

# **Table of contents and Abstracts – Fall 2015**

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### Change of the regime on film

#### Kriss Ravetto-Biagoli: Laughing into an Abyss. Cinema and Balkanization

The article examines the challenges of filmmaking after the regime change and various wars in Eastern Europe. Most of the films mentioned do not celebrate the coming of democracy and they fail to deliver clear moral judgements. The question is how to relate to their ambivalence. The text focuses on the aesthetic consequences of the collapse of socialism and nationalistic aspirations: the main problem of the films is how to discuss the subject of the unprocessed past, which has remained underground, without seeming to take sides, avoiding biased reading or the culture of resentment, or replacing the complex historical relations – which are forgotten by the revisionist historiography of ethnic nationalism – with the “romantic self-narrative of the West”. According to Kriss Ravetto-Biagoli, the films of Muratova, Kusturica, Dragojević, Paskaljević, Luzik, Makavejev attempt to disarm those discourses and images that legitimate a violent sense of truth by exposing the absurdity of such modes of representations.

#### Alice Bardan: Aftereffects of 1989. Corneliu Porumboiu’s *12:08 East of Bucharest* (2006) and Romanian Cinema

The study examines, based on semiotic aspects, the various interpretations of the events of December 1989, and the way the same are represented, primarily in Corneliu Porumboiu’s movie *12:08: East of Bucharest*. Starting with Derrida’s commentaries, the essay argues that there is no valid, canonical interpretation of the events, and the creation of such seems *a priori* impossible – this idea is confirmed by the high number of the existing interpretations as well. It points out the significance of the various signs and symbols in Porumboiu’s movies. Additionally, the study explores the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western contemporary European cinema, with respect to post-national pastiche.

## **Anikó Imre: Socialist television in a transnational perspective**

The essay situates television under Soviet-type socialism in Europe in the global study of television and in the cross-disciplinary study of socialism. It zooms in on three major surprises that such an intervention yields, which are developed across the chapters: (1) Rather than an instrument of brainwashing or propaganda, TV was a highly ambivalent instrument in the hands of party authorities, which undermined as much as it supported the legitimacy of socialist regimes. (2) Studying socialist and postsocialist TV audiences throws into question the near-exclusive attention to (dissident) literature, film and samizdat journalism that has dominated academic approaches to socialist cultures. TV offers an alternative view, from the vantage point of everyday practices of socialism. These practices were motivated by discourses and desires that muddy the binary opposition between official party-led cultures and dissident intellectual cultures. (3) Rather than existing in ideological isolation, television under socialism participated in and facilitated extensive transnational flows that involved the exchange of technical expertise, genres and programs, as well as viewer practices and tastes.

## **András Murai: Confronting. Historical documentaries through the fall of the regime**

The period beginning with the second half of the eighties through the beginning of the nineties can be interpreted as a unique era regarding the relationship between collective memory and historical documentaries. Documentaries, also having an important role in forming public opinion, had three main functions: one, they allowed the collective reinhabitation of the white spots of past events; two, they gave voice to individual stories that had been silenced previously; and three, these films documented the relationship of contemporary society towards its past. As an addition to their thematic relevance, these films were unique also due to their confronting strategies, the representation of parallel memories. A crucial characteristic trait of the documentaries released between 1988 – 1991 dealing with personal cult and the 1956 revolution, is to reconstruct history through interviewing former prisoners as well as their guards, the servants of the dictatorial regime, and thus reconstructing the past through the combination of opposing perspectives. The present study describes the various strategies of confrontation as well as the memory strategies of the people interviewed: the way they strive to create a coherent image of the self through distorting the past.

## Lóránt Stóhr: Business in the shop window. Entrepreneurs in post-communist Hungarian documentaries

This paper studies the representation of Hungarian big and small entrepreneurs in documentary cinema after the political changes in 1989. The author has two different analytical directions to this topic. First, he analyses the documentary techniques and attitudes which are applied by the Hungarian filmmakers to depict the entrepreneurs' life. Second, he studies the filmic representation of different entrepreneurs' roles and images in interaction with the society. The analysis sheds a light on the historical changes in the focus of the filmmakers. In the beginning, documentary filmmakers examined the social and economic characteristics of the entrepreneurship and the evolving Hungarian capitalism, later in the 2000s, they critically scrutinized the entrepreneur's lifestyle.

## György Kalmár: Re-familiarizing post-communist spaces in Nimród Antal's *Kontroll*

The present paper explores the issues of space and male identity in Nimród Antal's *Kontroll* (2003) from a post-Foucauldian theoretical perspective. The film, which was shown in Hungarian cinemas only a couple of months before the country joined the European Union, focuses on male figures in crisis in a recognisably post-communist Eastern European cultural and geopolitical setting. The years after the 1989 regime change saw dramatic (and often unexpected) changes that strongly influenced Hungarian identity-politics, cultural patterns, Hungarians' view of the EU. *Kontroll* takes the viewer to these confused and confusing years, where some of the basic questions of Hungarian identity politics were asked again, as a result of the ambiguous experiences of the country's change to consumer capitalism. This confusion and remapping also led to a fascinating artistic output in the early 2000s. Here I argue that *Kontroll* is inspired by precisely these tensions, contradictions, and the mixing of old and new ways, ideologies and practices—phenomena shared by both postcolonial and post-communist countries. The protagonist's night time wanderings in the Budapest metro (looking for a “way out”) reflect a very common feeling of confusion in the Eastern-European subject after communism. Relying on Michel de Certeau's inspiring post-Foucauldian analysis of space and resistance tactics, I will place the film in a peculiar Eastern-European context, with a special focus on relations between (geo-political) space and identity politics, with an eye on the historical background of these politics. In my interpretation, *Kontroll* takes the spectator to a (culturally constructed) land struggling with issues of (post)-coloniality, exploitation and inferiority complexes. The film depicts a time when coming to terms with the

past and the evaluation of possible futures are key aspects of the historical situation.

### **György Kalmár: Cruelty written on bodies. Sport, trauma and masculinity in *White Palms* (*Fehér tenyér* 2006)**

The present paper analyses Szabolcs Hajdu's *White Palms* (*Fehér tenyér* 2006), an award-winning Hungarian film from one of the most well-known directors of "new Hungarian cinema", from the perspective of such issues as sport, identity, nationality, masculinity, trauma and loss. The article explores questions such as "How does *White Palms* change the generic patterns of American sports film?", "How do traditional Eastern European narratives of sacrifice and loss affect contemporary films?", "How does *White Palms* present the relationship of the pre-1989 state socialist past and the democratic present, or that of East and West?", and "What kinds of recognisably Eastern European masculinities appear in the film?" The article argues that the film's narrative, as well as its formations of masculinity cannot be fully comprehended without reference to a uniquely Eastern European (or in some cases specifically Hungarian) historical-cultural-social context. The paper outlines some of the most important aspects of this complex context, indicating the intimate and inextricable connections between the film text and the cultural context. In an attempt to theorize the inner logic and dynamism of the above mentioned context, I rely on E. H. Kantorowicz's account of the Medieval theory of the king's two bodies. I argue that when the sportsman or sportswoman puts on the national jersey, one's natural body is supplemented with a noble, idealized, symbolic body as well, similarly to the way the king was endowed with such a second (symbolic, political) body at his coronation according to Medieval law. Following this line of thought, and building on Kaja Silverman's theory of masculinity at the margins, I interpret the protagonist's failure to win first place at the final competition as a failure of idealization caused by an ideological crisis specific of Eastern Europe, as the experience of the preponderance of the natural body (and the past traumas carried within) over the symbolic one.

### **Gabriella Vincze-Bába: Private games**

Péter Forgács: *Bibó Brevárium* [*A Bibó Reader*] (2001)

This essay presents *Bibó Brevárium* [*A Bibó Reader*] (2001) by Péter Forgács through the lens of film theory and experimental films in the early eighties. The analysis has two goals: the first is to draw the intellectual arc of filmmaking that is different from the traditional; the second is to detect how the end of remembrance transformed film language and how the intentions of film language have changed since the neo-avantgarde. The paper also describes the role and function the film plays in communication within the public sphere – reviving the possibilities of movies that we sometimes forget because of the success of classic narrative films. The question is whether the motion-sound

pictures play the role of a bridge to close Ricoeur's gap between experiencing and telling in the age of audiovisuality. Do the motion-sound pictures facilitate the understanding of past traumas when we re-experience history? How can the individual, the group or society as a whole get from restoring memories to recognize values? This paper aims to answer these questions through the analysis of film language in *Bibó Brevárium*.

**Levente Prax: Gábor Gelencsér: *Az eredend? máshol – Magyar filmes szólámok***  
**[Phrases of Hungarian cinema] (Book review)**

The collected essays in the last book of the author deal with the works of Hungarian cinema from the sixties. The writings are arranged in three thematic cycles: the first of which analyzes the creation and characteristics of the modernist canon, the second discusses the emergence of the counter-canon around the BBS Studio, and the third one engages with the survival of the stylistic features of last two after the regime change. The book can count on the interest of both the professional and the lay public.

