be described as yet another example of themed film-related accommodation mentioned by Roesch.⁴² The owner of the property, the company OPG Property Professionals, placed a plaque

⁴¹ A conversation of the author with Andrzej Szczepański on 22 February 2016.

⁴² ROESCH, Stefan. *The Experiences of Film Location Tourists*, pp. 47-49.

on the facade with the information that 120 Piotrkowska street was the address of Poland’s first permanent cinema theatre. Investors took the initiative to pick up this thread and acquired one of the annexes, which was opened in October 2013 as the hotel Stare Kino Cinema Residence. The 22 hotel rooms were designed in such a way as to refer to films shot in Łódź.⁴³ The hotel suites were named after film titles such as Wajda’s classic film set in Łódź, i.e. *The Promised Land*, or the extremely popular Polish television series – *Czterej pancerni i pies* (*Four Tankmen and a Dog*, 1966-1970) and *Stawka większa niż życie* (*Stakes Larger than Life*, 1967-1968) – and such recent productions as *Aleja gówniarzy* (*Absolute Beginner*, 2008) by Piotr Szczepański and the series *Commissaire Alex* (2011-2016).



Fig. 4. The *Kingsajz* Suite in the Stare Kino Cinema Residence, promotional materials provided by Stare Kino Cinema Residence

The reviews of Polish tourists posted on the travel website TripAdvisor were enthusiastic: “There is no professional spa or swimming pool,

⁴³ Maciej Kronenberg from the Centre of Initiatives for the Development “Regio” provided advice for the project. He also co-authored *Przewodnik po filmowej Łodzi*, see JONAS, Aleksandra – KRONENBERG, Maciej – WAWRZYŃIAK, Marta. *Przewodnik po filmowej Łodzi*. Łódź: Centrum Inicjatyw na Rzecz Rozwoju „Regio”, 2010.

but one can feel here the atmosphere of Łódź in the past,"⁴⁴ or: "The hotel offers more than just accommodation, it is also a place of film education."⁴⁵ However, guests from abroad, as observed by Aleksandra Choroś, the manager, did not share this enthusiasm.⁴⁶ The modestly furnished interiors, which alluded to films set in communist times, without any stylish ornaments, but fitted with facilities of inferior quality (a sign of the times!), were seen as kitsch and characteristic of budget class hotels. For obvious reasons, the visitors from abroad did not feel any nostalgia for communist Poland, the feeling which made these rooms so appealing to Polish tourists. As a result, when the hotel was expanded in 2014, the owners decided that the new rooms would also be related to cinematic ideas, but without references to Łódź. The design of the 20 new rooms alludes to Hollywood classic productions, including *Casablanca* (1942, dir. Michael Curtiz), *Gone with the Wind* (1939, dir. Victor Fleming) and *The Seven Year Itch* (1955, dir. Billy Wilder). Today, the hotel has 42 rooms (22 with Łódź themes and 20 referring to Hollywood), two conference rooms (named after the Krzemiński Brothers and the Lumière Brothers), and a small cinema room named Stare Kino opened with the motto: "we reactivate the oldest cinema theatre in Poland."⁴⁷ The cinema room is fitted with a 35mm cinema projector; in May and June 2016 it was a venue for screening Polish films, two per week, projected from a 35mm film tape. The screenings began with short presentations by members of the University of Łódź Cinema Society and included such films as *Popioły* (*The Ashes*, 1965) by Andrzej Wajda, *Faraon* (*The Pharaoh*, 1966) by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, and *Cafe Pod Minogą* (*Minoga Café*, 1959) by Bronisław Brok. The activities at Stare Kino were a classic example of mystification described by Patricia C. Albers and William R. James,⁴⁸ a mystification aimed at creating an image which would be

⁴⁴ The opinion concerning the hotel Stare Kino Cinema Residence posted by the user *leonkatar* on 19 October 2015 on TripAdvisor.

⁴⁵ The opinion concerning the hotel Stare Kino Cinema Residence posted by the user *sycyliana* posted on 11 October 2015 on TripAdvisor.

⁴⁶ The conversation of the author with Aleksandra Choroś, 18 February 2016.

⁴⁷ Łukasz Biskupski argues that the identification of the address 120 Piotrkowska Street with the activities of the Krzemiński brothers, promoted by the owners of the cinema, is controversial. BISKUPSKI, Łukasz. *Miasto Atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*. Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury – Szkoła Wyższa Psychologii Społecznej, 2013, pp. 152-154.

⁴⁸ ALBERS, Patricia C. – JAMES, William R. *Travel Photography: A Methodological Approach*.

attractive to the viewer by means of posing and theatricalisation. The strategy of Stare Kino evoked the memories of film screenings organised within the scheme of Film Societies. The screenings in Stare Kino offered a deconstruction of the classic film screening. The 35mm projector stood directly behind the audience. The sounds and heat given off by the projector became part of new film-related experiences. Thus, the technology exposed in public became an attraction in itself, on an equal footing with the film. As a result, the screenings in Stare Kino responded to the expectations of cinephiles and technophiles.

CONCLUSION

The thematising of cities with reference to their role as film spaces is related to the expectations of today's tourists who seek experience which are deviations of everyday life. The case of Łódź in this context is rather specific: it seems that the remarkable potential, which stems from the cinematic tradition of the city, is exploited only to a limited extent, whereas the forms in which this potential is represented in the public space are often caricaturish (as can be seen in the Łódź Walk of Fame). The Warner Bros Studio in Leavesden, just outside London, is home to the thematic museum of Harry Potter. The Documentary and Feature Film Studio in Warsaw has prepared the educational space known as the Film Set. In Łódź, by contrast, there have been no attempts at creating a theme park of entertainment and education related to cinema, despite the presence of the Feature Film Studio and, in former times, the Educational Film Studio. The sole exception is the Se-ma-for Museum of Animation run by the Se-ma-for Film Foundation (which is located on the premises of the privately-owned Se-ma-for Film Studio).⁴⁹ The tourist gaze, strengthened by the mechanism of thematisation, shapes the narrative about the cinematic Łódź as a universal phenomenon with no time- or space-related foundations. The representations of the presence of film in the urban tissue, in a way similar to travel

⁴⁹ CISZEWSKA, Ewa. The Se-Ma-For Film Studio from 1990 to 1999. In *Images. The International Journal of European Films Performing Arts and Audiovisual Communication*, vol. 17, no. 26 (2015), pp. 276-282.

photography studied by Patricia C. Albers and William R. James,⁵⁰ are subject to the principle of homogenisation, a principle which leads to the portraying of space and people in accordance with the model of representation currently in force. There can be no doubt that the narrative of career in Hollywood serves as such a model for cinema.

One other conclusion of this study is that the tourist gaze, in a way similar to film representations, often comes from within the space which is described by this gaze.⁵¹ In such cases, it serves the purpose of gaining appreciation from oneself and from others; at times, it is also a remedy for complexes. There is another legitimate way of understanding the decontextualising tourist gaze shaping the narration about the cinematic Łódź (the "HollyŁódź"): it may refer to the perplexity in dealing with the dominant modes of self-presentation and the inability to develop one's own original story. To quote but one example, the professionals of the film industry, whose work was vital for the film studios in Łódź, might well become the subjects of a self-identifying narration which would serve as an alternative to the current model. The choice of narration affirming the above-the-line professionals, instead of the below-the-line, copies the model observed in travel photography which prefers images shorn of the contexts of poverty, hardship, or harsh living conditions.⁵² Concurrently, authentic and complicated histories, in keeping with the rule observed in travel photography, are described in abstract and generalising terms of "cultural heritage" and "cultural traditions".

Is it possible to create a model of the thematisation of cities which is not based on the homogenising and standardising tourist gaze? Can the local film history be told in a new way and offer a narration which would attract tourists? Is it possible to translate the new narration of the cinematic Łódź into the language of film tourism in such a way as to emphasise the material and symbolic heritage related to the film industry rather than the films and television series produced in the city?⁵³ Taking up this challenge appears to be a worthwhile opportunity for a

⁵⁰ ALBERS, Patricia C. – JAMES, William R. *Travel Photography: A Methodological Approach*.

⁵¹ KRISTENSEN, Lars – MAZIERSKA, Ewa – NÄRIPEA, Eva. *Gazing at the Baltic: Tourist Discourse in the Cinema of the Baltic Sea Countries*.

⁵² ALBERS, Patricia C. – JAMES, William R. *Travel Photography: A Methodological Approach*, p.153.

⁵³ CISZEWSKA, Ewa – KLEJSA, Konrad (Eds.) *Kultura filmowa współczesnej Łodzi*.

city which does not belong to the category of well-known tourist destinations, given that film tourism can alter destination images in a relatively short time⁵⁴ and displace traditional holiday-makers.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ O'CONNOR, Noelle – FLANAGAN, Sheila – GILBERT, David. *The Integration of Film-induced Tourism and Destination Branding in Yorkshire, UK*. In *International Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 10 (2008), p. 433.

⁵⁵ BEETON, Sue. *Film-induced Tourism*, p. 99.

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