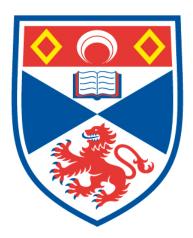# CHALLENGING POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY : REPRESENTATIONS OF THE RURAL IN POST-COMMUNIST HUNGARIAN CINEMA

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Abstract.

This thesis examines the ways in which the rural functions as a site of counter-narrative in post-communist Hungarian cinema. I argue that within the post-communist generation there exists a number of filmmakers producing cinema, varied in style, that utilise the rural as a space through which to challenge the multifarious political myths that have risen in the ideological wake of communism. By scrutinising nine diverse examples of post-millennial Hungarian cinema set in rural locations, Hungarian or otherwise, this thesis poses the following questions: What can one learn about Hungary's post-communist experience through cinematic representations of the rural? How do these films complicate the prevalent narratives of Hungary's past and present? Who is telling these stories, and why are these alternative narratives valuable to an understanding of contemporary Hungarian society?

Employing a cultural studies perspective, this thesis maintains that the films under analysis respond to the specific socio-historiographical conditions of their making, contesting the dominant political myths pertaining to post-communist life, the understanding and application of national history and Hungary's national self-perception within a now global, post-communist setting. Confronting both internal and external political myths, these films provide an alternative mode of discourse through which to better understand post-millennial Hungary and the ongoing process of transition.

I divide my analysis into three areas of interest. First, I examine the political myths surrounding Hungary's return to the West, questioning how cinematic representations of the rural challenge the mythopoeic narratives of Hungary's capitalist assimilation. I then explore the myths of Hungarian national history, examining the ways in which filmmakers utilise the

rural to query and contest contemporary Hungarian memory politics. Finally, I examine the consequences of post-communist political myths and the role that rural representation plays in bringing these consequences to the fore.

Acknowledgements.

Abbreviations.

ÁVO, ÁHO	Hungarian State Protection Authority (*Államvédelmi Osztálya*) (*Államvédelmi Hatóság*)
FIDESZ	Fidesz: Hungarian Civic Alliance (*Fidesz: Magyar Polgári Szövetség*)
JOBBIK	Jobbik, Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*)
KDNP	Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt*)
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*)
MIÉP	Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*)
MMK	Hungarian Public Film Foundation (*Magyar Mozgókép Közalapítvány*)
MNF	Hungarian National Film Fund (*Magyar Nemzeti Filmalap*)
MSzMP	Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*)
MSzP	Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*)
NMHH	National Media and Infocommunications Authority (*A Nemzeti Média és Hírközlési Hatóság*)
SzDSz	Alliance of Free Democrats (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*)

CONTENTS

Chapter One:

Introduction and Review of Literature.

1.1. Introduction.

Writing in 1968, Hungarian film critic Yvette Bíró claimed that 'the history which appears in Hungarian movies is not a sign of the usual escape, or the result of a need for myths but rather the other way around, it is a means of destroying myths' (3). This thesis asserts that this desire for demystification persists in the films of the post-communist generation. Through their complex and often-antagonistic representation of post-communist life, I argue that like the generations preceding them, the post-communist generation of Hungarian filmmakers strive to expose the prevalent political myths of contemporary society and explore the ways in which these myths shape post-communist political, social and historical discourse.

After over forty years of socialist governance under the direct influence of the Soviet Union, Hungary, and indeed the entire Eastern Bloc, was party to sudden, unforeseen and sweeping changes that radically transformed the fundamental political, economic and social infrastructures that had long governed the region's population. The abrupt transformation of the value systems and moral codes once considered entrenched and abiding induced a deep sense of collective ambivalence; as did the dissolution of old certainties such as guaranteed employment, welfare support and healthcare, leading many to perceive transition to be 'a leap from the melancholy of order to the melancholy of disorder' (Vogt 2005, 131).

In response to the traumatic nature of transition and subsequent years of disenchantment under the new political and economic systems, political myths emerged that provided the post-socialist subject with what political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu (1998) describes as 'quick and satisfactory answers to excruciating dilemmas' (6). Such myths offered a sense of

social stability and collective identity amidst the social fragmentation of post-communist life and disintegration of old certainties.

The myths that circulated most fervently in the post-communist climate were those that satisfied two key attributes of the Hungarian collective psyche; namely those that addressed Hungary's profound sense of national pride and, paradoxically, an equally profound sense of national pessimism. However, not all post-communist political myths originated internally. The fall of communism cemented neoliberal market capitalism and European supranationalism as the future of global economics and regional politics respectively, opening the former Soviet region to external political and economic influence. In conjunction with these external influences came political myths that sought to legitimise these incoming ideologies.

In view of this fact, the first political myth placed under scrutiny is the myth of post-communism itself. That is to say, the myth of a happier, more prosperous life enabled by the market economy and democratic governance. Due to years spent romanticising Western–style democracy and market capitalism during the communist era, many Hungarians anticipated that the post-communist setting would offer a simpler life, free from state bureaucracy. Yet, contrary to this belief, capitalism brought with it new complications and, as social scientist Henri Vogt (2005) contends, 'the realisation that life was in many respects easier before the revolution was one of the most central experiences during the first post-communist decade' (126).

Furthermore, as economist Péter Ákos Bod (2010) argues, 'too many Hungarians do not identify themselves with the market economy they live and work in'. Privatisation removed

the safety net of the state-run economy resulting in a monumental rise in unemployment, a depreciation in real wages and a severe tightening of the state welfare system. Growing inequalities have since emerged and the populace at large have lost faith in the political and economic systems that govern them. Thus, counter to the myth of free market prosperity and opportunity, the post-communist political and economic infrastructures have left many disillusioned.

In consideration of these conditions, I dedicate a chapter to examining how Hungarian filmmakers challenge the myths of post-communist emancipation, prosperity and contentment as enabled by democratic integration and free market economics. The films examined in this chapter engage with issues frequently overlooked by Western transitologists; namely, the human consequences of transition. The films engage with a wide variety of post-communist issues, from the abrupt alteration of values and their effects on interpersonal connectivity, to narratives exposing the harsh realities of transition and its impact on the vulnerable. In doing so, I argue that these films problematise the prevalent discourse of the 1990s and early 2000s that positioned Hungary as the model student of Eastern European neoliberalism.

The second group of myths under observation are those surrounding history and memorialisation. The fall of communism etched a new chapter in Hungarian history, one free of the imposed silence on national history. Yet, while the democratic, post-socialist milieu provided new opportunity for open dialogue, discourse has instead tended towards revisionist myths that hark back to pre-communist nationalist ideals. As social scientist Aviezer Tucker (2008) claims, '[r]evisionist historiography is uniquely founded on the penchant for therapeutic values over cognitive values' (3). Indeed, therapeutic values have significantly

informed historical memory in post-communist Hungary, serving as an articulation of the public's desire for collective identity following the social fragmentation the accompanied transition and the increasing alienation that came to characterise post-communist life. Therapeutic need has produced mythopoeic and socially gratifying forms of historical memory, discourse that has invariably positioned the Hungarian as historical and geopolitical victim; excusing, omitting, and even denying Hungary's complicity and accountability in the atrocities of the nation's twentieth century experience. Such discourse has consequently given rise to an inflated sense of collective martyrdom, fuelling jingoism and national narcissism. Given the complexities surrounding national history in post-communist Hungary, I devote a chapter to examining the ways in which filmmakers engage with contemporary Hungarian memory politics. Through complex cinematic language, the films under observation call attention to the historical manipulations and social amnesias prevalent in post-communist collective memory, suggesting a need for reassessment, acceptance and change.

The final chapter examines the consequences of political mythmaking in post-communist Hungary. Given the political and economic disillusionment that has come to characterise many citizen's experience of post-communism, Hungary has seen a swing towards populism. Populism is a form of '*moral* politics' (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012, 8), one that places sentiment over substance and appeals to emotional and therapeutic needs over reason and fact.[1] From the outset of post-communism, populist discourse had a presence on the Hungarian political margins, championed by the likes of writer and politician István Csurka.

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[1] Political scientists Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser (2012) provide a 'minimal' definition of populism, describing it as '*a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people*' (author's italics) (8).

However, in recent years, populism has crossed the threshold into the political mainstream, aided, in many respects, by the global financial crisis of 2008 and the political suicide of the left. Viktor Orbán exploited such rhetoric in his 2010 supermajority electoral victory, utilising discourse that placed neoliberalism and supranational politics – and those in Hungary who espoused them – as enemies of the Hungarian people.[2] However, as populism rose in political ascendency so too did political myths mobilising intolerance. Such myths propagated conspiracy theories that placed culpability for the many grievances of post-communism on both internal and external scapegoats, capitalising on genuine hardships to justify social exclusion and rationalise violence against minority groups. In view of these conditions, I designate a chapter to examining how Hungarian filmmakers attempt to understand the rise of bigotry in contemporary Hungary and the role cinema plays in bringing issues of the societal "Other" to the fore.

One of the central aims of this thesis is to update and expand the scholarship on Hungarian cinema. While there exists a wealth of scholarship dedicated to examining Hungarian cinema's relationship with indigenous society during both the communist era and the early years of transition, comparatively less has been written about the post-communist generation's relationship with contemporary Hungarian society. Given the international nature of global art cinema and the increasing prominence of the international film festival as a site of exhibition, a contemporary obligation for universal legibility has emerged, leading to a watering down of cultural differences and a downplaying of cultural specificity. This thesis

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[2] Hungary, however, has not been alone in this political swing towards populism. Both the United Kingdom's decision to withdraw from the European Union and Donald Trump's presidential victory in the United States demonstrate a rising shift towards populism in mainstream global politics. I argue, then, that the study of political myths is particularly relevant given the ascendency of populist rhetoric in political discourse.

responds to these trends by re-establishing local engagement as a valid and enlightening form of cinematic discourse. Hungary is, and has always been, a small national cinema with a strong heritage of introspective filmmaking. I argue, therefore, that a national cinema framework still provides fertile grounds for analysis. This thesis seeks to illuminate how self-analysis continues to serve as a central preoccupation in Hungarian cinema and engages with the ways in which the post-communist generation utilise the medium of film as a conduit for political, social and historical debate.

This study also aims to develop the interdisciplinary links between film studies and social studies. The approach adopted in this thesis is one that, like the social sciences, endeavours to understand social interactions and behaviours within a given culture. While a distance has historically been maintained between the two disciplines, I argue that cinema has the ability to reflect, shape and challenge the mentality of a nation. Films can communicate social realities and can provide insight into a nation's collective fears, anxieties and aspirations. However, it is the assertion of this thesis that rather than merely reflecting the social world, the films under analysis consciously address this world through a variety of complex cinematic themes and aesthetics. Thus, by combining detailed textual analysis with social and cultural contextualisation, I aim to unearth the often-latent social commentary within these films.

Hungarian cinema has a long history of social engagement and it is telling that cinema has repeatedly been a target of Viktor Orbán's authoritarian government, who seem all too aware of film's ability – and that of the media more broadly – to present alternative and, at times, discordant views. Under the Orbán government, the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (*A Nemzeti Média és Hírközlési Hatóság*, NMHH), an organisation closely tied to

the state, was introduced as part of a widespread restructuring of the Hungarian media industries. As part of this reorganisation, the Hungarian National Film Fund (*Magyar Nemzeti Filmalap*, MNF) was founded in 2011, replacing the self-governing Hungarian Public Film Foundation (*Magyar Mozgókép Közalapítvány*, MMK), the public film body established in 1998. The new centralised system raised concerns over political bias in the allotment of funds leading President of the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association (*Magyar Filmművészek Szövetsége*), Béla Tarr to claim that the MNF was 'established by sheer political will and without referring to representatives of the field'. Tarr would describe these infrastructural changes as both 'unacceptable and illegitimate' (Tarr 2012).

Furthermore, the Hungarian Film Week (*Magyar Filmszemle*), the nation's longstanding annual showcase of domestic cinema, has also faced challenges from the Fidesz government. In 2011, parliamentary budget cuts led to an initial cancellation of the 42nd Hungarian Film Week. The Hungarian Filmmakers' Association would resurrect the festival later that year, although the event was limited to exhibiting films released the previous year.[3] Films no longer competed for prizes during the 2012 Film Week due to budgetary limitations as, for a second successive year, the festival received no state support. In 2013, for the first time since 1965, there was no Hungarian Film Week (Macnab 2013). In a statement made on behalf of the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association, Béla Tarr stated, 'THERE IS NOTHING TO SCREEN! THERE IS NOTHING TO CELEBRATE!' (Tarr 2013) (author's capitalisation). The Hungarian Film Week would return in October 2014, now under the organisation of the MNF.

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[3] In his round up of the 42nd Hungarian Film Week, John Cunningham (2011) likened the event to 'attending a wake for a dear departed friend rather than a film festival' (247).

Moreover, in April 2015, the Fidesz government put forward plans to terminate all Bachelor Degrees that specialise in film history and film theory, as well as the highly reputable Visual Culture Master's Degree programme offered by the University of Szeged. The government's repeated intervention in the organisation of the Hungarian Film industry and other associative institutions suggests that Fidesz sees the potential of cinema as a sociological tool and wishes to silence its potentially dissenting voice.

1.2. The Rural.

This thesis places specific emphasis on cinematic representations of the rural. In a geographical sense, Hungary is, and has always been, a rural country. According to the *CIA World Factbook* (2016), 58.9 percent of the country's land is employed agrilculturally, while a further 22.5 percent is forestland (389). Furthermore, according to the 2011 census conducted by Hungarian Central Statistical Office (*Központi Statisztikai Hivatal*, KSH) Hungary is made up of 328 towns and 2,826 villages (Vukovich 2012, 10).[4] While primate city, Budapest accommodates 17.4 percent of the resident population, 52.1 percent reside in towns and 30.5 percent in villages (10). I argue, therefore, that to disregard rural Hungary is to disregard a fundamental aspect of the Hungarian experience.

Furthermore, it is through rural Hungary that the more detrimental effects of transition are most visibly magnified and, subsequently the site in which post-communist political

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[4] The word town (*város*) is somewhat ambiguous given that the Hungarian language makes no distinction between city and town. As such, *város* incorporates Budapest at one end of the spectrum, whose population, according to 2011 census information, stands at 1,737,000, and settlements such as Zalakaros and Visegrád at the other, both with the legal status of towns and each with a population below 2,000 citizens.

mythologies have been most vocal. Rural Hungary endured a more arduous transition process, shaped by a radical decline in the rate of agriculture production, the collapse of heavy industry and an uneven distribution of investment. As a result, poverty is endemic within certain areas of the Hungarian regions and rural citizens have become increasingly marginalised. In response to the traumatic experience of post-communism, rural populations have increasingly turned to nationalist politics in the form of the centre-right, Fidesz party and, to a lesser but rising extent, the far-right Jobbik party.[5]

The rural is also a symbolic space, one that holds strong ties to national identity. The nation is often synonymous with the symbols and customs of its rural heritage, such as traditional music and dance, indigenous fauna and flora, and local cuisine. These symbols romantically recall the traditions and customs of the past and with it a sense of community that often functions as a symbol for the ethnic community of the nation as a whole. Like national identity more broadly, representations of the rural tend to be prescriptive and often placed in opposition to the transnational and commercially colonised urban milieu.

Indeed, with regards to the contrast between the urban and the rural, rural Hungary has not been party to the same levels of commercialisation as the Hungarian metropoles, nor has the rural witnessed the same levels of political and ideological negotiations and renegotiations. Budapest, for example, has witnessed changes in street names, the uprooting and transferral of communist-erected statues and monuments, and the opening of new *lieux de memoires*

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[5] Jobbik has witnessed an exponential rise in popularity over the past decade, predominantly winning seats in rural areas. During the 2006 election, Jobbik won only 2.2% of the overall votes but this figure rose to 16.7% in 2010 and continued to rise to 20.3% in 2014.

(sites of memory) (Nora 1989), some of which have courted controversy for their projected ideologies.[6]

The rural also forms part of the iconographical heritage of Hungarian cinema. Regularly exceeding the role of setting, the rural habitually functions as a rhetorical, allegorical and/or metaphysical device employed in the creation of complex geopolitical texts. The Hungarian regions have a long and distinguished legacy within the nation's cinema, utilised to artistic acclaim by Hungary's most celebrated filmmakers.[7]

Thus, given the rural's historic ties to both Hungarian cinema and Hungarian national identity more broadly, I argue that the rural offers an edifying framework through which to examine post-communist Hungarian cinema and the ways in which filmmakers engage with the political myths of post-communist life. The rural is a complex and heterogeneous cinematic space, one that through its diverse representational scope offers an illuminating means of

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[6] A case in point being the 2014-erected German occupation memorial statue. The statue depicts an eagle attacking the archangel Gabriel; a symbol that detractors believed sought to distance Hungary from the atrocities of the Second World War by presenting the Magyars as the victim of German assault.

[7] Examples include István Szőts' *Emberek a havason/People of the Mountains* (1942) and *Ének a búzamezökröl/Song of the Cornfields* (1947), Géza Radványi's *Valahol Európában/Somewhere in Europe* (1947), Frigyes Bán's *Talpalatnyi föld/The Soil Under Your Feet* (1948), Zoltán Fábri's *Körhinta/Merry-Go-Round* (1955) and *Húsz óra/Twenty Hours* (1965), Miklós Jancsó's *Így jöttem/My Way Home* (1965), *Szegénylegények/The Round-Up* (1966), *Csillagosok, katonák/The Red and the* White (1967), *Még kér a nép/Red Psalm* (1972), *Szerelmem, Elektra/Electra, My Love* (1974) and *Magyar rapszódia/Hungarian Rhapsody* (1979), István Gaal's *Sodrásban/Current* (1964), *Magasiskola/The Falcons* (1970) and *Holt vidék/Dead Landscape* (1971), Zoltán Huszárik's *Szindbád/Sindbad* (1971) and *Csontváry* (1979), Pál Zolnay's *Fotográfia/Photography* (1972), Márta Mészáros's *Szabad lélegzet/Riddance* (1973) and *Olyan mint otthon/Just Like at Home* (1978), István Szabó's *Budapesti mesék/Budapest Tales* (1977), Judit Elek's *Tutajosok/Memories of a River* (1990) and Béla Tarr's *Kárhozat/Damnation* (1988), *Sátántangó/Satantango* (1994) and *Werckmeister harmóniák/Werckmeister Harmonies* (2000) and *A torinói ló/The Turin Horse* (2011).

exploring contemporary Hungarian society, whether identifying the specific hardships endured in the Hungarian regions or by drawing upon the symbolic nature of the rural to address wider national issues.

1.3. Background.

Having declared my intentions, I now wish to provide some contextualisation to help orientate the reader on the changing nature of life in rural Hungary. In 1948, Hungary was nationalised under the totalitarian governance of Mátyás Rákosi, General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party (*Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt*, MSzMP). In August of that year, the government passed regulations regarding the establishment of agricultural cooperatives and began expropriating private farmland, initially through volunteer cooperatives and then through forcible coercion and brutality.[8]

Following the death of Stalin in 1953, Hungary experienced a period of relative clemency. Incoming First Secretary, Nikita Khrushchev initiated a policy of de-Stalinisation, diminishing Rákosi's authoritarian powers and stripping him of his prime ministerial duties. Replacing Rákosi as Prime Minister was popular liberal reformist Imre Nagy. During his brief tenure, Nagy inaugurated a number of moderate reforms as part of the New Course of 1954, easing tension within collective farms by lowering quotas, improving agricultural

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[8] Volunteer cooperatives proved extremely unpopular. As Jörg K. Hoensch (1996) states, by December 1950, 'only 76,887 families, including 120,000 workers, could be persuaded to join one of the established 2,185 cooperatives' (208). By 1953 membership had risen to 376,000, however, agriculture during this period experienced mass migration with around 300,000 workers leaving thousands of hectares of arable land abandoned (Swain 1992, 84).

investment, and allowing peasants to leave the collectives.[9] Nagy's time in office, however, was short-lived. The Prime Minister faced criticism from Khrushchev, who accused Nagy of radicalism (Kontler 2002, 424), and Rákosi swiftly seized this opportunity to undermine his political adversary, claiming that the economy had suffered under Nagy's more liberal tenure. Economic decline led to Rákosi sympathiser András Hegedűs replacing Nagy as Prime Minister in April 1955. Under Hegedűs, Hungary re-embarked upon Stalinist policies, policies that would serve as a catalyst for the October revolution of 1956.

In the aftermath of the popular uprising of October 1956 and in reaction to the growing divide between the state and its subjects, newly appointed General Secretary János Kádár began a process of cautious reform with the aim of improving the mental welfare of the Hungarian citizenship. This did not mean abandoning the idea of collective agriculture, quite the opposite. The Kádár government insisted that collectivism was the only guarantor of agricultural development, but insisted that they would not use force to coerce participation.[10] By December 1956, collective farms were cultivating only 6.1 percent of arable land (Hoensch 1996, 229). However, by 1960 just 5 percent of arable land remained privately owned (Berend 1994, 391). Given the precautionary disposition of the masses following the failed revolution, the MSzMP were able to pressure citizens into joining the collectives. However, reforms to agricultural policy, such as the abandoning of compulsory quotas, allowing cooperatives to purchase limited amounts of machinery and allowing volunteers to retain a percentage of their produce, meant that joining the cooperatives became a more desirable option.

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[9] Such was the lack of support for collective farming that '[w]ithin a year, some five hundred collective farms were allowed to fold' (Gati 1994, 376).
[10] Despite these claims, violent coercion was still a reality, though less common.

As members of the collectives, workers received guaranteed accommodation, free healthcare and a state pension. Following the expansion of construction in the mid-1950s, collective members were provided housing, nicknamed 'Kadar Cubes' because they were often no more than one hundred square foot in size (see Roters 2014). These houses were often accompanied by a small plot of land in which members could keep livestock independent of the collective. As members of the collectives, workers theoretically had direct input in the running and maintenance of their common plot. They received rent for use of the land in the collective as well as income generated through the yield of the harvest.[11] However, notwithstanding these benefits, the coerced nature of participation meant that the collectives failed to establish a genuine sense of community. Commitment to the collectives was consequently limited and, as a result, productivity was often inefficient.

In defiance of state centralisation, peasants frequently supplemented their income through the unofficial, second economy. By cultivating their own private plots, often using tools and paraphernalia from the collective, members could sell their privately grown products at local markets, gaining greater control over pricing. Social anthropologist Krista Harper (1999) maintains that the second economy incited predilections for localism. For many, circumnavigating official channels of organisation via participation in the second economy became a deeply political act.[12]

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[11] However, as historian Peter D Bell (1984) notes, 'a sizable portion of these wages was paid in kind, not in cash' (158).

[12] Hungarian sociologist Elemér Hankiss (1990) places the second economy within the wider concept of Hungary's second society. Hankiss describes the first or official society as that prescribed by the government, which he claims was characteristically empty in rhetoric. Indeed, sociologists Michael Burawoy and János Lukács (1992) described the official public sphere as 'an elaborate game of pretense which everyone sees through but which everyone is

To win the support of the workers, the government began monitoring agricultural procedures and revising laws to better suit working practices (Varga 2014). Such reforms served to boost productivity and incentivise the workers. By the early 1970s, shortly after the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism, peasant income began to match that of the industrial workforce (Csizmadia 1985, 4).

Overall, Hungarian agriculture achieved unparalleled success within the Eastern Bloc. Essential foodstuffs were seldom in short supply and goods were exported to either side of the iron curtain.[13] Following transition, however, Hungary's agricultural sector witnessed a radical decline. During the first two decades of post-communism, agriculture's percentage contribution to GDP decreased drastically, falling from 15.63 percent in 1989 to 3.37 percent in 2009 (*TheGlobalEconomy.com*).

Broadly speaking, the collapse of communism was met with cynicism in Hungary. Under József Antall, the country's first democratically elected Prime Minister, Hungary embarked on a process of measured privatisation.[14] The Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar*

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compelled to play' (129). The second society provided alternative channels of discourse free from state jurisdiction. This informal and latent second society facilitated the development of a second, unofficial public sphere and with it a second culture and social consciousness. Notwithstanding the increasing openness of social life under the more liberal climate of the Kádár regime, a schism existed between public and private life. In public, citizens superficially espoused the official ideology of the state, while privately they decried it. Consequently, as Kenneth Jowitt (1992) argues, 'dissimulation became the central feature of the population's (misre)presentation of its public, or better, visual, self' (288).

[13] Such was the success of the agricultural sector under communism that Hungary was rated one of the world's finest producers of meat and cereal (Varga 2010, 37).

[14] In his account of Hungary's subdued revolution, historian István Rév (2005) states that '[t]here were no strikes, no large-scale demonstrations, no signs of popular unrest. Hungarians sceptically watched the not-so-dramatic suicide of the system' (30). By the same

Demokrata Fórum, MDF) and Christian Democratic People's Party (*Kereszt, énydemokrata Néppárt*, KDNP) coalition government operated very much by trial and error (Hieronymi, 2013) and claims even circulated that Antall took an almost indifferent attitude to the Hungarian economy (Lendvai 2012, 42).

Transition drastically transformed the formation of the Hungarian rural landscape. The Compensation Act (Law XXV), first passed in 1991 and amended in the spring of 1992, allowed pre-communist landowners, their legatee and collective farm members to claim land. Claimants were issued with compensation vouchers exchangeable for state assets. These vouchers were not redeemable for specific land but a downsized equivalent of their original losses to a maximum of five million Forints − approximately 50,000 USD according to the 1991 exchange rate (Ehrlich and Révész 1995, 43). The mass privatisation of arable land resulted in an extensive reconfiguration of farmland. Indeed, by the early 1990s, 90 percent of the 1.4 million registered farms acquired just a single hectare of land or less, an insufficient amount to sustain a living (Varga 2010, 275).

Likewise, Hungary's heavy industry sector, a significant provider of employment in rural areas, underwent substantial reorganisation. Under socialism, Hungary had transformed from 'a Nation on Horseback' (Vas 1966, 153) into 'a country of iron and steel' (Ernő Gerő in Cunningham 2012, 312). However, given the inefficiency of communist industry (see Verdery 1996), many state-owned factories and facilities were deemed uneconomical and either closed or dramatically restructured and streamlined, resulting in mass unemployment.

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token, Hungarian-born journalist Paul Lendvai (2012) describes Hungary's post-communist transformation as 'a half-hearted change' (7), a sentiment echoed by Julia Creet (2013), who characterises the transition as 'remarkably un-revolutionary' (34).

Re-employment often proved difficult and, by the autumn of 1993, only five vacant positions existed for every one hundred people unemployed (Dövényi 1994, 394). Compounding the limited prospects for re-employment was the fact that an above average percentage of rural inhabitants were classified as uneducated.[15] Indeed, the percentage of citizens educated up to the level of higher education in rural Hungary stood at 3.1 percent against the national average of 7.6 percent (Kiss 2000, 224).

Privatization accelerated during the Hungarian Socialist Party (*Magyar Szocialista Párt*, MSzP) and Alliance of Free Democrats' (*Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége*, SzDSz) two terms in office, a necessity given the foreign debt accrued under communism.[16] However, spatial patterns of foreign investment created a gulf between the urban and rural. FDI has been particularly Budapest-centric, with 60 percent of all foreign investment entering the capital (Quadrado et al. 2001, 22). Likewise, regional development funds, including the EU's Phare Programme, were unevenly distributed, with Hungary's north-western counties, those situated on the pre-enlargement EU border, benefitting significantly more than those of Eastern Hungary. Following the first decade of post-communism the number of rural settlements that were classed as 'less developed' stood at approximately 600 villages, equating 20 percent of Hungary's regional communities (Kiss 2000, 221-222).

Post-communist austerity bred discontent, giving rise to anti-global political rhetoric and anti-Semitic myths. Racial tension intensified following the 2008 global financial crisis and neo-

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[15] 2.6 percent of rural Hungarians were deemed uneducated compared to the 2.0 percent national average (Kiss 2000, 224).

[16] When communism collapsed, Hungary's Gross Foreign Debt stood at $20.6 billion, the largest debt of any of the former Comecon states (Åslund 2001, 49).

Nazi militia groups such as the New Hungarian Guard (*Új Magyar Gárda*) emerged on the political stage.[17] These extremist groups claimed to be reasserting control for the Hungarian people, those forsaken by a string of ineffective and elitist governments. Invariably, the target of such groups has been the Hungarian Roma and so-called "gypsy crime" (*cigánybűnozés*). Militia intimidation campaigns have led to entire Romani communities being evacuated from their homes for their own safety, as was the case in Gyöngyöspata in 2011. Even more disturbing was the spate of attacks on Romani families in Tatárszentgyörgy between 2008 and 2009, in which six people were killed and 55 wounded.[18]

From this abridged history of provincial Hungary, it is clear to see that transition drastically fragmented the social organisation of rural life, creating economic instability, political estrangement and frustration. The rural has consequently become a breeding ground for political myths. Therefore, at this point in the thesis, I believe it pertinent to explore the subject of political myth in more detail and relay to the reader the manifold ways in which scholars have comprehended this heterogeneous subject matter.

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[17] The New Hungarian Guard constituted one of many likeminded militia groups, their regional counterparts including For a Better Future Civil Guard (*Szebb Jövőért Magyar Önvédelem*) and The Outlaw's Army (*Betyársereg*). See *Athena Institute* 2010 for more information on Hungarian militia groups.

[18] The post-communist climate has increasingly marginalised Hungary's Roma population. To a certain extent, communism had helped the Roma to integrate and by 1971, roughly 80 percent of Romani men between the ages of 15 and 60 were in permanent employment (Ferge 1979, 93). Following transition, however, as employment opportunities became scarce, Roma applicants frequently faced discrimination in their search for employment. According to estimated figures, 70 percent of Hungary's Roma population are unemployed, more than 10 times the national average (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2012). Poverty is endemic within Roma communities and access to education is increasingly difficult as many establishments openly exclude Roma applicants.

1.4. Theoretical Approach to Myth.

How then might we approach the flexible and ostensibly boundless subject of political myth? The study of political myth has ties to many scholarly disciplines and so to situate political myth within a post-communist Hungarian context it is necessary to take an interdisciplinary approach to the subject matter. By no means do I intend this section to be an all-encompassing review of the manifold literature on political myth and myth more generally. Instead, I aim to provide a theoretical framework through which the reader can understand political myth within the context of this thesis.

1.4.1. Myth, Ideology and Neoliberalism.

Mythologist Christopher Flood (2002) claims that the theory of political myth is informed by both the broader study of mythology, which he distinguishes as sacred myth, and the study of ideology. He classifies political myth as '*an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group*' (author's italics) (44). Flood describes political myth as a form of everyday political communication, a vehicle for the ideological doctrines of belief that shape the social organisation and evolution of a given culture. Flood's ideological approach to political myths is particularly illuminating within the context of post-communism given the extensive ideological shifts that accompanied the democratic transition and the introduction of neoliberal market capitalism.

Neoliberal ideology asserts that individual freedoms are best advanced by market freedoms; that is to say, by private ownership, deregulated trade and minimal government intervention.

Under neoliberalism, the state is reduced to the role of facilitator, establishing and maintaining the infrastructures through which free trade can be achieved. As part of this reduction of state influence, public services and state assets are privatised, including, significantly, the media industries.

Corporate control of the media allows for the dissemination of neoliberal ideology on a mass scale, providing private organisations a platform through which to promote the virtues of the free market. It is through the everyday communication of the media that citizens are transformed into consumers, coerced by the relentless exposure to advertising and through the subliminal implantation of codes of behaviour espousing consumer practices. The private media arouses pseudo needs within the individual, needs that are ultimately satisfied in the consumer realm. In a neoliberal consumer society, consumer preferences shape self-identity. As sociologist Joseph E. Davis (2003) claims, '[w]e identify our real selves by the choices we make from the images, fashions and lifestyles available in the market, and these in turn become the vehicles by which we perceive others and they us' (46).[19] Consumer items consequently serve as symbols of neoliberal mythology.

Roland Barthes ([1957] 1972) developed the notion of the non-verbal communication of myth, building upon Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's study of semiotics. According to

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[19] Cultural anthropologist, Krista Harper (1999) claims that contrary to neoliberal mythology, consumer capitalism undermines democracy by emphasising self-interest over citizenship, indolence over political participation and apathy over responsibility. She argues that the media 'saturates public space and… distorts public debate and the flow of information with aggressive, expensive marketing. How can citizens develop a clear picture of their own needs and interests, when everything they lay their eyes upon in the street, in public schools, and in the media, is literally infused with exhortations to buy things, to share the fantasy, to drink in "the real thing" - the world of consumer goods produced and promoted by multinationals?' (108-109).

Barthes, '[m]yth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message' (107). Employing a connotative approach to signs, in which the signifier's representation of the signified is not necessarily obvious or denotive, Barthes argues that myths can acquire deep associations with arbitrary signifiers. However, as Barthes states, what differentiates myths from signs is the fact that myths are 'constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*' (author's italics) (113). Myths utilise existing signs and employ them as signifiers, endowing them with new meanings and ideologies.

In this way, consumer items come to signify the neoliberal myth; that is to say, consumer choice connotes the freedoms advocated by free-market capitalism. Choice allows citizens to shape their personal identities and grants them the freedom to contribute to their self-conception. As Conrad Lodziak (2002) argues, '[r]ather than a passive conformity, consumer culture is now widely believed to encourage an active, creative engagement in the pursuit of difference and individuality. Passivity and conformity [alternatively] suggest unfreedom' (68). The consumer item is thus symbolic of the freedom provided by self-regulating open markets.[20]

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[20] Critics of neoliberalism, however, argue that despite freedom being the cardinal feature of neoliberal ideology, democratic freedoms throughout the world have in fact diminished. David Harvey (2005) argues that rather than enhancing universal well-being neoliberalism merely serves the interests of the international elite and the expansion of corporate profit making. According to Harvey, the 'main substantive achievement of neoliberalization… has been to redistribute, rather than to generate, wealth and income' (159). Harvey employs the term, 'accumulation by dispossession' to denote the excessive corporatisation and commodification of everyday life wherein land, public utilities, history, and culture are all transformed into private assets and acquired by the financial elite.

In Hungary, the consumer item has a long history of mythical connotation. During the communist years, the ideological battle between East and West was, to a large extent, played out within the consumer realm, with many Hungarians equating the superior quality of Western consumer goods with a better quality of life in the West more generally (see Fehérváry 2006). Western consumer items would significantly contribute to the formation of a mythical, utopian image of the West in Hungary, one built upon the freedoms and material abundance symbolic of capitalism.

These symbolic associations continued during the early years of post-communism with Western consumer products functioning as pronouncements of individual subjectivity while also serving as a collective symbol of contemporariness, confirming Hungary's position within the globalised first world. However, over time, the symbolic capital attached to Western consumer goods changed in conjunction with changing attitudes towards the West. Given the subsequent years of post-communist hardship, many in Hungary have questioned who really benefitted from the neoliberal transformation, the Hungarian people or the multinational corporations that seized access to Hungary's newly opened market. Global brands such as Coca-Cola and McDonald's have since become 'Hungarian folk villains' whose 'logos symbolize the incursion of multinational corporations into public space, the media, and the public imagination' (Harper 1999, 104). Many Hungarians have subsequently begun to associate the ubiquitous nature of consumer advertising with the Soviet Union's equally ubiquitous five-pointed red star and, as such, a threat to Hungarian national autonomy.

The ideologies and myths ascribed to artefacts are therefore unfixed and constantly undergoing renegotiation in response to the contemporary social climate. Additionally, said

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artefacts can be the source of multiple competing mythologies, whose ideologies vie for ascendancy, growing and falling in prominence over time and with the changing social setting.

1.4.2. The Sociological Function of Political Myth.

Hungary's neoliberal transformation did not merely facilitate the influx of ideologically imbued political myths espousing the virtues of the free market; neoliberal privatisation fundamentally transformed the very foundations of daily life, producing a profound sense of ambivalence amongst the Hungarian populace. The prerequisite self-reliance of post-communist life offered dignity to those who embraced self-direction. Many, however, found the transformation of entrenched mental attitudes difficult and found taking personal responsibility for their own self-development alien. As social anthropologist Katherine Verdery claims, under communism '[t]he Benevolent Father Party educated people to express needs it would then fill, and discouraged them from taking initiative that would enable them to fill these needs on their own' (1996, 25). For many, this socialist mind-set was too deeply engrained and consequently the post-transitional burden of choice, coupled with doubts about assuming risk and trusting one's own intuition, led to growing feelings of disenchantment.

The post-communist requisite for self-sufficiency also resulted in the erosion of community. Through her fieldwork in Hungary, Barbara A. West (2002) found that Hungarians had little time for maintaining relationships with friends and families. Many found the burden of self-reliance to be a major factor in the disintegration of friendships as citizens invariably had less time for one another and consequently felt unable to rely on, and even trust, people once

considered friends.[21] The breakdown of traditional forms of social relations led to a growing sense of alienation amongst the Hungarian public, further contributing to the growing feelings of disillusionment aimed towards the new political and economic systems.

Such factors significantly contributed to the rise of post-communist political myths, myths that sought to provide the uprooted and fragmented Hungarian with a sense of cohesion and assurance. Polish anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski in his essay *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (1948) notes that when the cultural stability of a given society is threatened, myths perform a vital sociological function in that they 'convey[], express[], and strengthen[] the fundamental fact of the local unity and of the kinship unity of the group of people descendent from a common ancestress' (116). Myths attempt to unite disjointed people through forms of collective identity that are both familiar and gratifying. In periods of ideological and cultural uncertainty a myth functions as a 'sociological charter' (144), advocating and socially cementing customs, habits and modes of conduct. Malinowski argues that myth

> supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief… It fulfils a function *sui generis* closely connected with the nature of tradition, and the continuity of culture, with the relation between age and youth, and with the human attitude towards the past. The function of myth, briefly, is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events (146).

Thus, in view of the general uncertainties that characterised the early years of post-

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[21] For similar reasons family circles contracted, with many of West's interviewees constituting family as just their spouse and children, with parents, grandparents or other extended family members considered relatives as opposed to family. A recurring response to the reasons for the erosion of traditional family unity was simply that "[t]here's just no time" (43).

communism, Hungarians gravitated towards traditionalist myths that placed emphasis on localism and heritage; namely, the myth of the nation. Defining the role of the nation, historian Charles A. Kupchan (1995) claims that

> [t]he nation is purely emotive; it provides a sense of shared belonging and community to its members. Nationalism thus engenders among a specified population a common political ideology… Drawing on existing common attributes and generating shared historical experiences and myths, nationalism elevates the nation-state to a place of primacy (2).

Congruous to Malinowski's claims regarding the sociological function of myth, national identity provides citizens with a sense of collective identity based comparably upon a legacy of inherited customs and social practices, and a communal desire to maintain their values. Social anthropologist Ernst Gellner (1983) states that the formation of a nation is built upon two key catalysts, will and fear; that is, as Gellner claims, 'a mixture of loyalty and identification (on willed adherence), and of extraneous incentives, positive or negative, on hopes and fears' (53). Such catalysts are evident in the rise of national-oriented political myths in post-communist Hungary. Given the disorder of transition, Hungarians gravitated towards the nation in search of ideological foundations, constancy and cohesion. Indeed, Vladimir Tismaneanu (1998) argues that '[t]he Nation… [became] the substitute for the total community. In the nation one finds solace and security, a refuge from the vicissitudes of wild competition and ruinous selfishness' (33).

Malinowski contends that myth 'cannot be sober dispassionate history, since it is always made *ad hoc* to fulfil a certain sociological function, to glorify a certain group, or to justify an anomalous situation' (1948, 125). Correspondingly, Gellner argues that nationalism utilises and exploits factual history to satisfy sociocultural need, claiming that 'nationalism uses pre-existing, historically inherited proliferations of culture or cultural wealth, though it uses them

very selectively, and it most often transforms them radically' (1983, 55). Histories are more prone to reinterpretation and revision during periods of historical change and as Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006) claims in his study of imagined communities, '[a]ll profound changes in consciousness, by their nature, bring with them characteristic amnesias. Out of such oblivions, in specific historical circumstances, springs narratives' (204). In the context of Hungary's search for an agreeable form of identity, select historical narratives were propagated, narratives that glorified the Hungarian nation and its heroic struggle for independence.[22]

For instance, owing to the ideological void left by communism, Hungarians gravitated towards pre-communist national narratives. Divisively, one of the central figures of this revival was Miklós Horthy, regent during the interwar years. Horthy led the White Terror (1919-1921); a counter-revolutionary movement that violently dispelled the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic (*Magyar Tanácsköztársaság*). Within the context of post-communism, Horthy became not only a symbol of Hungarian patriotism but also a symbol of anti-communism. Horthy's staunch anti-communist attitude was in accord with the collective mentality of the early years of transition. Resentment towards the failed communist experiment was high and the prevailing attitude to the past forty years was one of denouncement (see Barany 1995, 192). Horthy was also symbolic of Hungary's resurrected resentments over the Treaty of Trianon.[23] Debate surrounding Trianon rekindled in the

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[22] This preferential approach to history can be understood in the light of Aviezer Tucker's (2008) notions of *[s]ignificance-driven* and *[v]alue-driven revision* (author's italics) (2). That is, the dissemination of selected historical narratives based upon what is considered significant at a given period and a re-evaluation of historical events based upon new political and social values respectively.

[23] Signed in 1920 as punishment for participation in the Central Powers, Hungary under the terms of the treaty was forced to cede two thirds of its territory and more than three fifths of

unrestricted climate of post-communism where Hungarians continued to perceive themselves as victims of injustice at the hands of the Allies.[24]

The post-communism veneration of Horthy was divisive, however, because it was Horthy who led Hungary into their uneasy alliance with the Nazis during the Second World War. Post-Trianon humiliation and an opportunity to reclaim these lost territories would motivate Hungary to side with Nazi Germany and actively participate in the Final Solution, sending 450,000 Jewish people to their deaths. However, in view of Hungary's post-transitional anti-communist backlash, right-wing discourse downplayed Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust and instead maintained that 'Hungary had taken part in the great struggle against Bolshevism' (Mink 2008, 176).

We may understand the mythical portrayal of Horthy and the revisions of history that transpired during the early years of post-communism in view of Henry Tudor's (1972) claim that

> [t]he view of the world that we find in a myth is always a practical view. Its aim is either to advocate a certain course of action or to justify acceptance of an existing state of affairs. Myths are, therefore, believed to be true, not because the historical evidence is compelling, but because they make sense of men's present experience (124).

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its population. Under communism, public discussion of Trianon was prohibited, even during the more liberal post-thaw years, however, the event never remained far from public consciousness and continued to be a source of profound national resentment.

[24] The issue of post-Trianon borders and Hungarians living in neighbouring countries has subsequently been at the heart of much post-communist political debate (see Waterbury 2010).

1.4.3. Myth and the Mobilisation of Discontent.

In search of an agreeable source of post-communist identity, many citizens turned to the imagined community of the nation. Many Hungarians had supposed that local autonomy and self-governance would fill the ideological void left by communism and, as Henri Vogt (2005) states, 'during the revolutionary heyday, freedom was essentially perceived in collective terms – the question was of national independence and self-determination' (181).

At odds with this emerging localism was the expansion of the private market, which granted transnational corporations unrestricted access to the Hungarian marketplace.[25] Furthermore, compounding fears over Hungarian national autonomy and cultural preservation was the direct involvement of supranational political organisations in Hungarian political life. In the early years of post-communism, one of the few areas of consensus amongst opposing political parties was a return to Europe.[26] However, many Hungarians were ignorant to the complexities of the European Union ascension process, believing that membership would be swift and uncomplicated given Hungary's historical ties to Europe and the nation's contribution to European civilisation. As the terms of ascension emerged, many Hungarians took a more sceptical stance towards European integration since 'the EU was able to shape

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[25] Indeed, in an effort to preserve national culture in light of neoliberal globalisation, the Hungaricum Club (*Hungaricum klub*) was established in 1999 with the remit of conserving and celebrating products deemed exclusively Hungarian. A *Hungaricum* - made up from the words *Hungaria* and *unikum,* i.e. Hungary and unique – is a phenomenon *uniquely* Hungarian and founded by four distinctly Hungarian companies; Zwack's Unicum, Tokaj Trading House, Herend Porcelain Manufactory and Pick Szeged Zrt. Additional *Hungaricums* include Pálinka, the Magyar Vizsla (Hungarian Pointer dog), Hungarian paprika, Matyó folk art and Mezőtúr pottery to name but a few.

[26] There were, however, some dissenting voices concerning European integration. István Csurka, for example, viewed the return to Europe as a threat to Hungarian national sovereignty, describing the European Constitution as 'a new Soviet system of centralization that was prepared in the West' (in Beckett Weaver 2006, 102)

domestic policy of accession countries through the carrots and sticks of conditionality'
(Malová 2004). Raymond Hill (2004) highlights the extent to which ascension countries of
the so-called 'Eastern Enlargement' had to acquiesce to the policy demands of the EU, stating
that,

> would-be members must transform their economic, monetary, immigration,
> legal, and human-rights policies to conform to very strict EU standards.
> Among its members, the EU has rule and regulation on everything from
> agricultural subsidies and workers' rights to government deficit spending and
> civil liberties (142).

Further supranational involvement came in the form of international financial organisations,
the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Hungary joined both organisations in
1982 in need of financial aid following the recession that stemmed from the global oil crisis
of 1973. The proviso of receiving Western loans were neoliberal reforms including increased
privatisation and cuts to state welfare. Hungary again required financial support shortly after
the change of regime due to the massive foreign debt inherited from the communists. In 1991
alone, Hungary received $970 million in financial aid from the IMF to help establish a fully
functioning market economy (Barany 1995, 188). Consequently, by 1993 50 percent of
Hungarian industry had been privatised. This figure rose to 80 percent by 1998 (Hill 2004,
111).

The subsequent years of post-communism have seen Hungary fall from being 'neoliberal's
best student' (Benyik 2010, 114) to one the most economically vulnerable nations in the
region. The Hungarian economy took a decade to return to the levels of GDP reached in 1989
(Andor 2009, 288) and reckless economic policies further exacerbated Hungary's already

excessive per capita foreign debt.[27] Given the precarious state of the Hungarian economy, the 2008 global financial crisis hit Hungary particularly hard and, in attempt to combat Hungary's budget deficit problems, the IMF proposed further privatisation and greater austerity measures in exchange for another bailout loan.

The broken promises of the market economy and the intrusion of supranational organisations in Hungarian daily life led many to perceive internationalism as a threat, one that would lead to the death of the nation (*nemzethalál*).[28] German philosopher Ernst Cassirer in his book *The Myth of the State* (1946) maintains that '[m]yth is an objectification of man's social experience' (47) which 'sprouts forth from deep human emotions' (43). Cassirer claims fear provides fertile ground for the development of political myth, stating that

> [m]yth and religion in general, have often been declared to be a mere product of fear. But what is most essential in man's religious life is not the *fact* of fear, but the *metamorphosis* of fear. Fear is a universal biological instinct. It can never be completely overcome or suppressed, but it can change its form. Myth is filled with the most violent emotions and the most frightful visions. But in myth man begins to learn a new and strange art: that art of expressing, and that means organizing, his most deeply rooted instincts, his hopes and fears (47-48).

George Sorel, in his book *Reflections on Violence* ([1908] 2004), scrutinises the drive and emotional force behind political myth. Sorel focuses specifically on the role of myth in revolutionary discourse; however, his theory of the emotional power of myth is useful when examining the myth of *nemzethalál* in post-communist Hungary. Viewed in light of Sorel's theory of myth, notions of national death function 'not [as] descriptions of things but expressions of a will to act' (28). Such myths mobilise action by empowering the recipient,

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[27] See Lendvai 2012 on Péter Medgyessy's '100-day programmes' and the infamous Őszöd affair as examples.
[28] See Gerő (2008) for a history of Hungarian fears surrounding national death.

producing an emotional response built upon a sense of righteousness and glory. Sorel argues that to instil the will to act within the recipient, myths arouse 'all the strongest inclinations of a people, of a party or a class, inclinations which recur to the mind with insistence of instinct in all circumstances of life' (115). Sorel maintains that the form adopted by myths is secondary to their emotional impact, believing myths to exhibit a sense of assurance akin to religious faith. He describes such belief as an 'expression of… convictions in the language of movement' (29). Paramilitary institutions such as the Hungarian Guard exhibit these same convictions, utilising the myths of national death and Zionist conspiracies to impel action. While one may dispute the validity of their claims, Sorel contends that the deep conviction of their belief renders such myths as 'unanalysable into parts which could be placed on the plane of historical descriptions' (29).

Through the study of political mythology, we can acquire valuable insight into the post-communist experience and the collective hopes and fears of a nation. In accordance with historian Rebecca Collins (2003), who states that myths 'are better understood as being symbolic of certain truths which cannot be disclosed through a series of factual claims' (342), I believe that through the study of political myths we are provided access to significant narratives and societal insight unattainable via official histories. The study of myths supplements social and historical discourse, enriching analysis of society and its collective dispositions.

Cinema, I argue, is the consummate medium of modern day political mythmaking. In our contemporary media society, images and sounds play an increasing role in the shaping of our perceptions and social experiences, moulding the very structures of daily life. Films help contribute to the construction of our political values, our social identities, our understanding

of what it is to be a certain class, ethnicity, gender or sexuality. Films shape our morality, dictating what is good and evil, right and wrong. Films also bring social issues to public consciousness, inform common understandings of history, and provide a window into the structures through which our society operates. By transcoding the discourses of the social world into images, films present audiences with the materials through which they construct their subjectivities. Writing in 1946, British film scholar J.P. Mayer likened the role of cinema to that of myth and ritual in primitive society. Quoting Malinowski, Mayer argues that just as myth provided savage communities with codes of behaviour, morality and faith, cinema possesses the same sociological functions in present day society. Akin to political myth, cinema aids in establishing sociological charters, espousing certain forms of conduct, belief and value while denouncing others. Yvette Bíró (1982) echoes these sentiments, asserting that the 'customs and gestures of everyday life become ceremonial on the screen; [] they acquire mythical dimensions by being presented and distributed in the medium of film' (101).

Films can therefore be understood as vessels of ideology, purveyors of social, political and cultural discourse from which citizens shape their understanding of the social world. In much the same way, Christopher Flood (2002) defines political myths as vehicles of ideological belief, describing political myths as ideologically-marked narratives imprinted with the values and aspirations of a specific society or social group. One may thus consider cinema a medium of political myth. Films, like political myths, provide narratives communicating political ideology. Whether explicitly or covertly, ideological discourse pervades all films and indeed the cinematic apparatus itself. This was the assertion of the political modernists. Building upon Althusserian Marxism, psychoanalysis and semiotic theory, film theorists such as Jean-Louis Baudry (1974), Jean-Louis Comolli (1985) and Paul Narboni (with Comolli

([1969] 1971)) posited that the mechanisms of cinema were ideologically-imbued. Jean-Louis Baudry, for example, argues that the illusion of reality inherent within the very mechanisms of the cinema function ideologically. At a fundamental level, cinema, by presenting the semblance of reality through the projection of photographic images displayed at 24 frames per second, exhibits a fabricated reality, one that deceives us into believing that the images projected on screen are real. Compounding this sense of deception are the invisible modes of editing and sequencing that transform the raw material of objective reality into an ideologically-infused unified product. These cinematic processes are invariably concealed by techniques of continuity that create an illusion of reality. Baudry states that this manipulated reality functions as an ideological state apparatus that presents the social world as filtered through the ideology of the bourgeoisie, presenting a mythopoeic vision of reality that serves to maintain the ideological status quo.

Flood, however, maintains that political myths are not solely an instrument of the dominant class but vehicles of political doctrine utilised by all social groups in the consolidation of their respective ideologies. Thus, the films in this study, while challenging the dominant political myths of contemporary Hungarian society, may also be considered mythopoeic in that they communicate their own ideologically-laden narratives that operate in competition with other ideologically-imbued political myths.

1.5. Literature Review.

At this point in the introductory chapter, I will provide a survey of the existing literature on three key areas of study pertinent to this thesis. I wish to highlight the contributions made by earlier authors, identify how these texts inform my own study and highlight the gaps in the

existing research that I intent to fill. Given that the films examined in this thesis adopt a variety of different cinematic styles, I am compelled to employ an array of different methodological approaches to their analysis. As a result, this literature review does not provide comprehensive insight into specific writing on individual styles and/or aesthetic concerns but instead explores a number of overarching themes and subject matters relevant to the study of the rural in post-communist Hungarian cinema. The first objective of this review of literature is to map out the trends and prevailing assumptions that dominate the study of Hungarian cinema and examine how these hypotheses have transformed and developed over time. The second area of scholarship considered is the literature on rural cinema. I propose to examine the ways in which scholars have come to understand the cinematic countryside in relation to interrelated subject areas such as the urban, the nation and national history. Finally, I survey the literature concerning cinema studies and sociology, examining the ways in which authors have typically envisioned cinema as a medium apropos for the communication of social realities. In parallel, I will also examine the perceived limitations of this marriage of scholarly disciplines.

1.5.1. Hungarian Cinema.

Before proceeding with the survey of literature, I believe it pertinent to call attention to the uneven and, at times, problematic issues within the research on Hungarian cinema and consider how these issues have shaped the ways in which scholars have typically approached cinema produced in Hungary.

1.5.1.1. An Imbalanced View of Hungarian Cinema.

Dina Iordanova, in her influential text *The Cinema of the Other Europe* (2003a), calls attention to some of the common misconceptions that dominate Western understanding of Central European cinemas. One such preconception is the assumed role of the state in the region's film industries. While one cannot ignore the fact that under communism, cinema was under the jurisdiction of the state and censorship was a reality, the popular Western perception of the oppressive state versus the oppressed artist oversimplifies the relationship between the state and the region's cultural producers. For most of Central Europe, the period of totalitarian censorship in which cinema was tightly bound to the constraints of Socialist Realism was short-lived, declining with the death of Stalin. In the years that followed, the level of state intervention varied across the region, changing with the contemporary political climate. In the case of Hungary, following the failed uprising of 1956 and the appointment of János Kádár as General Secretary, Hungary embarked upon a period of liberalisation.[29] Within the more tolerant climate of post-thaw Hungary, American journalist O.W. Riegel (1977) maintains that the state 'both encouraged the arts and recognized the value of self-expression and criticism as politically healthy' (204).[30]

In view of Western assumptions regarding censorship and the state operated production system, it may seem paradoxical then that Western discourse has also tended to presume that

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[29] Hungarian filmmakers achieved relative autonomy. Minister of Culture György Aczél operated an open-minded policy based on the 'three T's' of *tiltos*, *tűres* and *támogatás'* (prohibited, tolerated and supported) (Cunningham 2004, 95), facilitating more original and daring cinema.

[30] However, even under the more liberal climate of 'goulash communism' censorship, although rare, was a reality. Indeed, Péter Bacsó's *A Tanú/The Witness* (1969) was shelved for ten years. However, upon release in 1979, the film immediately acquired a cult following owing, in no small part, to the fact that the film had been banned.

the region produced little other than intellectual and political cinema.[31] This misconception

arose because Western access to films from the Eastern Bloc was primarily limited to those

exhibited on the international film festivals circuit. Iordanova (2003a) claims that for the East

and the West alike, the film festival became a site of 'undisguised flag-waving' (29). For the

Soviet Union, highbrow and cerebral cinema provided evidence of the region's cultural

pedigree and, as Iordanova argues, formed 'part of a crucial political effort to rebalance the

configuration of the world's (cultural) powers… replicating the logic of geopolitical priorities

in the area of cultural exchange' (28-29).

Both Iordanova and Hungarian film scholar, Anikó Imre (2004) assert that Western festival

critics tended to put films from the region on a pedestal purely because of their subversive or,

at the very least, assumed subversive qualities. Imre maintains that

> it is likely that what had lent East and Central European films such a unique
> position in world cinema during the Cold War was not necessarily the
> aesthetic value of the films or the originality of the filmmakers but Western
> investment in the idea of "good nationalism" – of nations firmly embedded in
> teleological history united around the voice of the white male genius – a
> notion that East European filmmakers eagerly embraced and perpetuated
> themselves (9).

Imre elaborates on this viewpoint in her introduction to the edited volume *East European*

Cinemas (2005), suggesting that Western investment into a particular type of film made in

the region, namely that which played into pedagogical nationalist discourse, resulted in

alternative forms of cinema, that which did not necessarily conform to Western expectations

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[31] Balasz Varga (2013) demonstrates that throughout the history of Hungarian cinema,
popular genres have been regularly produced. Providing a breakdown of each decade's most
popular genres, Varga states that 'in the 1930s it was comedy, in the 1940s melodrama, in the
1950s comedy and operetta, in the 1960s historical film adaptations, in the 1970s comedy, in
the 1980s comedy and animation, and in the 1990s and 2000s comedy again' (177).

and presumptions, being ignored.

O.W. Riegel (1976a) touches upon these alternative cinematic voices, recognising "serious cinema" to be but a small percentage of Hungary's entire cinematic output. Riegel also questions the impact of serious cinema on the Hungarian cultural scene, highlighting the audiences' preference for more light-hearted cinema such as literary adaptations, musicals, comedies and romances (also see Cunningham 2004, 101).[32] Riegel (1977) then proceeds to explore the Hungarian comedy, a genre, he claims, has had difficulties connecting with a broader, international audience because its humour derives from Hungary's unique national character and from the experiences and norms of Hungarian life, specific national traits, traditions and values that do not necessarily translate universally.

American film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum, in his 1990 article *A Bluffer's Guide to Béla Tarr,* also engages with the difficulties Western scholars face when addressing Eastern European cultural products, stating:

> One reason that Eastern European films often don't get the attention they deserve in the West is that we lack the cultural and historical contexts for them. If Eastern Europe's recent social and political upheavals took most of the world by surprise, this was because most of us have been denied the opportunity to see the continuity behind them: they seemed to spring out of nowhere. The best Eastern European films tend to catch us off guard in the same way, and for similar reasons.

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[32] Indeed, in his study of youth in communist Hungary, political scientist László Kürti (2002) suggests that while the cinema remained a popular pastime in Hungary throughout the latter years of communism, owing to the ever-increasing availability of Western films in Hungarian cinemas, the popularity of domestic, socially-oriented productions waned, especially with youth audiences. As one of Kürti's interviewees asserts: 'We are living in Hungarian reality; we don't need to be lectured about it again and again, which Hungarian films are notorious for doing' (202).

While Rosenbaum brings the matter of national context to the fore, he is quick to sidestep the issue, claiming:

> I believe that these problems are less serious than we tend to make them out to be; rather than pretend they don't exist, it seems more honest and useful to acknowledge them – in the process of showing how and why they don't matter much.

Rosenbaum's article then proceeds to fall back on established art cinema discourse, giving ascendancy to what film theorist Paul Willemen (2006) describes as an 'assumed universality of film language' (35). Willemen views such practice as 'evasive cosmopolitanism' (34), whereby Western scholars impose personal and/or institutionally inscribed frameworks upon unfamiliar cultural texts at the expense of specific cultural references. Ultimately, Willemen states that such forms of universalism 'actively delay[s] the advent of a genuinely comparative film studies by trying to impose the paradigms of Euro-American film and aesthetic theories upon non-Euro-American cultural practices' (34).

Graham Petrie, in his innovative study *History Must Answer to Man* (1978), similarly acknowledges the issues surrounding Western engagement with Hungarian cinema. While recognising the problems of irregular access and the distinctive nature of Hungarian culture, Petrie also correctly identifies a strong sense of Western-centrism at the heart of international scholarly discourse, stating:

> Part of this can be attributed to the notorious cultural laziness, or blindness, or arrogance, of Anglo-Saxon society: it has long been taken for granted that, outside Britain and America themselves, the only cultural traditions worth taking seriously are those of France Italy, Germany, Spain and Russia. The occasional Norwegian playwright, Swedish film director or Polish composer may break through the barrier, but there is rarely much interest in examining in any depth the artistic or social heritage from which his works derive (2).

While the tendency for Western critics/academics to adopt universal discourse in the study of Hungarian cinema has been largely attributed to the Cold War and political divide between the East and West, I argue that universalist discourse has, in fact, expanded in the global climate of post-communism. The rise of the transnational co-production and the international film festival as key sources of finance and exhibition respectively, has been somewhat of a double-edged sword. One cannot deny that Hungary has benefitted from transnational co-productions and, unquestionably, Hungarian films have achieved wider audiences and global prestige because of broader international exhibition (see Papp and Buglya 2011).[33] However, notwithstanding these benefits, transnationalism has fostered and normalised universalism as the dominant language of global cinematic discourse.

In their edited volume, *Global Art Cinema* (2010) Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover suggest that with the increasing institutionalisation of world cinema, cross-cultural universalism has become the dominant language of both the institutions themselves; that is to say, the funding bodies and the festivals themselves, and that of mainstream film criticism. Galt and Schoonover suggest that alien cultures and traditions are rendered universal as a means of 'reduc[ing] the threat of unpleasurable difference, to manage the irreconcilable fissures produced by translation, and to construct texts as easily assimilable to Western cultural norms' (10). Despite the inextricable link between cinema and world, Galt and Schoonover argue that geopolitical context is habitually overlooked in cinematic discourse in

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[33] Indeed, two of the films under observation in this study are themselves transnational co-productions, *Delta* (Kornél Mundruczó, 2008), a Hungarian, German co-production and *Csak a szél*/*Just the Wind* (Benedek Fliegauf, 2012), co-financed in Hungary, Germany and France. However, I would argue that economic factors chiefly motivated these transnational collaborations. Even though Mundruczó has collaborated with the German production companies, Essential Filmproduktion and ZDF/Arte on subsequent projects, I see these relationships as examples of opportunistic transnationalism as opposed to any kind of milieu-building or affinitive transnationalism, to use Mette Hjort's (2010) terminology.

favour of more universal notions of Bordwellian art cinema; that is to say, cinema that foregrounds the auteur figure and that which positions itself in opposition to mainstream commercial cinema (see Bordwell 1979 [2002]).[34]

Thus, part of my motivation for examining Hungarian cinema through a national, or more precisely, small national cinema framework, is to address this issue of universalism, which only expands as transnational cinematic discourse becomes overriding. This is not to suggest that I view Hungarian cinema in a global vacuum. On the contrary, I align myself with Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie (2007) who maintain that 'the concept of small nation promises to shed light on at least some of the ways in which subnational, national, international, transnational, regional and global forces dovetail and compete in the sphere of the cinema' (2).

1.5.1.2. Trends within Pre-1989 Hungarian Cinema.

Having addressed some of the limitations within the current literature on Hungarian cinema, I now wish to expound upon what we can learn. Given their age and/or specific agendas, a large proportion of the scholarship dedicated to Hungarian cinema places little to no emphasis upon the post-communist period upon which I base this study. This does not mean

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[34] American film critic and theorist Bill Nichols (1994) explores what he describes as 'the Festival Phenomenon' (16), referring to the ways in which festival audiences extract meaning from the cinematic texts of unfamiliar cultures. According to Nichols, festivalgoers assimilate cinema from cultures they are unaccustomed to by adopting familiar (universalist) cinematic discourses built around canonistic art cinema rhetoric and a generic humanism. By their very presence on the international film festival circuit, Nichols suggests that festival audiences are encouraged to view such films as 'the work of directors ready to take their place with an international fraternity of auteurs' (16) and accordingly apply art/auteur cinema discourse to extrapolate meaning.

that this literature holds no value for my own study. On the contrary, such scholarship

provides retrospective insight into the ways in which Hungarian cinema has historically been

understood, defined and celebrated. Therefore, I propose to begin my review of literature by

examining how scholars and commentators have commonly characterised pre-1989

Hungarian cinema. I aim to bring to light a number of shared hypotheses within this corpus of

research with the aim of tracing post-communist Hungary's cinematic lineage. I will then go

on to explore how this screen legacy has evolved and transformed in the post-communist era.

Much of the scholarship on pre-1989 Hungarian cinema places keen emphasis upon cinema's

intimate relationship with indigenous society. Brian Burns, in his book *World Cinema –

Hungary* (1996), describes the ethos of Hungarian cinema as being 'resistant to

transplantation or to interbreeding: its great virtue is its close relationship with a particular,

local culture and its servicing of the needs of that culture' (113). Such sentiments are echoed

by Mira and Antonin J. Liehm (1977) who argue that Hungarian filmmakers are motivated by

'the endeavor-felt, in many cases, to be an obligation-to treat as profoundly as possible

themes about their own people' (401). Catherine Portuges (2005), an American film scholar

of Hungarian descent, congruously claims that 'each successive cinematic generation in

Hungary seem to speak a different language… [but] changing perceptions of Hungarian

identity continue to find a place in Hungarian film (124).[35] How then does this introspective

self-analysis manifest? The core texts identify two recurrent thematic concerns.

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[35] This philosophy is echoed by the filmmakers themselves. For example, in 1980 director
István Szabó stated that 'the characteristic feature of a good Hungarian film is that it
expresses something about Hungary' (in Burns 1996, 90). Such sentiments were also
affirmed by Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács in his opening statement at 24th Hungarian Film Week in
which he stated: 'We filmmakers are a mirror to the world, and the mirror must be honest and
true' (in Portuges 1997, 204).

One of the central preoccupations of pre-1989 Hungarian cinema has been national history. Not merely history, but as Burns states, 'the human consequences of the processes of history, set against the background of Hungary's progress from a rural, agricultural society to an urban, industrial one' (39). History as represented in Hungarian cinema has ritually been a source of self-knowledge, a means of national comprehension in the face of the official narratives prescribed by the state. Yvette Bíró (1968) argues that films of the so-called Hungarian New Wave challenged the myths of communist-dictated history. Such films contested the didacticism and distortions of official discourse and compelled audiences to confront the difficult realities of recent history, reconsider recognised heroes and question canonised national narratives.[36]

Film historian David Paul (1989) correspondingly highlights Hungarian cinema's commitment to national history and history's effect on the contemporary Hungarian experience. Paul employs the term "Hungarity" to allude to this specific form of historical reflection, suggesting that Hungarian filmmakers look 'to the [nation's] complicated past for clues about their complicated present-day identity – their sense of "Hungarity" – and in this question of past and present identity many filmmakers find a compelling source of subject matter' (179).

John Cunningham (2004) adopts a more cautious approach towards the interpretation of history in Hungarian cinema, suggesting that there exists a tendency for scholars to overstate

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[36] State censorship prohibited direct critique of the regime and/or the regime's proclamations of history, compelling New Wave filmmakers to employ encoded cinematic language and complex allegories in their contestation of these dominant historical narratives. Portuges (2005) maintains that such films 'conjoin[ed] audiences and moving pictures in an unspoken complicity of mutual and reciprocal understanding with regards to politically and historically sensitive subjects' (121).

cinema's role in the demystifying of history. Cunningham suggests that while the films of the New Wave challenged the official versions of history, many offered an equally distorted picture of the past, one that often reduced the Hungarian to the position of inactive bystander swept along by political tides. Cunningham argues that despite being preferable to official histories, such films 'rarely offered anything other than a rather vague humanism' in which 'one myth is replaced by another' (110). O.W. Riegel (1976b) similarly questions the demystification of history proclaimed an essential quality of Hungarian cinema. Riegel claims that despite re-examining Hungary's troubled past, most New Wave films failed to adequately acknowledge Hungarian accountability, whether on an individual or collective level. Instead, Riegel contends that many of the films that engaged with the vexed questions of national history tended to position actual historical events as subordinate to personal ones.

Dina Iordanova (2003a) alternatively suggests that history as represented in the cinema of Central Europe frequently placed contemporary political needs over historical accuracy. In the context of communism's airbrushing of history, Iordanova argues that the history that appeared in Central European cinema was used to fuel intellectual debate and speak to the common sensibilities and attitudes of the public.[37] Iordanova also argues that history in Central European cinemas was often built upon 'the inherent tensions found at the intersection of historical master narratives and smaller, individual accounts and personal views of history' (47). History habitually served as a backdrop to private narratives,

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[37] The films of Miklós Jancsó provide one such example of how representations of national history provided a means of inciting dialogue on contemporary issues. Hungarian film scholar András Bálint Kovács (2004) proclaims Jancsó's films to be historical parables, fables that articulated political ideas the director believed were inexpressible by any other means. Jancsó set many of his films during key periods of Hungarian and Eastern European history but, as Graham Petrie (1978) argues, through his heavily stylised aesthetics, Jancsó isolates events from their specific historical settings as a means of extracting themes relevant to the contemporary milieu.

narratives that did not necessarily claim factual accuracy but instead revisited and reappraised history through the individual's social experience.[38]

Portuges (2014) congruously emphasises the role played by what she describes as 'first-person memory narratives' (159). She argues that autobiographical discourse allowed filmmakers to reacquaint with the supressed issues of national history and, in doing so, help determine 'the memory, popular perception and subjective experience of socialist and Cold War history' (152). With regards to the memory of the failed uprising of 1956, Portuges states that through narratives of subjective experience, filmmakers proffered a space for the testimony of witnesses, victims and survivors whose voices had been silenced by official discourse. Portuges identifies two key aesthetic strategies in Hungary's autobiographical cinema, flashbacks – which she describes as a signature trait of the Budapest School – and the use of archival footage in fictional narratives. Through the hybrid blurring of fact and fiction, these films 'authenticate and interrogate the filmmakers' as well as the protagonists' perspectives, negotiating the often ambiguous zones between autobiographical exploration

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[38] The work of István Szabó and Márta Mészáros exemplify this form of personal historical narrative. Graham Petrie (1978) argues that while Szabó's films primarily focus upon intimate personal narratives, they frequently conclude with scenes that expand the narrative beyond the individual in order to evoke more universal experiences. Petrie highlights the ways in which Szabó transforms individual experiences into collective ones by having the central character's actions literally replicated by other surrounding individuals whose circumstances mirror those of the film's protagonist[s] (for further information on how Szabó turns private narratives into collective ones see Paul 1994 and Cunningham 2014a). Mészáros' films alternatively offer a re-reading of recent history from a gendered perspective, emphasising the interconnectivity between the individual and the political system under which they live. Catherine Portuges (1993) claims that throughout her oeuvre Mészáros has 'illuminate[d] the larger question of the constitution of self in an East-Central Europe which has favored group identity at the expense of the individual' (126). Through semi-autobiographical narratives set against the backdrop of Hungary's recent past, and through the amalgamation of documentary and fictional material, Mészáros explores female subjectivity, balancing personal reflection with a desire for historical reappraisal (also see Portuges 2004).

and historical investigation' (153).

The second preoccupation identified within the literature, one germane to the first, is Hungarian cinema's commitment to topical social issues. Indeed, David Robinson (1970), writing for *Sight and Sound*, claimed that post-thaw Hungarian cinema successfully utilised 'film as a medium for socio-political *debate*' (author's italics) (85). Mira and Antonin J. Liehm (1977) testify to Robinson's claim, emphasising the possibility for more open dialogue in Hungarian cinema after 1963, in light of the wider societal changes of the Hungarian thaw and the coming of age of a new generation of filmmakers with a desire to wrestle with the issues of the day.[39] Congruously, David Paul (1989) examines the propensity for the post-

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[39] This is not to say that films made prior to 1963 failed to engage with issues pertinent to contemporary society, on the contrary. Films such as *Hortobágy/Life on the Hortobagy* (Georg Höllering, 1936), *Emberek a havason/People of the Mountains* (István Szőts, 1942), *Valahol Európában/Somewhere in Europe* (Géza Radványi, 1947) and *Ének a búzamezökröl/Song of the Cornfields* (István Szőts, 1947) provide somewhat isolated examples of the more socially-oriented cinema produced in pre-communist Hungary, an era in which literary and theatrical adaptations were more commonplace. Such films endeavoured to present Hungary with a greater sense of authenticity, depicting issues relevant to the contemporary social climate – the aftermath of the war, the effects of modernisation and rural poverty for example – in a manner more candid than had previously been customary. Writing in 1945, István Szőts ([1945] 1999) articulated his vision for the future of cinema in Hungary, advocating a move away from the escapist and profit-oriented cinema that had dominated the pre-war years. In his *Pamphlet on Behalf of Hungarian Film Art* (*Röpirat a Magyar filmművészet ügyében*), Szőts stated that a cinema built upon democratic foundations would emerge from the ruins of the war, a cinema of social and cultural commitment, one that would build bridges of understanding not just within Hungary but throughout Europe. Szőts' pamphlet had limited distribution, however, and, as Cunningham (2004) states, it is unclear how much impact it had on the industry at the time of its circulation (61-62). Nevertheless, a number of Szőts' proposals did subsequently come to fruition, such as the establishment of both a film archive and a film laboratory, and the founding of the monthly film journal, *Filmvilág*, launched in 1958. Three years after Szőts' manifesto, Hungarian cinema was nationalised, initiating a widespread reorganisation of the Hungarian film industry. In accordance with Szőts, communist doctrine dictated that films should exceed mere escapism and instead function on a social level, however, Szőts' philosophy was deeply at odds with that of the communists, who banned Szőts' *Song of the Cornfields* for its erroneous and non-Marxist ideology (Liehm, and Liehm 1977, 149). Szőts was also removed from his subsequent project, *Talpalatnyi föld/The Soil Under Your Feet* (1948), which was handed to

New Wave filmmakers to focus upon contemporary issues and social problems. Such films

increasingly pushed the boundaries of acceptability and smashed taboos by presenting subject

matter previously forbidden.[40]

Frigyes Bán. Following nationalisation, Hungarian cinema became, as István Nemeskürty ([1965] 1974) states, 'the cinema of the Hungarian people' (151). While the politics of films produced in the early years of nationalisation were deeply imbued with the ideology of the new regime, often serving as little more than transparent propaganda, these films nevertheless began to more consistently engage with the working class milieu and working class issues. Films such as *Szabóné/Anna Szabó* (Félix Máriássy, 1949), *Felszabadult föld/Liberated Land* (Frigyes Bán, 1950), *Dalolva szép az élet/Singing Makes Life Beautiful* (Márton Keleti, 1950), *Teljes gőzzel!/Full Steam Ahead* (Félix Máriássy, 1951), *Vihat/The Storm* (Zoltán Fábri, 1952), *Az első fecskék/The First Swallows* (Frigyes Bán, 1952), *Simon Menyhért születése/The Birth of Simon Menyhért* (Zoltán Várkonyi, 1954), *Életjel/Fourteen Lives Saved* (Zoltán Fábri, 1954), *Körhinta/Merry-Go-Round* (Zoltán Fábri, 1955) all demonstrate a shift towards more contemporary themes and depictions of the everyday social world, albeit one prescribed by the communist regime. Of particular note is Bán's *The Soil Under Your Feet*, the first film released under the new nationalised system. The film elevates itself above its contemporaries due to its unsentimental depiction of provincial poverty, presenting rural life with a poetic realism akin to the work of Szőts and Radványi. Set during the interwar years, the film follows the struggles of Jóska Góz (Ádám Szertes) who, having eloped with his sweetheart Marika Juhos (Ági Mészáros) during her arranged marriage to wealthy peasant Zsíros Tóth (István Egri), is forced to pay for the cost of the wedding in exchange for her divorce. However, circumstances impede Jóska's efforts to raise the money and after drought threatens the yield of the peasant's crops, Jóska leads a rebellion against a wealthy landowner who denies the peasants access to water from a nearby dam. The peasants take the water by force, bursting the dam's banks and filling their arid land with water. The Gendarmes intervene and Jóska is arrested. However, as he is led away, the camera's low-angle framing positions the chained Jóska heroically, standing triumphant in defeat. Nemeskürty states that *The Soil Under Your Feet* placed subject matter only hinted at in *People of the Mountains* front and centre; that being the poverty endured by the Hungarian peasantry during the Horthy years. The film exhibits a documentary realism hitherto not seen in Hungarian cinema, refusing the optimism that, as Liehm, and Liehm (1977) state, became an obligatory feature of Hungarian films made during the late 1940s and 1950s (151). Árpád Makai's cinematography transitions from the vibrantly frenetic wedding sequence to an ethnographic-like depiction of everyday life, perhaps most strikingly displayed in the montage sequence in which Jóska and his family attempt to raise the money owed to the Tóths.

[40] Subject matter included a lack of housing (*Családi tűzfészek/Family Nest* (Béla Tarr, 1979), *Ajánda ez a nap/A Priceless Day* (Péter Gothár, 1979)), youth culture (*Bástyasétány hetvannégy/Singing on the Treadmill* (Gyula Gazdag, 1974), *Megáll as idő/Time Stands Still* (Péter Gothár, 1981)), the role of women (*Kilenc hónap/Nine Months* (Márta Mészáros, 1976), *Teketória/Flare and Flicker* (Gyula Maár, 1976), *Sziget a szárazföldön/The Lady from Constantinople* (Judit Elek, 1969)), abortion (*Adj kiraly katonat!/Princess* (Pál Erdőss, 1982), *Embriók/Embryos* (Pál Zolnay, 1985)), prostitution (*Egy erkölcsös éjszaka/A Very Moral Night* (Karoly Makk, 1977), *K... Film a prostituáltakról - Rákósi tér/K... A Film About*

Melinda Szaloky (2005) examines the phenomenon of 'internal exile' as represented in Hungarian cinema, charting its development and modification across multiple generations. Szaloky defines internal exile as a sense of displacement and estrangement within one's own country and proceeds to build a profile of what she describes as 'the ever-adapting "deformed" Hungarian social character' (85), which she links to the discourse of both exile and diaspora cinemas. Examining the films of the New Wave, Szaloky identifies the phenomenon of exilic epistephilia, a desire to bridge the gaps of separation from national history. Focusing on the post-New Wave films of the 1970s and 1980s, exilic epistephilia gives way to a cinema of orphanage, exemplified through themes surrounding broken homes, fragmented families and rootless children. Szaloky's notion of internal exile, I believe, is a very useful framework for examining the post-communist experience. Given that Szaloky defines internal exile in terms of a lack of identification with the system in which one lives, one can argue that the displacement of post-communism, widespread globalisation and supranational intervention have continued to rupture Hungarian identity and created a sense of de-territorialisation and internal exile within many post-communist citizens.[41]

Prostitutes - Rákósi Square (György Dobray, 1988)), moral and social alienation (*Öszi almanach/Almanac of Fall* (Béla Tarr, 1984)), crime (*Az áldozat/The Victim* (György Dobray, 1979), *Vészerződés/Blood Brothers* (György Dobray, 1982)), poverty and the social other (*Cséplő Gyuri/Gyuri* (Pál Schiffer, 1978), *Dögkeselyű/The Vulture* (Ferenc András, 1982)), domestic issues (*Panelkapcsolat/The Prefab People* (Béla Tarr, 1982), *Napló szerelmeimnek/Diary for my Loves* (Márta Mészáros, 1987)) and sexuality (*Egymásra nézve/Another Way* (Károly Makk, 1982), *Visszaesők/Forbidden Relations* (Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács, 1982)).

[41] Hamid Naficy's *An Accented Cinema* (2001) provides the foundations from which Szaloky builds her study of communist Hungary and thus serves as an essential source for examining internal exile within a post-communist context. Naficy claims that within accented cinemas, themes surrounding homeland and territory are key, as are themes of alienation, historicity, identity and nostalgia.

The tradition of local engagement identified within the core literature on pre-1989 Hungarian cinema reveals a longstanding self-reflectivity, which, as I hope this thesis will reveal, continues to be present in post-communist Hungarian cinema. I argue that despite the new pressures of the market economy the post-communist generation are continuing the legacy of social and historical engagement that, throughout its history, has remained at the heart of the nation's cinema. The films selected for examination, like those that preceded them, desire to bring suppressed issues into public consciousness and into the public sphere of debate. István Szabó once stated that '[m]y task is not to amuse the viewer, but, on the contrary, to help, to act as therapy' (Szabó in Cunningham 2004, 94). I argue that therapeutic notions of confrontation, acknowledgement, acceptance and reconciliation remain at the heart of the post-communist films observed in this thesis.

1.5.1.3. Post-Communist Hungarian Cinema.

Given the manifold changes that accompanied the collapse of communism, the infrastructures that had supported introspective and socially conscious cinema in Hungary underwent massive structural changes as production shifted from a state financed, unit-based studio system to an international, privately financed one.[42] As much of the scholarship testifies, Hungarian cinema endured a period of adjustment, weathering the storm of uncertainty produced by the new market conditions, the influx of foreign films and the precarious nature of state funding (see Iordanova 2003a, Cunningham 2004, Portuges 2013a). Catherine Portuges (1992) states that many filmmakers experienced feelings of dislocation during the early years of transition. She quotes filmmaker and former head of the Hungarian Film

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[42] For a detailed history of the infrastructural developments that took place in the Hungarian film industry over the course of the post-communist years, see Varga (2012).

Academy, Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács who stated that 'I always had an enemy to track… Now that the enemy is gone, one loses one's sense of purpose' (531).

Scholars also highlight the difficulties Hungarian filmmakers faced in adapting to the obligations of commercial filmmaking. As John Cunningham (2004) maintains, 'topics frequently chosen for film projects were unsuitable for mass appeal, and many Hungarian film-makers had little experience in making the kind of films that were good box-office performers' (142). Likewise, Dina Iordanova (2003a) underscores the difficulties Central European filmmakers had in identifying their audience, films catering towards a wider audience fell short of the escapism offered by imported popular cinema while art house productions struggled to attract finance. As Iordanova states, 'productions carrying an East European label continued to be hard to sell at film markets' (144-145). Derek Elley (1990) reiterates this claim, suggesting that Hungary's 'fiercely individual culture (one of its great strengths) does not adapt easily to the blander demands of internationalism' (192).

Hungarian film scholar Balázs Varga (2013) argues that during the early years of post-communism there was a general belief that local filmmakers lacked the relevant expertise to produce popular cinema and compete with the masses of imported films that had since flooded the Hungarian market. This led filmmakers to initially shy away from popular cinema and remain rooted to the traditions of modernist auteur filmmaking to which they were accustomed. Indeed, Iordanova (2003a) claims that despite the collapse of the Eastern bloc and changes to the filmmaking infrastructures, familiar themes and subject matter continued to preoccupy Central European filmmakers. These included social criticism responding to the many unforeseen consequences of transition, existential films that looked for meaning in a post-communist world devoid of absolute truths, and historical films that sought to re-address

the communist and pre-communist past.[43]

Indeed, in *Cinemas in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989*, Portuges (2013a) highlights a continued preoccupation with topical local concerns, suggesting that cinema after 1989 became a site of 'multifaceted critical discursive debate on the reformulation of national identity and collective memory' (121). Subject matter addressed during the early years of transition included the plight of those marginalised by the political and economic changes, the war in the Balkans, Hungarian-Russian relations, the difficulties surrounding the establishment and maintenance of civil society, growing ethnic nationalism and anti-Roma prejudice, and the reclamation of Jewish identity.[44] Portuges states that post-communist cinema displayed a deep commitment to issues relevant to contemporary society, 'offering a dynamic intervention in discourses of ethnic, gender and national identity' (121). Marking a departure from nationalist-oriented narratives that had dominated the communist era, Portuges underscores otherness as a central thematic preoccupation within post-transition Hungarian cinema. She states:

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[43] This is not to suggest that commercial fare was lacking in post-communist Hungarian cinema, far from it. As Balázs Varga (2013) maintains, comedy was the most commonly produced genre of the 1990s and the genre that achieved some of the decade's biggest box office successes. These include *Sose halunk meg/We Never Die* (Róbert Koltai, 1993), *Csinibaba/Dollybirds* (Péter Tímár, 1997) and *A miniszter félrelép/Out of Order* (András Kern and Róbert Koltai, 1997). Varga also illuminates the ways in which the MMK actively emphasised the importance of popular cinema. In 2003, the MMK initiated a system of support offering subsidies to films expected to achieve over 80,000 in domestic admissions (which producers would have to reimburse if the film failed to achieve these figures). The MMK provided additional subsidies to filmmakers who had achieved box office success in previous productions (as well as those who had previously entered films into international film festivals) and in 2007 the Hungarian Film Week began offering prizes for the best popular or genre film. Varga concludes by emphasising that while in the 1990s, Hungarian cinema was known as a cinema of auteurs, the contemporary scene has shifted dramatically with Hungarian popular cinema growing in stature and recognition (also see Cunningham 2004, Fehérváry 2006 and Portuges 2013a).

[44] For further information on post-communist Jewish identity, see Portuges 1995, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2012, 2013a, 2013b.

As hybrid narratives of fragmented cultural identity, several films were structured from the perspective of a single protagonist, as opposed to being Communist-era vehicles discourse that engaged wider social contexts. The tendency toward representations of difference and otherness marks a reversal of the territorial imaginary of Hungary's Communist heritage (114).

Portuges (1992) also testifies to Hungarian cinema's continued preoccupation with national history, highlighting an inclination towards 'retrospective narratives' (533), films that sought to re-examine the distortions and fabrications of communism's now moribund official history. Portuges (2003) also suggests that within the post-communist generation there existed those who endeavoured to promote intergenerational dialogue on the subject of national history. These filmmakers at once sought to provide testimony for the silenced voices of past generations, encourage contemporary historical reassessment and establish a memory archive for future generations. Portuges concludes:

This rich archive of films indicates the layered process of remembrance for those who made filmmaking their duty in order to bear witness and memorialize Hungary's history. These filmmakers' sense of urgency to overcome denial and repression, and to resist the dangers of exploitation of their subjects, acknowledges the compromises faced by cinematic representation of traumatic historical events and experiences. Their retrospective gaze keeps the intergenerational work of memory transmission alive, now more than ever, when the desire to forget seems to be the order of the day (52).

Focusing on post-millennial Hungarian cinema, Clara Orban (2013) employs Francis Fukiyama's notion of the end of history to suggest that as Hungary became a liberal democracy, which Fukiyama believed to be endpoint of man's historical evolution, history only had meaning 'within frameworks of human psychology or behavior' (3). She states that

[f]ilms provided a medium for showing how historical moments are muted through human experiences. Painful historical realities retreat as artistic constructs replace historical events. History at times disappears from films, replaced with allegorical structures that obscure, but indexically point to, the

extra-diegetic contexts of the films. History may have indeed come to an end, replaced by uncertainty and warnings that optimism should be cautious at best. As Hungary has lurched from one societal transition to another, Hungarian filmmakers have kept their lenses firmly trained on how these transitions affect the nation and its people (11).

Orban identifies three recurring modes of address through which filmmakers approach national history. Firstly, through her study of *Vilaszam! Dodo és Naftalin/Colossal Sensation* (Robert Koltai, 2005) and *Szabadság, szerelem/Children of Glory* (Krisztina Goda, 2006), Orban highlights a continuation of films in which historical events play in the background of private narratives.[45] Orban then identifies films that employ structuring devices that de-contextualise historical events and/or figures. In her study of *Nyóckér!/The District* (Áron Gauder, 2005) and *Csoda Krakkoban/Miracle in Krakow* (Diana Groó, 2004), Orban demonstrates how the films allude to historical experience while avoiding highly charged historical realities. Finally, Orban examines ahistorical diegetic worlds. Despite offering little

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[45] Indeed, with regards to the interconnectivity of private narratives and collective memory, one much acknowledge the work of Péter Forgács. Forgács is a media artist who creates what Catherine Portuges (2011) describes as 'image texts' (159), re-orchestrated home movies and archival footage interwoven with newsreel footage and textual and audio superimpositions taken from diary entries, political speeches and radio broadcasts. These multi-layered image texts employ intimate familial histories as a means of commenting upon wider issues of Hungarian cultural memory. In reviving these forgotten personal narratives, Forgács reconstructs a lost past for a contemporary audience, positioning them as historical witnesses. Portuges (2001) suggests that '[a]s a performative act of mourning and reparation, [Forgács'] layering of home movies, found footage, and amateur films merges and condenses past and present, reconstituting lost objects in memory' (119). In converging past and present, Forgács does not merely provide a space for the testimony of forgotten histories, his treatment of the materials invite audiences to interrogate contemporary Hungarian memory politics. As Portuges (2011) states, Forgács 'problematizes the spaces between Communism and post-Communism by engaging with the politics of contemporary representational modes within the axes of Central European culture, in a radical critique of Hungarian complacency during both eras' (160). Thus, Forgács' work endeavours to reappraise national history through the simultaneous juxtaposition and amalgamation of the personal and the public, utilising these forgotten personal histories as a means of challenging national suppositions and falsified national narratives. Portuges (2011) describes Forgács as a critical mediator of an undiscovered past, whose works serve as 'retrospective narratives that interrogate personal and cultural memory, inviting reconsideration of the meaning and the construct of national selves and others' (159).

to no historical contextualisation, Orban demonstrates how *Werkmeister Harmoniak/Werkmeister Harmonies* (Béla Tarr, 2000) and *Kontroll* (Nimród Antal, 2004) encourage their audiences to extrapolate wider historical and political meanings through allegory. Orban suggests that ahistorical allegories typically place emphasis on the human consequences of history by focusing upon themes relevant to Hungary's collective historical experience.[46]

Aniko Imre (2004), however, suggests that allegory in post-communist cinema has been understood reductively. Through her analysis of György Pálfi's *Hukkle* (2002), Imre demonstrates how the film deviates from the politically committed allegories synonymous with East Central European cinemas. Imre states:

> Most interpretations of East European films during the Cold War insisted on reducing allegory to its Romantic, typological understanding, which assumes a transcendental authority – in this case, the nation – and a transparent interpreter, who is outside of politics – in this case, the intellectual/artist. The

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[46] Allegorical interpretation continues to inform the analysis of post-communist Hungarian cinema. Michael Goddard (2009), for example, interprets the underground metro system of *Kontroll* as an allegorical space through which the viewer is encouraged to draw comparisons between the oppression of wild capitalism with that of communism. Goddard contends that '[t]he world of *Kontroll* combines the underground life associated with the decay of the communist regime with the fierce competition associated with post-1989 transition, implying that the latter has served merely to continue and perpetuate the former' (178). Alternatively, Steve Jobitt (2008) construes the underground world of *Kontroll* as an allegorical rendering of the hopes and fears surrounding Hungary's ascension to the European Union. Jobitt views central protagonist, Bulcsú (Sándor Csányi) as being '[c]aught in a subterranean purgatory situated somewhere between the hell of the past and the promise of better future', the promise being European integration. Analogously, John Hodgkins (2009) examines *Werckmeister Harmonies* as an allegorical attempt to readdress Hungary's complicity with Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Hodgkins utilises discourse on trauma to examine cinema's role in the collective mourning process. Hodgkins positions Tarr as a 'therapist for the nation' (61), providing the viewer with an opportunity to re-experience the past, claiming that central protagonist, Valuska (Lars Rudolf) 'becomes our stand-in in the filmic text, our surrogate eyes and ears and our point of emotional connection' (58). The violence witnessed by Valuska provides an opportunity for Hungarians to re-experience the past and contemplate its significance in the present.

latter is presumed to have absolute faith in and unlimited access to the truth of
a sacred text – national history (12).

Drawing upon both post-structuralist and post-colonial theory, Imre suggests that *Hukkle* presents an aesthetic shift from the Marxist-inflected pedagogical allegories mentioned above to a more self-deconstructive form of allegory that emphasises the hermeneutic inadequacies within its own discourse. Through the film's generic eclecticism and amalgamated aesthetics, *Hukkle* simultaneously encourages allegorical readings while foregrounding the interpretational uncertainty inherent within allegory as a mode of representation. As Imre states, *Hukkle* provides an experience that is 'at once subjective and collective, aesthetic and political, abstract and visceral. The film represents all these levels at once as interconnected, eliciting an emotive interpretation that exceeds the usual auteurist, nation-cinema categorizations of East and Central European film criticism' (11).

Like Imre, Andrea Virginás (2011) views allegory in post-communist Hungarian cinema as a device of self-reflection. By examining uncertain diegetic realities in Szabolcs Hajdu's *Tamara* (2004) and *Bibliothéque Pascal* (2010) and Attila Gigor's *A nyomozó/The Investigator* (2008), Virginás maintains that the films challenge the didacticism of Hungary's cinematic heritage. Virginás claims that through their highly mediated imagery, the three films contest notions of "realism" historically tied to Central European cinemas. Virginás argues that '[i]ntense moments of mediation and remediation… that create inter- and multimedial constructions in these filmic sequences allow for proposing that in New Hungarian Cinema mimesis and representation do not always counterpoint the real and reality' (140). In highlighting the self-conscious artificiality of the three films, Virginás claims the three films problematise "the real" attached to the pedagogical traditions of the region's cinema. By emphasising the ways in which post-communist filmmakers challenge a

perceived outmoded tradition of representation, both Imre and Virginás highlights a desire

within the post-communist generation to find new and more appropriate methods of depicting

the world around them.[47]

László Strausz (2011) also recognises this representational ambiguity. He provides an

anecdotal account of a roundtable discussion he attended in Budapest where filmmakers from

the older generation questioned the younger generation's commitment to the political and

historical legacy of Hungarian cinema. In retort, Strausz claimed that 'the younger directors

pointed out the ambiguities of contemporary social-historical experience and its connections

to a past that are often mediated through the expectations of an older generation'. Strausz

then proceeds to examine the very notion of generational identity crisis in Pálfi's *Taxidermia*

(2006). By examining the three generations, set in the pre-war, socialist and post-socialist

eras respectively, Strausz claims that Pálfi 'criticises the idea of a teleologically progressing

history, and displays his scepticism of the causal connections that exist between the separate

eras and identities'. In the first narrative strand, Strausz examines how the sexualized body

becomes a site of resistance, the private world of fantasy providing a space in which to

express personal identity. Similarly, in the second narrative, the freedom denied by the state

is internalised through the act of consumption. The final episode differs. As Strausz states,

'the contemporary body is projected as an empty hull. It turns into a signifier or copy that no

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[47] Portuges (2013a) congruously emphasises a departure from the traditions of verisimilitude
during the early years of post-communism. She states: 'A number of post-transition films,
intoxicated by the absence of state censorship, focus on sexuality, eroticism, gender, and the
body in ways that subvert the more subdued realism of filmmaking under Socialism, at once
both symptom and result of the turn towards a free-market economy, with its attractions,
seductions, and disappointments' (108). Portuges also briefly expounds upon the coming of
age of a new generation of post-communist filmmakers such as Pálfi, Antal, Mundruczó and
Hajdu who too sought new directions that deviated from the traditions of "realist" cinema,
highlighting a propensity towards 'edgier, more youthful, and daring cinematic styles' (127).

more maintains a connection with its original. What remains is a caricature of its original functions: it becomes the ultimate object'. For Strausz, the human body becomes a device through which Pálfi articulates the dilemmas of representation.[48] The interpretation of the post-communist body as an empty object speaks to the younger generation's belief that the modes of cinematic discourse once considered legitimate devices of identity are no longer so in the modern political and social climate.

Strausz (2014) explores contemporary Hungarian cinema's search for agreeable modes of representation in depiction of mnemonic themes and proclamations of post-communist cultural and political identity. Despite claims that the post-communist generation exhibit a disconnection with the past, Strausz observes three recurrent motifs through which themes of history and its impact on present-day identity have been examined; those being through generational relationships, corporeality and migration.[49] Strausz argues that despite lacking direct engagement with the past, the three above mentioned themes provide what he terms as 'mnemonic strategies' which 'reveal the hardships of addressing the past through unmediated discourses'. Strausz maintains that the indirect referencing of issues pertaining to memory and contemporary identity formations alludes to the post-communist generation's ambivalent relationship with the past now that the discourse of resistance under communism have been rendered obsolete.

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[48] In recent years, the discourse of corporeality has dominated the scholarship on contemporary Hungarian cinema (see Goddard 2009, Moise 2011, Shaviro 2012, Kalmár 2013, Strausz 2014, Bugaj 2016, Király 2016, Stőhr 2016 and Vincze 2016 for examples).
[49] Strausz explores such issues through Ferenc Török's *Moszkva tér/Moscow Square* (2001), Szabolcs Hajdu's *Fehér Tenyér/White Palms* (2006) György Pálfi's *Taxidermia*, Kornél Mundruczó's *Delta* (2008) and Ágnes Kocsis' *Pál Adrienn* (2010).

As the above literature testifies, post-communist Hungarian cinema is a cinema of continuity and change, at once preserving the cinematic legacy of the past while simultaneously breaking from it. Despite the widespread infrastructural shifts, Hungarian cinema has maintained its renowned self-reflective character and upheld many of its prior preoccupations. For the post-communist generation, the desire, nay obligation, to both memorialise and scrutinise national history remains a fundamental matter of concern. Equally, the post-communist generation demonstrate a continued commitment to societal examination, dramatising the undesirable consequences of transition and other issues relevant to the contemporary milieu. However, where the contemporary generation deviates from their parents' is in the representational modes utilised to present this familiar subject matter. These filmmakers reject the pedagogical cinema of the past, perceiving didacticism to be invalid in the entropic, postmodern world. This thesis seeks to demonstrate how post-communist filmmakers instead strive to complicate contemporary discourses and challenge dominant narratives. The pre-existing literature on Hungarian cinema provides a bedrock that I hope this project will expand upon and develop through a framework that has yet to be addressed in sufficient detail, that being cinematic representations of the rural. I argue that this thesis broadens the established discourse on Hungarian cinema by providing new insights and perspectives from the vantage point of rural Hungary, illuminating the ways in which provincial Hungary has operated as a site of self-knowledge, candour and resistance, a site through which to engage with the dominant political myths of post-communism.

1.5.2. Rural Cinema.

Having identified the overriding trends in the scholarship on Hungarian cinema, I now wish to turn my attention to another area of study pertinent to my research question, the rural. I

aim to provide an overview of the discourse on the polysemic space of the cinematic countryside, exploring how the rural functions as both a social and symbolic space through which filmmakers articulate national and transnational concerns.

1.5.2.1. The Social Construction of Cinematic Space.

Film scholar Martin Lefebvre (2006a) argues that films contribute to the anchorage of landscapes in human life. Films influence the ways in which we both perceive and experience space, shaping our emotional connection to specific geographies. Yet, at the same time, Lefebvre acknowledges that spatial representations are themselves influenced by wider social discourses. Colin McArthur (1997) echoes this view, describing cinematic spaces as social and cultural constructs that contribute to the very discourses that shape them. As well as drawing upon the social world, McArthur states that spatial representations draw upon extra-cinematic acts of discourse production. Films appropriate and recycle elements taken from pre-existing spatial representations, with artistic depictions, news and factual sources, anecdotes and even jokes contributing to this discourse (19). McArthur thus maintains that cinematic spaces do not simply mirror the social world; instead they are complex sites of diverse social and spatial discourse.

McArthur also suggests that contemporary discourses produce valences between individual locations, ideological oppositions that articulate wider social sentiments. McArthur examines a number of these ideological valences within a variety of national and social contexts.[50] He

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[50] In one such example, McArthur examines the ways in which F.W. Murnau draws upon the ideological valences between the rural and the urban in *Sunrise* (1927). The film centres on a city girl (Margaret Livingston) who bewitches a small-town farmer (George O'Brien) and

states that these valences are unfixed, undergoing continuous renegotiation in view of the contemporary milieu. Thus, he asserts that one must be vigilant to the changing psychological values assigned to locations by a given society at a given moment in time.

It is the ideological valences between the rural and the urban that serves as the subject of Raymond Williams' influential text *The Country and the City* (1975). Williams explores changing attitudes towards the city and country as expressed in English poetry and literature.[51] He states that despite the true heterogeneity of experience offered in both the country and the city, powerful symbolic associations have emerged, enduring and developing over multiple generations and historical contexts. Williams examines the persistence of these reductive archetypes, suggesting that one cannot simply dismiss them as simple illusions. Instead, he argues that one must question the drives that underlie them. Williams proceeds to chart the shifting attitudes towards the country and city, situating these changing sentiments within the context of changing historical realities and capitalist developments. In his analysis, Williams positions the rural and the urban as interrelated spaces that both inform and affect

tries to persuade him to murder his wife (Janet Gaynor). McArthur highlights Murnau's use of sub-oppositions to contrast his two female protagonists. Through the mise-en-scène, Murnau emphasises both the licentious nature of city girl and the chastity of the country girl. The film alludes to the city girl's promiscuous nature through her dark, bobbed hairstyle, knee length black dress, makeup and cigarettes; she is the consummate flapper girl. Alternatively, the farmer's wife is a picture of virtue, insinuated by her long blonde hair, a light coloured, ankle length dress and by the fact that she does not wear makeup. McArthur argues these formal elements should not be viewed in isolation, however, and should instead be situated within the social climate of the film's making. *Sunrise*'s representation of the urban/rural opposition therefore provides a statement on the transition to modernity and the fears generated by the corruptible and morally ambiguous nature of modern life.

[51] While Williams focuses specifically on the English city and countryside and on English socio-cultural contexts, his analysis is undoubtedly relevant to any study of rural representation. However, one must be wary of applying culturally specific findings to alternative societies, cultures and contexts. Indeed, while the English countryside is synonymous with rolling hills, quaint country cottages and green and pleasant lands, Hungary's rural heritage is vastly different, shaped by its semi-feudal history, communist inscribed collective farming and post-communist rural poverty.

one another. He suggests that rather than perceiving them as atemporal, antithetical geographies, it is more fruitful to examine how the city and the countryside relate to and inform one another.[52] Williams provides numerous examples of this interconnectivity, demonstrating how social, political and/or economic changes in the urban impact upon the rural and vice versa.[53] Ultimately, Williams states that the archetypal images of city and country are not founded in reality but from a revisionist expression of ambiguity towards contemporary social realities. Thus, while serving as a central source from which citizens acquire knowledge of their social milieu, these powerful archetypes are themselves social constructs, articulating society's hopes and fears.

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[52] The inter-relationship between the urban and rural and the tension produced therein have frequently served as subject matter in Hungarian cinema. *Hortobágy/Life on the Hortobagy* (Georg Höllering, 1936), for example, explored the ways in which modernisation threatened the traditional life of the Hungarian herdsmen. Similarly, documentary films such as *Fekete vonat/Black Train* (Pál Schiffer, 1970) and *Hotel Magnezit* (Béla Tarr, 1978) directly addressed issues surrounding rural to urban migration such as life in the worker's hostels, commuting and the conflicting values between country and city life. Such subject matter has also been addressed in fictional films such as *Cséplő Gyuri/Gyuri* (Pál Schiffer, 1978), *Adj király katonát!/Princess* (Pál Erdőss, 1982) and *I Love Budapest* (Ágnes Incze, 2001), which follow their respective protagonist's migration from the rural to the urban in order to find work and a better life. Such films complicate the traditional binary of rural and urban by setting their narratives on the urban margins; that is to say, on the periphery of the urban centre in locations that blur the boundaries between the urban and the rural. Such in-between locations are typically free from traditional rural and/or urban tropes and instead can be characterised by a sense of placelessness.

[53] One such example Williams proffers is the symbolic transformation of the rural that accompanied the industrial revolution. Accelerated economic development and urban expansion induced fears surrounding the death of a traditional way of life and, in response, the rural came to be seen a site of nostalgia, a place where the traditions of the past were preserved. This nostalgic and prescriptive view of the rural, Williams maintains, drew parallels between country life and the Garden of Eden, both being perceived as unspoilt places of purity, uncorrupted by man. Post-feudal capitalism also produced a new class of landowner and aristocrat for whom the rural became a romanticised site of 'unlocalised reverie' (1975, 24), an Arcadia subjected to the needs and preconceptions of a developing agrarian capitalist society as opposed to the country worker and peasant who dwelled and laboured therein. The rural became a site of retreat from the city, one that was idealised as a site of pleasure, 'a land yielding of itself' (32). Within much of the literature of the period representations of the rural negates any inclusion of the toil of the labourer, the rain and the snow, the harshness of the land and instead transforms the rural into a romanticised, even theatrical space.

Linguist and film scholar Myrto Konstantarakos (2000) suggests that the medium of cinema offers a valuable means of examining the dynamics of space and the complexities of spatial representation. She asserts that

> space can be seen to contribute to the dynamics of the narrative and can be shown to play an important part in the development of a variety of considerations, both ideological and artistic. Space is not only recorded as a background stage - its very organisation implies a handling of space, revealing the ideology of the time. Moreover, as with maps, cinema acquires a power of control by fixing in place conflicting ideas about the constitution of social space (1).

Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner similarly explore the ideological construction of space in their 2010 study *Cinema and Landscape.* They suggest that 'all notions of landscape are produced by human interpretation which, simply due to human psychology or due to political or cultural bias, is selective' (16). Harper and Rayner thus see cinematic landscapes as polysemic spaces that are historically, socially and ideologically informative. Landscapes can be mnemonic, with the ability to arouse collective memories and evoke national tragedies or triumphs. At the same time, landscapes may also arouse a personal response in the spectator that may complement or contradict the intentions of the filmmaker(s). Harper and Rayner thus maintain that landscapes 'are not only selective but are never neutral in intention and reception' (2010, 16). Cinematic representations of landscape therefore transform already ideologically laden locations into poly-mediated sites of meaning.

Consequently, the interrelationship between space and society is a complex and multi-dimensional one. In view of this fact, I employ a variety of non-cinematic sources that bear witness to the rural as a lived environment encompassing particular lifestyles, routines and customs shaped by established social formations and economic structures. I also draw upon

scholarship deconstructing the fundamental qualities of Soviet-style socialism, examining its cognitive organisation and the ways in which it shaped the daily lives of those under its governance (Verdery 1996). I also address the narrative of the Hungarian political, social and economic transformation. These texts examine the realities of transition, bringing to light the hopes and expectations that arose in the new post-communist political era (Fehérváry 2002), the fears and disillusionments (West 2002, Vogt 2005), and the ways in which post-communist frustrations have been articulated (Hockenos 1993, Tismaneanu 1998, Beckett Weaver 2006).

1.5.2.2. Symbolic Landscapes.

However, not all the films under observation in this thesis treat the regions ethnographically. Many of the films instil meaning upon the rural through aesthetic choices that transform the landscape into a figurative and/or metaphorical space. Cinema has a veritable wealth of representational tools through which to instil real or created landscapes with specific expressive and/or figurative meaning. Indeed, Harper and Rayner examine various methods employed by filmmakers to heighten the significance of the landscape or symbolically transform it. These include framing, in which the formal constellation within the frame, focal range, camera movement and editing all impact upon how we perceive the landscape in connection to other diegetic elements. Additionally, Harper and Rayner argue that colour and sound provide additional layers of interpretative meaning used to complement or indeed, complicate our understanding of a given landscape.

Lefebvre (2006b) explores the aesthetic and poetic potential of the cinematic landscape. He argues that within narrative cinema there exists an inherent tension between story and

spectacle, a tension produced by conflicting modes of spectatorship which cannot function concurrently, a *narrative mode* and a *spectacular mode* (author's italics) (29). [54] Thus, through the inclusion of *temp morts* the landscape momentarily rids itself of narrative function, privileging spectacular modes of engagement that facilitate more reflective, contemplative spectatorship and invite more complex symbolic interpretation.

Symbolic representations of landscape form the basis of David Melbye's 2010 study *Landscape Allegory in Cinema*. Melbye charts the heritage of cinematic landscape allegory by surveying its antecedents in painting and photography, emphasising the significance of numerous international art movements. One such example being the Dutch landscape painters of the seventeenth century, for whom the landscape served as an allegorical device through which to express post-independence patriotism. Melbye also highlights the European Romantic painters of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, who turned to the majesty of the landscape as a source of spirituality following the Enlightenment. Melbye also identifies the Romantic painters of the Hudson River School and early American landscape photographers, who utilised magnificent landscapes as a means of spiritualising American expansionism and reinforcing the view of Manifest Destiny. [55] On the subject of allegorical landscapes in the pre-cinematic visual arts, Melbye states,

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[54] 'When I *contemplate* a piece of film, I stop following the story for a moment, even if the narrative does not completely disappear from my consciousness' (Lefebvre 2006, 29)

[55] Akin to the European Romantic painters, Hungary witnessed a similar Romantic movement in the 1800s and early 1900s. Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and the founding of the Dual Monarchy, the newly established Kingdom of Hungary embarked upon a process of modernization. In response, native artists turned to the Hungarian countryside as a site of riposte. Artists such as Károly Markó, Antal Legeti, Károly Telepy, Gusztáv Keleti, Mihály Munkácsy, László Paál and László Mednyánszky, like their European equivalents, bestowed upon their representations of the countryside a spiritual quality. As art historian Katalin Telepy (1973) states, 'Hungarian culture has increasingly become an urban – indeed, a metropolitan – culture and the surrounding countryside, neutral for country folk – and

> [t]he complex heritage of landscape painting demonstrates the potential of natural settings to be their own visual subjects. As such, they take on deeper meanings and become figurative wonderlands mirroring our collective psyche. Their shared approaches allow these works to communicate overarching cultural myths to their intended audience. In other words, as a part of larger movement, each painting succinctly allegorizes the mindset of a particular nation (153).

Melbye observes some of the early depictions of landscape in cinema, many of which followed the practices established in painting and photography. He then proceeds to more comprehensively analyse Western cinema in the 1960s and 1970s.[56] Here, he examines landscape allegory within a multitude of national contexts and in the depiction of a variety of existential, cultural and political issues. These include Italy's post-war spiritual crisis, Australia's colonial history and cultural exploitation, and Germany's imperial past. What unites his various analyses, however, is the landscape's metonymic quality, its ability to not only reflect individual unconscious thought processes but the collective psyche of a given culture. The interaction of protagonist and landscape can provide a macroscopic view of society from which filmmakers articulate social criticism and express a need for self-examination.

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characteristically not represented in folk art – has consequently held the city-dweller with the promise of a lost Paradise' (30-31).

[56] Melbye examines how the representation of landscape in both Western avant-garde and mainstream cinema during this period served to unite forms of cinema typically viewed in antithesis. This he puts down to the more cerebral cinema emerging from the various European art cinema movements and New Hollywood; which responded to the post-war existential crises of the Western world. This period witnessed a rise in youth-oriented subcultures and heightened social tensions, evident in the 1968 student riots in Paris and the opposition to US involvement in the Vietnam War. As Melbye states, these conditions cultivated a climate of introspection.

1.5.2.3. The Rural and the National.

Harper and Rayner (2010) maintain that cinematic landscapes often have a pre-existing identity autonomous of their filmic representation and with it pre-established social and cultural associations. Despite their mediated presence within a given film, Harper and Rayner claim that the application of actual landscapes can provide 'communal cultural contact between filmmaker and audience and/or the maintenance, questioning and propagation of national identity' (22). Given their associative ties, landscapes very often elicit national readings and, as historian Simon Schama (1995) states, '[n]ational identity… would lose much of its ferocious enchantment without the mystique of a particular landscape tradition: its topography mapped, elaborated, and enriched as a homeland' (15). Indeed, as Harper and Rayner state:

> The cinema's power in the depiction of landscape, be it rural, metropolitan, industrial, urban or suburban, has driven or led filmmakers of every nationality and political viewpoint, has fed and fed upon definitions of national identity and been read by cinema audiences as one of the most conspicuous and eloquent elements in the idiom of film culture from which it emanates (24).

Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield (2006) congruously argue that there exists a correlation between landscapes and national identity. Focusing specifically on rural spaces, their study highlights the importance of the land as a 'geographic and topographic environment in relation to which the rural inhabitant is defined and in turn defines himself' (6). The rural landscape exceeds physicality, becoming an evocative site of memory and nostalgia. It is a social space shaped by ideology and often linked to the past, a sense of national community and to the traditions that national community evoke. Equally, Fowler and Helfield suggest that the ways a national cinema invests in the rural may impart a particular outlook of the

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future. An overly sentimental view of rural life may suggest fears regarding the future and a desire to conserve the past. Conversely, a more cynical view of the rural may express a challenge to tradition and a need to readdress the past. Thus, cinematic representation of the rural need not exclusively reflect rural issues. Instead, as Fowler and Helfield suggest,

> we can say that underlying all rural cinema is a contemporary consciousness that complicates yet also specializes its apparent attachment to the past, while at the same time drawing it nearer to the concerns of urban cinema: the expression of ongoing conflicts within a rapidly changing society or culture and the need to maintain a connection to a pure cultural or national identity, lost through urban assimilation and the dissipation or abandonment of traditions and rituals that in the rural context had kept this identity alive (3).

Fowler and Helfield's approach to rural cinema, national identity and the rural's ability to communicate wider social concerns, ambiguities and fears greatly informs my own study. I argue that the rural functions as a metonym for wider post-communist Hungarian society. Given the increasing transnational and multicultural orientation of the urban milieu, the rural becomes a surrogate for the nation as a whole; a site in which national issues can be dramatised, dissected and discussed.

Both Dina Iordanova (2003) and John Cunningham (2006) focus more specifically on the rural cinemas of Central European and Hungary respectively. Iordanova claims that rural cinema, like that of other regions, tackled the difficult issues of modernity, albeit in the context of communism. With the industrial developments that accelerated under the communist regime, social formations within the regions slowly shifted as citizens migrated towards industrial centres for work. Consequently, akin to films made outside of the Eastern bloc, a number of Central European films utilised the rural to articulate fears surrounding modernity and its perceived threat to traditional ways of living. However, the rural also functioned as a site of critique, one that presented the backwardness of forced

collectivisation. Films such as *A Tanú/The Witness* (Péter Bacsó, 1969) used the regions to depict the illogical bureaucracy of the communist regime. The rural also served as a site through which audiences were invited to recall, reassess and relive moments of history as, for example, in Zoltán Fábri's *Magyarok/Hungarians* (1978).

Cunningham charts of history of rural cinema in Hungary, emphasising the role of the rural landscape in 'engag[ing] with the here and now' (305). During the inter-war years, Cunningham demonstrates how Hungarian cinema presented the rural a 'picture-postcard Arcadia' (293) despite the realities of widespread poverty and high rates of illiteracy. During this period, idyllic representation of the regions typically served as a response to the Hungarian industrial revolution. One exception Cunningham highlights is István Szőts' *Emberek a havason/People of the Mountains* (1942), a film that challenged such views, presenting the provinces in a far more sober and unsentimental manner. *People of the Mountains* utilises landscape allegory as a means of exteriorising character subjectivities, projecting their psyches onto the natural environment, transforming the locale into what David Melbye would describe as a 'landscape[] of the mind' (2010, 1).

Following the nationalisation of the Hungarian film industry in 1948, cinema became a tool of the state and utilised as a thinly veiled bearer of socialist propaganda. Under these circumstances, Cunningham notes that the filmic provinces recurrently functioned as a government vessel for the promotion of collectivism. In the short-lived period of Socialist Realism, Cunningham states that the 'anonymous, faceless peasants now became heroes' (2006, 300) as is evident in films such as *Lúdas Matyi/Mattie the Goose Boy* (Kálmán Nadasdy and László Ranódy, 1950). However, following the death of Stalin in 1953, the

more lenient political climate allowed filmmakers to divorce themselves from the restraints of Socialist Realism, as seen in Zoltán Fábri's *Körhinta/Merry-Go-Round* (1955).[57]

Cunningham goes on to examine cinematic representations of the rural during the post-thaw years, emphasising in particular the work of Miklós Jancsó. Jancsó utilised rural as means of revising historical myths and allegorically challenging Soviet morality through narratives of brutality set during key dates of Hungarian history. Films such as *Szegénlegények/The Round-Up* (1965) and *Még kér a néo/Red Psalm* (1971) utilised the Great Hungarian Plain (*puszta*) as a dominating and oppressive terrain that circumscribes the characters, inhibiting their progress beyond its boundaries. The harsh and unforgiving environment became a means of allegorically alluding to the cruelty exhibited by man.

Cunningham claims that in the ensuing years of post-communism, cinematic representations of rural Hungary have become increasingly nonspecific, shedding much of their regional iconography and local thematic concerns (304). Indeed, much of the traditional folk heritage has receded from the nation's cinema. The equestrian culture of the Hungarian cowboy (*csikós*) and herdsman (*gulyás*) has been largely absent since the post-communist transition, as has that of the traditional Hungarian peasant (*paraszt*). Cunningham highlights a number of post-communist films set in the urban milieu that use the countryside as a retreat from the hardships of city life. He also acknowledges the work of Béla Tarr but fails to engage with

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[57] Unlike the utilitarian aesthetics employed under the doctrines of Socialist Realism, *Merry-Go-Round* is visually remarkable, described by Cunningham as a 'lively, engaging spectacle (particularly in the famous fairground scene)' (302). Thematically, the film remains closely tied to contemporary socialist discourse; depicting the rising social tensions between a righteous proletariat and a feudal landowner through a narrative of lovers divided by class. However, the film elevates itself above its contemporaries through its sensitive portrayal of its characters. As celebrated Hungarian film scholar István Nemeskürty (1965) states, 'all [the] characters are full of life, colour and variety, like the people we meet every day' (176).

his films in any significant detail. Cunningham's essay demonstrates a need for further analysis on the rural within the context of post-communism, a gap in the literature that this thesis seeks to address.

1.5.2.4. The Rural and the Transnational.

It is possible to view the lack of national specificity in post-communist representations of the rural in view of Thomas Elsaesser's theory of double occupancy (2005). Elsaesser observes the challenges facing traditional nation-state identity formations in the transnational climate of cultural globalisation, mass-migration and political supranationalism. In the context of modern Europe, alternative forms of personal identity relating to lifestyles, religion, leisure pursuits and profession parallel and, in some cases, supersede national identity. Elsaesser claims,

> the state of double occupancy applies to every part of Europe, and to all of us: our identities are multiply defined, multiply experienced, and can be multiply assigned to us, at every point in our lives, and this increasingly so - hopefully to the point where the very notion of national identity will fade from our vocabulary, and be replaced by other kinds of belonging, relating and being (109).

The consequent paradigm of double occupation; that is to say, the hybrid fusion of nationalist and post-nationalist identity, can be succinctly represented through cinematic landscape. By presenting national landscapes devoid of recognisable landmarks and lacking a sense of national familiarity, films have been able to examine contemporary notions of identity within transnational New Europe.[58] The utilisation of non-specific national space, whether rural or

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[58] Indeed, exilic and diasporic filmmakers utilise such modes of representation as a means of articulating their cultural in-betweenness (see Naficy 2001 and Loshitzky 2010).

urban, speaks to the binary of double occupation; a transitional space no longer bound to national specificity but one that, at the same time, cannot rid itself of national identity.

Michael Gott and Todd Herzog (2015) explore such issues in their study of post-enlargement European cinema. In attempting to remap the conceptions of contemporary European identity, Gott and Herzog highlight the still-prevalent "Eastern" paradigm and its role in positioning those on the Eastern side of New Europe as "others" to their Western counterparts. Yet, concurrently, they acknowledge the role migration has played in diversifying European identity and challenging established notions of East and West, identifying migration's impact on the European 'centre' as one of the most revisited themes of post-1989 European cinema. László Strausz (2014) and Hajnal Király (2015) congruously focus upon narratives of migration within the context of post-communist Hungarian cinema. Both Strausz and Király highlight migration, mobility and homecoming as recurring themes through which Eastern European filmmakers articulate their post-Wall European identity. Király highlights the spatial dynamics of such representations, observing a propensity for such films to be set in 'placeless places' (173) that express a sense of post-communist displacement, encapsulating the crisis of identity produced by double occupancy.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that the rural provides an engaging rubric through which to approach post-communist Hungarian cinema. Given the rural's ability to communicate social realities and illuminate contemporary issues; and given the symbolic nature of the cinematic countryside and its metonymic ties to concepts such as nationhood and history, I contend that the rural is a fitting site through which to examine post-communist political mythology. The rural is a complex and polysemic environment in a constant state of renewal, transforming in light of the existing social climate. As such, I ask; what do cinematic representations of the

rural impart about life in post-communist Hungary, and how do filmmakers utilise the rural to challenge the dominant myths of post-communism?

By framing my study through a rural framework, I aim to accentuate the provincial Hungarian landscape as a significant site of counter-narrative. Within the contemporary discourse of post-communist Hungarian cinema, the rural has received little attention as a site of academic intrigue. For that reason, I aim to demonstrate how the rural functions as a multi-layered site through which filmmakers scrutinise post-communist life, the memorialisation of national history and the consequences of post-communist political mythmaking.

1.5.3. Sociology and Cinema.

The final section of the review of literature examines the pre-existing scholarship linking cinema and sociology. This thesis posits that cinema has the potential to raise political and social consciousness; it is a medium through which filmmakers may query dominant ideological doctrines and articulate resistance to prevailing political mythologies. How then have authors typically interpreted cinema's connection to social life? How does film communicate ideologies, dominant or otherwise? I propose to explore how scholars have interpreted and theorised the socio-cultural impact of cinema.

1.5.3.1. A Division between Disciplines.

In *Moving People, Moving Images* (2010), co-author Dina Iordanova calls attention to an absence of cinematic references within the scholarship of the social sciences. Iordanova relays an anecdotal account of a conference she attended in which an attendee questioned the

validity of cinema as a form of sociological discourse, believing that because Iordanova's study focused on works of popular culture it was, by default, inconclusive. This led Iordanova to readdress the sociological literature informing her study whereupon she found that despite the vast array of films that could adequately support the claims raised within the scholarship, seldom were cinematic citations made. Despite the commitment of filmmakers to specific social causes, cinema appeared to lack sufficient persuasion within the social sciences. Iordanova found this perplexing, especially given cinema's ability to communicate to mass audiences on subject matter outside of the mainstream. Nevertheless, Iordanova found that sociological discourse typically neglected visual media. She states that

> [a]s soon as it comes to literature and film… one enters the 'grey zone'; the 'fictional' not only cannot supply legitimate material for study, but it is not even mentioned nor acknowledged as something that may be informing opinions and thus a factor of social life (114).

Given film's ability to broaden awareness and shape the perceptions of mass audiences, Iordanova argues that cinema's influence can exceed that of more official and academic platforms such as think tanks, research organisations and policy consultancies. For this reason, Iordanova maintains that cinema should be acknowledged as a valuable sociological tool.

Film theorist, Francesco Casetti (1999) also queries the division between cinema and sociology, attributing this traditional dissociation to the diverging methodological approaches conventionally adopted by each discipline. Casetti claims that film scholars chiefly employ qualitative approaches to their subject matter, often, though not exclusively, based around close textual analysis of a given film or small body of films belonging to a particular filmmaker, genre, nation, era etc. Conversely, sociologists take a quantitative approach to

their research, working with large amounts of data, correlating information that will provide insight into collective social phenomena. These approaches immediately feel incompatible; yet, as this review of literature intends to demonstrate, the division between disciplines is not insurmountable and a number of theorists have sought to bridge the gap between film studies and sociology, arguing that cinema can not only communicate the social but also directly impact upon it.

1.5.3.2. Cinema as a Sociological Tool.

Having highlighted the methodological discrepancies between cinema and sociology, Casetti proceeds to explore how cinema might function as a sociological tool. He divides his study of cinema into four interrelated subject areas germane to sociological interest; these being cinema as industry, cinema as institution, cinema as part of the wider culture industry and cinema as a representation of the social. The first category, cinema as industry, examines cinema through industrial processes, observing the ways in which systems of production not only influence the types of films produced but also how the infrastructural dimensions of distribution and exhibition determine how a given society accesses and consumes cinema. The sociological view of cinema as industry considers the mechanisms of power that dictate how the industry functions, the personnel who make the decisions, the role of the state, technological advancements that transform industrial practices and ancillary markets.

Cinema as institution places emphasis upon cinema's influence within a given society. Under this category one must consider the institutions that dictate the worth of a film, such as magazines, television shows, Internet blogs, cinematic scholarship and other sites of critique. Casetti also argues that one must consider the wider social climate in order to understand why

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a particular culture embraces or rejects a particular film or filmic trend. Conversely, it is important to consider how society impacts upon the films made. How do certain societal events and/or the broader social climate influence the kinds of cinema produced?

The third sociological classification recognised by Casetti positions cinema as a component of the wider culture industries. The cultural industries approach examines the pedagogical function of culture; that is to say, how the culture industries instil identification with dominant ideologies. Casetti cites critical theorists Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer ([1944] 2002), who explore how the culture industries maintain the ideological and economic status quo through unyielding homogeneity and commodification.

Finally, Casetti maintains that cinema is able to present contemporary social realities. He asserts that cinema's testimonial qualities derive from an ability to both mirror the social world and encapsulate its psychology, reflecting prevailing attitudes and perceptions. Casetti asserts that cinema

> underscore[s] the subterranean, hidden aspects of society, to the point of illustrating its unconscious. They mark its historical evolution, uncovering its dynamics. In short, cinema is a perfect *witness,* and as such it is a precious *source* for the work done not just by the historian but by the sociologist (126-127).

Casetti claims that cinema does not merely duplicate reality but recomposes elements taken from the social world and reformulates them in cinematic language. Films thus bear witness to the social world in four fundamental ways; through content, style, direct engagement with social issues and through their reception and interpretation. Through a study of content, one is able to discern how a society perceives itself and others around it. Casetti claims that the study of content reflects a given society's 'latent side', that which 'a society knows without

wishing to acknowledge' (128) and can expose its political, social and historical blind spots. Casetti also maintains that it is necessary to examine *how* film constructs society, what formal devices are employed, do these aesthetic choices support or contradict the film's content and how do these stylistic formations contribute to a film's articulation of the social world? Additionally, Casetti argues that cinema may directly engage with society, responding to contemporary need by mobilising awareness and galvanising action. Cinema may also challenge the status quo by providing counter narratives and marginalised perspectives that contest dominant ideologies. Casetti also asserts that cinema testifies to social reality through the way in which audiences comprehend films. He suggests that 'every society interprets texts in its own way: it takes note of certain aspects and suggestions and overlooks others' (128). The manner in which audiences interpret a given cinematic text is context sensitive, moulded by contemporary social attitudes, themselves shaped by the current political climate. As such, a film's critical and popular reception is indicative of wider social and ideological formations.

It is the fourth of Casetti's highlighted sociological study areas, cinema as a representation of the social, which best speaks to my own research preoccupations. This thesis seeks to examine what cinematic representations of rural Hungary impart about contemporary Hungarian society and how filmmakers utilise cinema as a tool for disseminating ideological counter-narratives contesting prevailing political myths.

One the most renowned contributions to the study of cinema as a representation of the social is Siegfried Kracauer's 1947 publication *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Film.* Kracauer argues that because 'films address themselves'; that is, they 'satisfy mass desires' (5), the medium is uniquely suited to echo the collective mentality of a nation's

psyche. However, rather than presenting the explicit nature of society, Kracauer states that films reflect 'those deep layers of collective mentality which extend more or less below the dimension of consciousness' (6). Cinema presents 'visible hieroglyphs' (7), symbols of the configurational components that make up a given society. Kracauer maintains that

> [i]nner life manifests itself in various elements and conglomerations of external life, especially in those almost imperceptible surface data which form an essential part of screen treatment. In recording the visible world – whether current reality or an imaginary universe – films therefore provide clues to hidden mental processes (7).

Kracauer asserts that cinema can expose a nation's soul, stating that 'the techniques, the story content, and the evolution of the films of a nation are fully understandable only in relation to the actual psychological pattern of this nation' (5). Through his analysis of the cinema of Weimar Germany, Kracauer observes the correlation between aesthetic and thematic concerns in cinema and the psychological state of the nation.[59]

While Kracauer's work is justifiably acclaimed, it is not without its shortcomings. There is a tendency for his analysis to rely on a deterministic view of history. Kracauer's propensity for retrospection undermines some of his claims as he at times fails to situate the films more succinctly into their given context and instead places them within his own constructed grand

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[59] From the monster films popular throughout the 1910s to the psychological films of the 1920s, the patriotic films of the 1920s and 1930s, and the flourish of films built upon themes of sadism, manipulation and surrender in the 1930s, Kracauer argues that cinema in Germany articulated national sensibilities and convictions. *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari/The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920), for example, reflected the introverted nature of post-war Germany and the psychological angst felt by the masses. Analogously, in his analysis of *Der blaue Engel/The Blue Angel* (Joseph von Sternberg, 1930) Kracauer links professor Rath's (Emil Jannings) infatuation with the morally dubious Lola Lola (Marlene Dietrich) to the allure of the Nazi party. Similarly, in his study of *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931), Kracauer argues that the child murderer's (Peter Lorre) submission to his dark desire to kill children serves as a manifestation of Germany's surrender to Nazism.

narrative. Kracauer also vehemently privileges the causal connection between cinema and society at the expensive of alternative discourse. Consequently, his analysis fails to acknowledge contributing factors such as the alternative external influences on Weimar German cinema, for example, that of other non-German films or the original intentions of the filmmakers themselves.

Where Kracauer's approach has garnered criticism, Douglas Kellner (1995, 1998, Ryan and Kellner 1988) constructs a more multi-perspectival methodology through which to examine the relationship between cinema and society, one that acknowledges the wider aspects of media culture. In his case study of Hollywood, Kellner (1998) states that rather than analogically embodying social life,

> film[s] takes the raw material of social history and social discourses and process them into products which are themselves historical events and social forces. Films, therefore, can provide information about the 'psychology' of an era and its tensions, conflicts, fears and fantasies, but they do so not as a simple representation or mirroring of an extra-cinematic social reality. Rather, films refract social discourses and content into specifically cinematic forms which engage audiences in an active process of constructing meaning (355).

Ryan and Kellner (1988) suggest that films 'transcode the discourses (the forms, figures, and representations) of social life into cinematic narratives' (12), narratives that in turn become cultural representations that contribute to the very formation of social life. Kellner further accentuates the reciprocal relationship between cinema and society in his 1995 study, *Media Culture,* rejecting one-dimensional perspectives that position the media as a monolithic disseminator of dominant ideologies. Instead, Kellner favours what he terms, diagnostic critique; an open and adaptable framework that explicates a contextual approach to cultural studies. Kellner maintains that diagnostic critique provides 'insight into the multiple relations between texts and contexts, between media culture and history' (116). Drawing upon Antonio

Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1971), Kellner suggests that media culture is a contested terrain in constant dialogue. Consequently, by reading a film in relation to its contemporary social and historical context one may garner insight into existing ideological contestations. Kellner states that '[r]eading films politically… can provide insight not only into the ways films reproduce existing social struggles… but can also provide insight into the social and political dynamics of the era' (103). Consequently, Kellner argues that by analysing how cinema transcodes social life one may acquire insight into the social and political structures of contemporary life. As Kellner suggests,

> [r]eading media cultural diagnostically… presents insights into the current political situation, into the strengths and vulnerabilities of the contending political forces, and into the hopes and fears of the population. From this perspective, the texts of media culture provide important insights into the psychological, socio-political and ideological make-up of a specific society at a given point in history (116).

Jena-Anne Sutherland and Kathryn Feltey, in their edited volume *Cinematic Sociology: Social Life in Film* (2010), adopt a method they term 'sociology *through* film' (italics added) (8). Congruous to Kellner, they argue that '[f]ilms reflect our culture at the same time as they are an element that constitutes it. We see our society through film and we see films through the prism of our social norms, values, and institutions' (8). Sutherland and Feltey frame their sociological approach to cinema through four core thematic components of sociological intrigue: identity, interaction, inequality and institutions. Through the theory of symbolic interactionism, which posits that we attribute meaning through social interactions, Sutherland and Feltey argue that identity formations represented in cinema influence personal identity. Cinema informs how individuals interact in different environments and contexts; they enlighten audiences of social and historical inequalities, give voices to marginalised groups

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and provide insight into the workings of institutions and social structures through which our identities are shaped.

Like Kellner, Sutherland and Feltey emphasise the importance of context to their model of sociology through film, arguing that a film's representation of a given social issue is shaped by wider social milieu. Consequently, how a film depicts social issues and conflicts is influenced by broader issues of acceptability and established social norms. The representation of race, for example, is shaped significantly by contemporary social attitudes or, in the case of more subversive cinema, in reaction to these attitudes.

1.5.3.3. The Aesthetics of the Social.

While Sutherland and Feltey's claims regarding cinema's role in socialisation are pertinent to my own study, their insight can, at times, understate the role of the filmmaker(s) in the communication process. If film is indeed a communicative process, whose messages are we receiving and why?[60] By the same token, Sutherland and Feltey fail to give adequate attention to film's formal and stylistic aspects. They claim that their 'interests are sociological-social-not aesthetic', stating '[w]e can appreciate the aesthetic beauty of, say, a Merchant Ivory production, but our sociological imaginations are animated by the actual story and the moral lessons they present to us' (7). I would argue, however, that aesthetic analysis grants the sociological study of cinema an array of interpretive tools through which to examine the ways

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[60] In highlighting the role of the filmmaker, I do not wish to privilege her inferred meaning as exclusive or universally translatable. Likewise, I wish not to position the spectator as a passive receiver of dominant meanings and acknowledge that audiences appropriate and make sense of cinematic texts in unforeseen ways (see Hall [1980] 1999 and Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998 for further details on audience reception theory).

in which cinema articulates the social world. A film can complicate and subvert ostensibly conservative narratives through specific formal configurations. Indeed, as Graeme Turner argues in *Film as Social Practice* (1999),

> [f]ilm does not reflect or even record reality; like any other medium of representation it constructs and 're-presents' its pictures of reality by way of codes, conventions, myths and ideologies of its culture as well as by way of specific signifying practices of the medium. Just as film works *on* the meaning systems of culture - to renew, reproduce, or review them - it is also produced *by* those meaning systems (152).

Kellner (1995) congruously argues that 'reading media culture politically involves situating it in its historical conjuncture and analyzing how its generic codes, its positioning of the viewer, its dominant images, its discourses, and its formal-aesthetic elements all embody certain political and ideological positions and have political effects' (56). Turner (1999) echoes this view, claiming that '[t]he ideology of a film does not take the form of direct statements or reflections on the culture. It lies in the narrative structure and in the discourses employed - the images, myths, conventions, and visual styles' (173).

Turner briefly explores the ideology of aesthetics using cinematic realism as a case study. Citing Colin MacCabe's *Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian theses* (1974), Turner claims that realism, being the dominant mode of address in narrative filmmaking, speaks to dominant forms of ideology. MacCabe suggests that realist fiction inhibits critical engagement on the part of the spectator, which, by extension, translates to an unquestioning acceptance of dominant values. Within classically realist texts, narrative is privileged as the source of objective truth wherein '[n]o [alternative] discourse is allowed to speak for itself but rather it must be placed in a context which will reduce it to a simple explicable content' (MacCabe 1974, 10). Ultimately, this form of narration reduces the role of the spectator in the

construction of meaning. As MacCabe states, '[t]he unquestioned nature of the narrative discourse entails that the only problem that reality poses is to go and look and see what *Things* there *are*' (author's italics) (12). Realist narration thus functions as an authoritative form of narration, one that reduces independent thought by removing ambiguity, providing the spectator with all the necessary information, directing them towards dominant readings. As MacCabe states, 'the classic realist text ensures the position of the subject in a relation of dominant specularity' (12). According to MacCabe, realist texts support the status quo by fostering a form of acquiescence, a submission to authoritative narration and by extension the ideological status quo.

Turner acknowledges that MacCabe's reading constitutes one of many divergent interpretations of cinematic realism, maintaining that '[o]ne cannot simply read off the ideology of a film from its formal characteristics' (1999, 181). This brings us back to Kellner's notion of contextual cultural studies, which advocates viewing cinematic aesthetics within the context of the individual media text and within the wider social climate.

What the above scholarship reveals is that despite a continuing divide between the disciplines of film studies and sociology, films can serve as a valuable tool in the study of societies. Films can provide insight into the social, political and/or cultural climate under which they are made, exposing a society's underlying fears, hopes and dreams. Films present ideological snapshots through which audiences may acquire greater knowledge of contemporary socio-political debates and conflicts. However, akin to Douglas Kellner, it is the assertion of this thesis that films do not merely present an analogue reflection of the social world, films take elements of social life and reconstitute them in cinematic discourse. Thus, through a combination of close textual analysis and in-depth social and historical contextualisation one

may decode the often complex language used in rendering these social discourses cinematically in order to reveal commentaries on issues of social relevancy and challenges to contemporary political myths.

However, while the abovementioned scholarship engages broadly with issues surrounding cinema's role in society, they predominantly focus upon works of popular cinema that reach a broad audience. How then might we understand the cinema of a small nation such as Hungary? Hungary is a small filmmaking nation producing an average of 24 feature films annually.[61] Since transition, local productions have acquired only a limited market share of the indigenous film industry, reaching a record high of just over 15 percent in 2006, and it is not uncommon for Hungarian productions to receive a local audience of just a few thousand. Given the manifold and often conflicting demands of the post-communist milieu – the still relatively new demands of the marketplace, the increasing need for universal legibility imposed by the now institutionalised international film festival circuit, the continued demand for a visible political and social consciousness imposed by past generations of Hungarian filmmakers and the demands of local audiences who appear to have grown tired of the social-oriented cinema seen as synonymous with the entertainment-starved communist era – how do post-communist Hungarian filmmakers engage with contemporary society and contemporary social issues? This thesis seeks to examine the various ways in which post-communist Hungarian filmmakers have negotiated these contradictory demands while continuing to engage with the contemporary milieu and the political myths that have emerged therein. I argue that the various and, at times, contradictory approaches adopted by the films examined in this thesis testify to the post-communist generation's search for an appropriate method

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[61] This average is taken from the number of feature films released in Hungary between 1989 and 2009.

through which to engage with social issues in light of the multifarious demands of the post-communist setting.

1.6. Methodology.

Having determined the major study areas apposite to this thesis and surveyed the key literature pertinent to them, I now wish to dedicate this section of the chapter to clarifying several methodological issues to convey to the reader how I intend to approach the films in this study and my justifications for these decisions.

However, before proceeding, I wish to address what, for some, may appear to be an elephant in the room; I am not Hungarian nor have I ever resided in Hungary; I have Hungarian ancestry but I am British. This of course has had certain ramifications upon my thesis that I wish to acknowledge and address. While it is common for scholars to write about national cinemas outside of their own nationality and residence, it is in view of my specific research question that I wish to clarify my own position as, for the want of a better word, an outsider writing about Hungarian cinema.

First, I wish to declare that my interest in Hungary stems from my ancestry and not a desire to 'plant [my] flag on the terrain of [Hungarian] film studies', to use Paul Willemen's terms (2006, 34). I wish not to impede or overrule the already extensive native scholarship; rather, I hope that my work will enrich and supplement this research. As a non-national, I argue that

my work offers unique and divergent perspectives and ideas that serve to enhance the wider discourse on Hungarian cinema.[62]

My status as a non-national offers a potentially enriching perspective through which to examine post-communist political myths. Myths are a fundamental component of everyday perception, functioning as an influential ideological and emotional force within social life. Indeed, in their study of West-Muslim political mythmaking, Chiara Bottici and Benoît Challand (2010) argue that '[p]olitical myths have become the unperceived lenses through which we experience the world' (16). I thus contend that, as a non-national, my analysis retains a certain level of exemption from these socially embedded ideological influences; influences that citizens assimilate subtly and often unconsciously. Furthermore, as Christopher Flood (2002) argues, political myths are not perceived as such by those invested in them; rather, they are inherent truths endowed with the strength and conviction of religious belief. Thus, the fact that I am not a national provides distance from the prevailing myths of daily life, granting me a profitable vantage point to address the subject and provide new insights from this perspective.[63]

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[62] One may expect that given a native and a foreigner's respective levels of emotional investment in national issues, whether they be social, political and/or historical, opinion between the two may differ. In highlighting this incongruity, I do not wish to privilege one outlook over another, but instead demonstrate how these divergent viewpoints broaden the discourse. I also wish to denounce any suggestion that foreignness equates in any way to objectivity. One may argue, for example, that the inclination of Western critics towards universalist interpretations expresses an underlying capitalist ideology. Universalism waters down cultural difference, thus rendering world cinema more desirable and indeed more marketable to Western, middle class audiences.

[63] This is not to suggest that Hungarian society assimilates these myths inertly and I acknowledge that sceptics, non-believers and dissidents exist within the national borders. It is also not my intention to suggest that it takes an outsider's perspective to distinguish myth from truth. More precisely, I argue that my position as a non-native, of being on the outside looking in, provides an alternative and complementary viewpoint to further the study of political myths in post-communist Hungary.

Furthermore, without foreign input, there is a risk that studies of national cinemas will become homogenised and/or predisposed towards preferred readings. As Andrew Higson ([1989] 2002) states, 'very often the concept of national cinema is used prescriptively rather than descriptively citing what ought to be the national cinema' (53). Higson maintains that there exists a predisposition for nations to promote a mythological sense of cultural resistance to dominant forms of popular culture, often defining themselves by what they are not rather than what they are, usually in opposition to Hollywood. I argue, therefore, that a non-national perspective can challenge prescribed models of national cinema, shedding new light upon canonised cinematic works while foregrounding those that deviate from and contest recognised and accepted notions of national identity. An outsider's perspective potentially allows for critical engagement with films that do not necessarily fit patriotic modes of representation or those that may contain critical subtexts.[64]

In addressing my status as a non-national, I also wish to illustrate how the lack of Hungarian citizenship has affected my thesis logistically. While I have a basic grasp of the Hungarian language, my language skills are such that I require subtitles when watching Hungarian films, a factor that has directly influenced the films selected for this project. Having utilised the annual Film Yearbook (*Filmévkönyv*) to avail myself to the feature films produced and released each year, I set forth locating films that were of interest to me. Having contacted the

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[64] It must be acknowledged, however, that prescriptive interpretations are not exclusively a national issue and it is entirely possible for the scholarship of non-nationals to present a misrepresentative image of a particular national cinema, one that suits the writer's/publisher's agendas or ideologies. Indeed, Anikó Imre (2004, 2005) suggests that during the communist years there existed a predisposition in Western scholarship towards Hungarian films that fit neatly into preconceived paradigms of resistance and anti-Sovietism that suited Western interests and political agendas.

Hungarian National Film Archive (*Magyar Nemzeti Filmarchívum*) to arrange screenings, I found that the Archive could not supply subtitles. Consequently, my search for appropriate films was limited to not only DVDs and videos but also those with subtitles.[65]

This led to a new set of issues, chiefly that certain Hungarian films had not received domestic distribution on DVD or video and a number of those that had, especially those made in the 1990s, were no longer in circulation. One may ascribe this lack of availability to wider social factors, namely that in the 1990s, only a small number of Hungarians owned home entertainment systems.[66] Furthermore, given that only a minority of local productions achieved even moderate box office success in the 1990s, home video releases were rarely financially viable.[67]

However, I do not wish to overstate the issue of availability. DVD distribution expanded in Hungary with the modernisation of the Hungarian film industry in the 2000s and with the modernisation of Hungarian culture more broadly.[68] Furthermore, due to their success on the international film festival circuit, a number of films received distribution deals outside Hungary but not necessarily within – or, failing that, saw release much later. Moreover,

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[65] An inevitable upshot of requiring subtitles is the fact that certain elements of the language are lost in translation. However, I would argue that it does not prohibit foreign audiences, critics and scholars from understanding foreign films nor should it inhibit non-native scholarship. Indeed, with the increasing emphasis placed upon transnationalism, the quality of subtitles has improved dramatically the world over.

[66] By 2001, only 38 percent of Hungarian households owned a VCR player and only 1 percent owned a DVD player (Kiss 2004, 113).

[67] One of the reasons that Hungarian films seldom achieved wider distribution in the 1990s was due to poor production values. Financial necessity meant that many films were shot on video rather than film. Local audiences automatically perceived these films to be inferior to their foreign equivalents as Hollywood quickly became the standard-bearer to which Hungarian audiences set their cinematic expectations.

[68] Indeed, by 2004 DVD player ownership had risen to 16.6 percent of households, which doubled in 2005 (Heller 2008, 285).

Hungarian films have also become increasingly available online via video streaming websites such as Indavidéo, currently only available in Hungary, and subscription-based video on demand sites such as MUBI as well as on YouTube. Additionally, where necessary I have sourced films from torrent websites containing films ripped from Hungarian television.

These conditions, in part, motivated my decision to focus upon films made after the millennium, but was by no means the only, nor indeed most significant, motivating factor. Firstly, I made this decision for purely practical reasons. The post-communist era now, at the time of writing, encompasses a period of over twenty-five years and so by focusing on post-millennial Hungarian cinema I have been able to concentrate upon a more manageable timeframe.

Secondly, limiting my analysis to films made after the millennium allows me to distinguish the post-communist period from the immediate transitionary period in which certain issues were specific to the short-lived period of institutional change and not necessarily reflective of the wider conditions of post-communism. The first decade of transition was one of radical transformation in which established social and cultural components were overwhelmed and destabilised. The economy underwent mass privatisation and, after a period of adjustment, slowly began showing signs of stabilisation, eventually catching up to pre-transition levels of GDP in the late 1990s and by the end of the decade, citizens had begun to adapt to a life free from state paternalism. I argue, therefore, that post-millennial filmmakers are in a favourable position to take stock and reflect upon the successes and failures of transition.

Furthermore, like society more generally, Hungarian cinema endured a period of transition and as film scholar, Gábor Gelencsér (2004a) claims:

> A decade had to pass before we were able to speak about a new era in Hungarian cinema: about a fresh generation, an original vision and unique ambitions as regards genre. I believe there was no "belatedness" to speak about, the lengthy transitional period was simply the unavoidable period of "already not in the old way but not yet in the new" (14).

While this thesis does include members of the so-called middle generation – those who began their careers in the 1980s and 1990s – focusing on post-millennial films allows me to foreground this new generation and explore the sensibilities and approaches that distinguish them from previous generations. I am hesitant to use labels such as the Hungarian New Wave or the New Hungarian Cinema to categorise this new generation, as I do not wish to suggest a conscious movement is taking place. Rather, there appears to exist a common mind-set amongst these filmmakers that derives from the heritage of social engagement in Hungarian cinema and from a need for alternative discourse in post-communist society more broadly.

1.6.1. A Diverse National Cinema and a Polysemous Site of Representation.

Both commentators and filmmakers alike have utilised labels such as the Hungarian New Wave or the New Hungarian Cinema as historical markers, emphasising the coming of age of the first generation of post-communist filmmakers as opposed to identifying common aesthetic and/or thematic concerns within their work. Such shared characteristics have proven harder to classify. Free from the constraints of state censorship, the films produced by the post-communist generation have varied widely in style and theme, embracing a wealth of cinematic and non-cinematic influences. The multiplicity of aesthetics adopted by the post-communist generation has directly influenced how I engage with the films in this study. When I embarked upon this project, I aimed to highlight the true diversity of post-communist

Hungarian cinema by including as wide a variety of styles as possible.[69] This led me to adopt

a number of different cinematic frameworks rather than a single, overarching approach. I

argue that the use of a single theoretical framework would limit my analysis and may even

produce a distorted image of post-communist Hungarian cinema. While one could effectively

frame a study of post-millennial Hungarian cinema around the discourse of slow cinema,

magical realism, corporeality or minimalism – these being some of the more discernible

trends in contemporary Hungarian cinema – such an approach would fail to recognise post-

communist Hungarian cinema's true heterogeneity and the multifarious ways in which

filmmakers address post-communist society. The films examined in this study articulate

social critique in very different ways, utilising a variety of world cinematic discourses.

Consequently, in order to uncover the underlying meanings within each film, I am compelled

to employ a variety of diverging cinematic approaches.

The different cinematic approaches adopted in this thesis also testifies to the polysemic

nature of the rural as a site of representation. I favour the term rural because it is broad and

inclusive, incorporating a wide variety of representational possibilities. I follow Fowler and

Helfield's (2006) lead in selecting the rural over peasant, pastoral, village or agrarian because

such words evoke specific connotations. Peasant brings with it associations of class and

status. Agrarian suggests an emphasis on the land as a site of cultural and economic

significance. Pastoral, alternatively, evokes a sense of Arcadia in the representation of the

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[69] This led to my decision to omit the work of Béla Tarr, Hungary's most acclaimed
contemporary filmmaker. Tarr's regularly sets his films in rural settings and so would be
appropriate for this study. My decision to exclude Tarr is a response to the fact that he has
dominated the discourse on Hungarian cinema – this includes an essay of my own that builds
upon the methodological approach utilised in this thesis and situates Tarr as a Hungarian
filmmaker scrutinising Hungarian issues (see Mann 2015). I wish to provide readers with
access to alternative filmmakers active in Hungary and demonstrate that Hungarian cinema
exceeds beyond the work of Béla Tarr.

land and the village is a restrictive term, emphasising one area of rural representation. The rural, I argue, is a more all-encompassing term, one that encapsulates the variety of ways in which the films under observation utilise the landscape as a site of critique.

My decision to focus on the rural derives from its flexibility as a site of representation. The rural is a multidimensional space through which filmmakers address local, national and global issues. Within a post-communist Hungarian context, cinematic representations of the rural incorporates the specific hardships endured in the rural Hungary, where of the more adverse effects of transition are most visible. Additionally, the rural provides a platform through which to examine broader themes and subject matter that transcend the specific local environment, transforming the setting into a metonymic and/or figurative space. Jacques Rancière (2013) discusses such forms of non-representational social critique in his study of Béla Tarr. Rancière argues that despite the formal developments made in the late 1980s, one may observe a continuation of social concern within Tarr's oeuvre. Rancière states '[t]his… is how angry, young filmmakers mature: not by losing their illusions, but by untethering the reality to which they wish to remain faithful from the expectations and sequences that bind the logic of fiction to the temporal schemes of the rhetorics of power' (7). This, I believe, is fundamental to understanding how the films observed in this thesis utilise rural space. These films present the essence of social realities through rhetorical modes of representation that transcend the individual experience to encapsulate collective, social ones.[70]

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[70] This is not to suggest that all filmic representation of rural Hungary fit this mould. There exists a variety of films that depict the countryside in a more light-hearted and uncritical manner. Examples include *Argo* (Attila Árpa, 2004), *Hasutasok/Railroad Junkies* (András Szőke, 2006), *Mázli/Fluke* (Tamás Keményffy, 2008) and *Kalandorok/Adverturers* (Béla Paczolay, 2008). Likewise, I do not wish to suggest that filmmakers have not engaged with the city as a site of social critique. Indeed, films such as *Dealer* (Benedek Fliegauf, 2004), *Friss levegő/Fresh Air* (Ágnes Kocsis, 2006), *Papírrepülök/Paper Planes* (Simon Szabó,

By framing this study of post-communist Hungarian cinema within the wider discourse of rural cinema, I also hope to broaden the potential interest in this project beyond Hungary and Hungarian cinema, which, for some, might be of limited appeal. I intend to add to existing discourse on rural cinema by examining rural representation within a specific post-communist socio-cultural context.

1.6.2. Hungary as a Small National Cinema.

While this thesis employs multiple cinematic approaches to unearth the social criticism underlying each of the nine diverse films studied, I unite them within a small national cinema framework. That is to say, I consider these films as national texts addressing national issues. However, my focus is not limited to exclusively national issues, but rather national manifestations of global issues. A national cinema is a constantly evolving organism open to external influences and manipulations. Wider social and political issues such as cultural globalisation, postmodern alienation and capitalist disaffection all manifest in local translations. Likewise, wider trends in both art and popular cinema, and wider trends in popular culture more broadly, also influence the types of film made nationally.

My decision to implement a national cinema framework may seem somewhat antiquated given the ascendency of transnational discourse. However, this decision is a response to contemporary trends in global art cinema and the ways in which international critics and audiences engage with Hungarian films. The international nature of global art cinema and the

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2009) and *Szelíd teremtés: A Frankenstein-terv/Tender Son: The Frankenstein Project* (Kornél Mundruczó, 2010) all testify to the urban as a site of social and political intrigue.

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increasing prominence of the international film festival as a site of exhibition has led to a downplaying of national/cultural specificity in favour of universal interpretations that suit the financial imperatives of the festival. International film festivals often screen films without sufficient context and both audience members and reviewers alike lack insight into specific localised systems of meaning, limiting their understanding and appreciation of the films screened. The festival circuit also encourages the filmmakers themselves to push universal or humanist readings in fear of alienating a wider potential spectatorship and/or international distributors.[71] The national framework adopted in this thesis responds to these trends by re-establishing local engagement as a valid and enlightening form of cinematic discourse.

Furthermore, there exists a tendency in Western scholarship to group Hungarian cinema within larger studies of the cinema of Eastern Europe, Central Europe or the Other Europe, to name but a few recurring categories. This approach I find problematic as a regional perspective inadvertently instils a form of scholarship built upon generalisations as opposed to specific localised focus. Words such as communism and post-communism come to have all-encompassing generic meanings, doing a disservice to the complicated and multifarious national incarnations that transpired. While comparisons to other communist satellite states may be drawn, Hungary's specific communist experience, encompassing key national events

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[71] However, I feel I must clarify my position on the transnational. I indeed recognise the significance of transnational networks of exhibition and distribution such as the film festival, which have granted Hungarian filmmakers not only a wider international audience but also a domestic audience who retrospectively take an interest in a given film following its international success. As stated earlier, two of the films under discussion in this thesis are transnational co-productions and all the films examined have achieved greater exposure because of the international film festival, with many of them subsequently receiving DVD/video and television distribution deals outside of Hungary as a result. That said; I believe that new modes of transnational production and exhibition have resulted in an overemphasis of transnational discourse, which has ultimately led to a watering down of cultural difference.

such as the October Revolution of 1956, Kádárism and the rise of market socialism, not only differs from that of neighbouring countries but is also at odds with the broader conceptions of communism. This is also true of post-communist era. Each nation has experienced a very different transition process, and while it is possible to draw comparisons, I believe that these comparisons ultimately produce distortions and misrepresentations that are at odds with local experiences and phenomena.

Therefore, to better situate the films within a national context, I employ Douglas Kellner's (1995) concept of diagnostic critique, a contextual approach to cultural studies that 'uses history and social theory to analyze cultural texts and uses cultural texts in turn to illuminate historical trends, conflicts, possibilities, and anxieties' (125). I seek to examine the interconnections between Hungarian cinema and Hungarian society and to do this I employ economic, sociological and historical scholarship to support and contextualise my arguments as well as national and international criticism from the trade press, popular journalism and academic research. While I do employ pre-existing interviews where necessary to help illuminate a director's particular intentions and/or cinematic philosophies, I have chosen not to conduct my own interviews with filmmakers and/or other personnel associated with the films under analysis. This is a conscious decision based upon my belief that the answers given by interviewees may be compromised by the contemporary political climate in Hungary and the precarious nature of the relationship between cinema and state.[72] Given the

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[72] An example of this unstable relationship between the state and the nation's filmmakers can be seen in the case of Béla Tarr. Having won the Silver Bear at the 2011 Berlinale for *A torinói ló/The Turin Horse*, Tarr was interviewed by German daily newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* (see Schulz-Ojala 2011a). When questioned about the state of the arts in Hungary, Tarr stated that Hungarian artists were in the midst of a 'culture war' with the government (Hudson 2011). Tarr reputedly stated that 'the government hates intellectuals because they are liberal and oppositional. It has insulted us as traitors' (Bos 2012). Because

structural changes that occurred within the Hungarian film industry in 2011, I believe that few filmmakers would be willing to openly discuss any social and political criticism within their work for fear of biting the hand that feeds, as the state continues to serve a significant source of finance for Hungarian filmmakers.

Additionally, given that much of the scholarship published on Hungarian cinema is intended to introduce readers to what, for many, is an obscure and unknown cinema – a consequence of forty years spent behind the iron curtain – there exists a tendency for authors to employ quantitative approaches to their research. Indeed, a significant amount of Western scholarship has adopted this practice (Nemeskürty ([1965] 1974), Liehm, and Liehm 1977, Paul 1989, Burns 1996, Iordanova 2003a, Cunningham 2004, Portuges 2005, 2013a, 2013b, 2014), familiarising readers with the key texts through brief summations and analyses. In contrast, this thesis adopts a qualitative approach. Given the variety of styles adopted by the films under analysis, and given the complex and often-underlying nature of their political and social commentary, it is necessary to employ detailed textual and sociological analysis in order to expound upon the ways in which these films articulate social critique.

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of this public statement, Mokép, Hungary's national film distributor, now under the control of the MNF, cancelled both the Hungarian premiere of *The Turin Horse* and the film's nationwide distribution. In response to these actions, Tarr had to disassociate himself from the interview (Schulz-Ojala 2011b). Such conditions, I argue, have made Hungarian filmmakers reluctant openly discuss any underlining social commentary in their work as, unlike Tarr, most Hungarian filmmakers do not have the international cachet to easily procure finance outside of Hungary. Tarr subsequently announced that *The Turin Horse* would be his final film and now resides outside of Hungary, mostly in Sarajevo where he teaches at the Film Factory, the moniker of his programme at the Sarajevo Film Academy.

1.7. Structure.

This thesis will be divided into three proceeding chapters, the first being 'Challenging the Myths of the West', the second 'Challenging the Myths of Memory' and the third 'The Consequences of Post-Communist Political Myths'. In this first chapter, I examine the political myths surrounding Hungary's long-desired return to the West and the myths linking freedom, prosperity and contentment to democracy and the market economy. Many had assumed that the collapse of communism would lead to a rise in living standards and a better quality of life more generally. However, the complexities of post-communist life have since shattered such illusions, resulting in widespread feelings of disillusionment and resentment. The films examined in this chapter thus seek to challenge the myths of post-communism; those built upon a long-established and illusionary view of life in the West and one advocated by incoming neoliberalism.

Through analysis of *Üvegtigris/Glass Tiger* (Iván Kapitány and Péter Rudolf, 2001), *Tamara* (Szabolcs Hajdu, 2004) and *Utolsó idök/Lost Times* (Áron Mátyássy, 2009) I examine the various consequences of Hungary's return to the West. Through my study of *Glass Tiger,* I claim that the film comments on of the myths of Western prosperity as enabled by the market economy. I argue that despite the ubiquitous presence of Western cultural artefacts and references within the film, Kapitány and Rudolf suggest that Western discourse merely serves as a smokescreen that masks the realities of transition. Through Hajdu's *Tamara,* I examine the changing nature of community and interpersonal relationships in post-communist society. The film presents a complex allegory of transition, examining the often-overlooked psychological transformation that accompanied the economic and political ones. Finally, through my analysis of *Lost Times* I examine the film's representation of the social

inequalities produced by transition, challenging the myths of equal opportunity produced by the market economy. I explore how the film draws upon social realities to reveal the spatial disparities produced by transition.

The following chapter, entitled 'Challenging the Myths of Memory', explores issues of historical remembrance in post-communist Hungary. Despite renewed opportunities for public dialogue, political myths have flourished, providing the disjointed Hungarian citizen with a sense of collective identity in response to the fragmentary nature of post-communism. Such forms of therapeutic history have reinforced long-established notions of national martyrdom, heightened by rejuvenated fears of national death produced by global supranationalism. The films in question attempt to challenge historical revisionism in Hungary and give voice to marginal historical discourse, discourse overlooked and omitted from the mainstream public sphere.

The three films scrutinised in this chapter are *A porcelánbaba/The Porcelain Doll* (Péter Gárdos, 2005), *Hukkle* (György Pálfi, 2002) and *Másnap/After the Day Before* (Attila Janisch, 2005). Through my analysis of *The Porcelain Doll,* I explore how, in the telling of three mythical tales set during three key periods of Hungary's recent history, the film advocates the need for alternative discourse in Hungary's approach to national history. In my examination of *Hukkle* I explore the myths of restorative nostalgia. The film presents an idyllic vision of rural life only to later subvert it, utilising invasive cinematography as a visual metaphor, encouraging audience to scratch beneath the surface of idealised national history. Finally, I propose that *After the Day Before* explores issues of blame, responsibility and collective amnesia in contemporary Hungary. Through the film's complex non-linear

narrative, I explore how the film challenges the self-exculpatory myths that have come to fruition in post-communist Hungary.

The final chapter of the thesis is entitled 'The Consequences of Post-Communist Political Myths' and explores the social upshots of post-communist political myths. Given the disenchantment that has come to characterise many citizen's experience of post-communism and the Hungarian disposition towards self-righteous historical narratives, new nationalist myths have come into being; myths that advocate retribution for the injustices of the past and that vent contemporary frustrations with the post-communist political and economic systems. These myths provide scapegoats for the hardships of post-communist life and promote an inward-looking nationalism. The films in this final chapter explore the rising tensions in post-communist Hungary and highlight the upshots of political myths in contemporary society.

The three films examined in this chapter are *Apaföld/Father's Acre* (Viktor Oszkár Nagy, 2009), *Delta* (Kornél Mundruczó, 2008) and *Csák a szél/Just the Wind* (Benedek Fliegauf, 2012). By examining the relationship between a father and his son, my study of *Father's Acre* explores the notion of history repeating itself because of an absence of dialogue. Following this, I examine *Delta's* representation of "the other" through the film's representation of incestuous siblings. Finally, continuing from the notions of "otherness", the concluding film, *Just the Wind* focuses upon the persecution of the Roma through a fictionalised account of actual murders committed in 2008 and 2009. Through the film's emphasis on the victims, I argue that Fliegauf seeks to personify the victims of racial terror, presenting them as human beings rather than stereotypes.

Chapter Two:

Challenging the Myths of the West.

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter focuses upon the myths surrounding Hungary's return to the West; more precisely, how Hungarian filmmakers engage with the myths surrounding Hungary's democratic and capitalist assimilation. I argue that the three films examined in this chapter seek to confront both the ideological myths impressed from above and those romantically envisioned from below; that is to say, those disseminated by the global culture industries advocating market capitalism, and those deep-seated fantasies of life in the West cemented under communism. Over the course of this chapter I aim to demonstrate how *Üvegtigris/Glass Tiger* (Iván Kapitány and Péter Rudolf, 2001), *Tamara* (Szabolcs Hajdu, 2004) and *Utolsó idök/Lost Times* (Áron Mátyássy, 2009) contribute to the discourse surrounding Hungary's Western integration. I argue that the films challenge the propagandist and ideologically laden myths of the West and engage with the expectations of the Hungarian citizens, expectations built upon a mythopoeic imaginary West as glimpsed from behind the iron curtain.

The myth of the West forms part of the communist legacy, born out of the coercive nature of communist rule, the shortage economy and the state's inability to fulfil its utopian promises. During the hard dictatorship of Mátyás Rákosi, Hungary's economic policy strictly adhered to the guiding principles of Stalinism, placing great emphasis on heavy industry.[73] Light industry, conversely, was vastly underfunded resulting in frequent shortages of basic consumer goods. However, in the aftermath of the October Revolution of 1956, newly installed János Kádár sought to extinguish the threat of further insurgence and appease the

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[73] Between 1949 and 1954, 92.1 percent of industrial investment was devoted to heavy industry (Swain 1992, 79).

alienated Hungarian populace through a policy of cautious reform. In exchange for citizens'

acquiescence to communist ideology, the socialist government granted Hungarians greater

individual liberties and grew more responsive to their material needs. Over the period of

Kádár's governance Hungarians gained access to a comparatively well supplied and variable

source of state produced consumer items.

Material culture provided an outlet for individual expression and subjectivity. However, the

socialist consumer experience was laden with political ideology. Nationally produced

consumer items were loaded with subtext, promoting the virtues of socialist ideology through

notions of functionality and efficiency.[74] Consequently, despite the regular access to

nationally produced consumer items, Hungarians instead attributed elevated cultural capital

to their Western equivalents. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, access to Western consumer

products was limited, obtainable only via the black market at hugely inflated prices.

However, after the Hungarian thaw, their availability steadily increased, with a richer and

more varied array of Western products slowly finding their way to the Hungarian high

streets.[75] Western consumer products became vehicles of political mythology, shaping what

Alexei Yurchak (2006) describes as the Imaginary West. As Yurchak asserts, the Imaginary

West emerged from

> an array of discourses, statements, products, objects, visual images, musical
> expressions, and linguistic constructions that were linked to the West by theme
> or by virtue of their origin or reference, and that circulated widely in late
> socialism, gradually shap[ing] a coherent and shared object of imagination
> (161).

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[74] For further information on the politics of socialist Hungary's consumer culture, see
Féherváry 2009.

[75] The range and accessibility of these products noticeably increased following Hungary's
ascension into the World Bank and IMF in 1982.

Yurchak suggests that the concept of the Imaginary West was archetypal, disconnected from any real sense of place but infused with ideology. The Imaginary West proliferated, in part, because of the intermittent exposure to the West, which was largely limited to Western consumer products, and because of 'a recourse to fantasy' that arose from the absence of a fully functioning public sphere (Borneman 1991, 18). In communist Hungary, the mythical West was primarily conceptualised from the popular perception of Western consumer goods. As Hungarian anthropologist Krisztina Fehérváry (2006) maintains, these products 'were understood as not just evidence of a better production system, but iconic of a more natural and humane political system, one valuing human dignity' (56).

The diversity, workmanship and prestige of Western consumer products came to reflect the quality of life offered by the West more generally. Through their immeasurable novelty and variety, Western consumer goods were suggestive of an ideology that placed individual freedoms at the fore. Said products exposed the inferiority of the centralised economic system and imbued resentment towards the functionality of state manufactured consumer goods and the ideology deeply instilled within their making. These resentments came to reflect the dissatisfaction with the communist system more broadly.

The emotional investment placed in Western consumer products was a collective response to the lived experience of communism. The cachet of Western commodities circulated as a statement of defiance towards communism's imposed ideology, representing a desire for individual autonomy amidst the paternalism of the state and as a desire for freedom, symbolically manifest in the form of unrestricted consumer choice. Western consumer products also provided a link to the European community to which many Warsaw Pact citizens still believed they belonged (Kundera 1984).

Following the sudden and unforeseen implosion of communism, the fantasy of consumer abundance, which had fuelled the Imaginary West, became a reality, at least on the Hungarian high streets, now awash with foreign franchises and products. Inevitably following transition, many citizens 'interpreted freedom of consumption as an inalienable right connected to their newly acquired individual freedom' (Vogt 2005, 88). Citizens equated material culture with self-worth and status, and many assumed that Hungary's return to the West would yield greater standards of living and by extension greater contentment and wellbeing.

While serving as an expression of freedom and an articulation of critique against communism's now moribund ideologies, the Imaginary West also served as a neoliberal Trojan horse used to implant codes of behaviour espousing free market values. However, forty years of communist rule had left Hungarians in need of socialisation in the practices of globalised consumer culture. In order to instil the ideology of consumption, international advertising, marketing and public relations companies purchased majority stakes in Hungarian communications agencies in what Anikó Imre (2009) describes as a 'colonization of the virtually virgin postcommunist media and information technology markets' (3). Consequently, during the first decade of post-communism, advertising expenditure in Hungary rose exponentially, soaring from $50 million in 1990 to $1,894.70 million in 2000 (Coulter et al 2005, 617). Western advertising placed emphasis on the authenticity of these newly available consumer items as Coca Cola's slogan, 'The Real One' (*Az Igazi*) suggests (Salter 2006). Such claims to authenticity served as attempts to legitimise neoliberal capitalism as both genuine and rightful.

Similarly, Hollywood studios acquired major shares in Hungarian film distributors ensuring that Hungarian cinema's exhibited Hollywood movies (see Cunningham 2004, 143-144). New private television channels *RTL Klub* and *TV2* launched in 1997, and both public service and commercial broadcasters began importing increasing amounts of foreign television. Timothy Havens, Evelyn Bottando and Matthew S. Thatcher (2013) observe that between 2001 and 2004 US imports accounted for 57.3 per cent of all imported programming on Hungarian television with European imports reaching just under 25 per cent during the same period (130).[76]

By 1991, 70 per cent of the Hungarian national daily newspapers were foreign owned (Gulyas 1998, 69) and by 1996 so too were 65.8 per cent of women's weekly magazines (75). Hungarian versions of popular Western magazines and periodicals began progressively filling kiosks and newsstands.[77] In reference to fashion and lifestyle magazine *Cosmopolitan,* first published in Hungary in 1997, Hungarian journalist Gusztav Kosztolanyi (1999b) notes that '[i]n format, content and tenor, it was indistinguishable from its Western counterparts'.

Western media thus became the primary means of disseminating neoliberal ideology and socialising citizens in the values of capitalism. By acquiring significant stakes in Hungarian media industries, foreign media conglomerates procured a platform through which to promote the virtues of the free market, transforming citizens into consumers through the communication of social codes espousing rampant consumerism. To satisfy these newly implanted material desires, new sites of consumption were established. From the mid-1990s,

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[76] Over 92 per cent of all European Imports came from Western countries, principally from Germany (20.1%), UK (18.6%) Italy (17.3%) and France (16.8%) (Havens et al 2013, 132).
[77] The first of American consumer magazine published in Hungarian was *Playboy,* released in November 1989 (see Rosenberg 2010).

construction began on modern shopping complexes backed principally by American finance. The Duna Plaza, the nation's first American-style shopping mall, opened its doors in 1996 establishing what urban theorist Judit Bodnár (2001) describes as 'a novelty in the local culture of shopping' (147).

However, while Hungary initially stood as the poster-child of post-communist neoliberal integration, the privatisation of formerly state-owned assets severely uprooted the lives of the Hungarian populace. The state could no longer guarantee employment as Hungarian industry was denationalised. Privatisation had a particularly devastating effect on Hungary's industrial centres as facilities struggled to secure investors and were subsequently forced to close. Through strategies of neoliberal shock therapy, reforms such as the Bokros Plan of March 1995 resulted in significant cuts to social welfare and education, as well as a decrease in real wages and a devaluing of the Forint.[78] Unemployment, homelessness and crime, conditions virtually non-existent under communism, escalated dramatically and citizens quickly lost faith in the post-communist political and economic systems under which they lived.

The integration of Western-style economics fundamentally transformed the ways in which citizens lived and interacted with one another. The end of communist paternalism fostered an environment of individualism as citizens were now forced to fend for themselves. Consumer culture resulted in a shift towards self-interest and narcissism, and post-communist society became increasingly atomised, leading many citizens to decry the loss of community that had existed under the communists.

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[78] Opposition leader, Viktor Orbán claimed that the Bokros Plan served only the interests of global finance.

These conditions saw anti-Western sentiments rise in ascendency. Support for the market economy declined as capitalism failed to generate the levels of inclusive growth many had expected during the communist years. Enthusiasm for democracy waned due to political corruption and a widening gulf between the rich and the poor. Consumer culture and European supranationalism were heralded as threats to traditional Hungarian values, and many citizens concluded that life had been better under communism.[79]

Accordingly, the films examined in this chapter seek to engage with the realities of transition and challenge the myths of the Imaginary West. The three films employ diverging themes and styles but share a commitment to observe and scrutinise the lived experience of post-communism, presenting the unforeseen consequences of Western integration, the complexities of life free from the state paternalism and the unanticipated mass disillusionment that has become a cardinal feature of post-communist life.

The first film examined in this chapter is Iván Kapitány and Péter Rudolf's *Üvegtigris/Glass Tiger* (2001). Through central protagonist Lali's (Péter Rudolf) desire to own a Chevrolet Impala, I argue that *Glass Tiger* offers insight into the role of Western material culture in post-communist identity formations. However, through the Impala's immediate destruction, *Glass Tiger* symbolically highlights a clash between post-communist expectations and realities. I argue that Lali's failed expectations speak to a wider sense of disillusionment that accompanied Hungary's return to the West as the realities of life under capitalism failed to meet citizens' long-held hopes of prosperity and material comfort.

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[79] Indeed, a survey conducted by the *Pew Research Group* (2009) revealed that 72 percent of respondents believed they were better off under communism, with only eight per cent claiming the opposite (5).

Furthermore, I claim that Kapitány and Rudolf utilise the Glass Tiger caravan itself as a means of commenting on the success of Hungary's Western integration. If one looks beyond the café's American frontage, the socialist footprint remains visible. Through the Glass Tiger café, the film addresses the façade of Westernisation, suggesting that while neoliberal reforms have led many commentators to deem Hungary's post-communist transformation a success, one must look beyond this semblance of successful Western assimilation to see the underlying realities of life in capitalist Hungary.

The second film examined in this chapter is Szabolcs Hajdu's *Tamara* (2004). I argue that through titular Tamara's (Orsolya Török-Illyés) visit to the secluded Játékos family farmhouse the film allegorically explores the transformation of social attitudes in post-communist Hungary. I argue that through Tamara's encounters with the three Játékos family members, the film highlights the changing nature of interpersonal relationships and the breakdown of traditional forms of community.

Through the film's esoteric formal style, I argue that Hajdu creates a complex allegory of communist Hungary. Utilising Krisztina Fehérváry's (2002) discourse on the normal, I argue that Hajdu draws parallels between the peculiarity of the Játékos family and the perceived abnormality of the communist regime. I then go on to explore how Hajdu disrupts this abnormal world by introducing the modern, individualistic and materialistic Tamara, a personification of the attitudinal dispositions introduced by capitalism.

The final film explored in this chapter is Áron Mátyássy's *Utolsó idők/Lost Times* (2009). I argue that through the film's warts and all depiction of rural Hungary, Mátyássy challenges

global capitalism's myths of freedom, social mobility and material abundance, providing a counter narrative to the images of wealth and opulence disseminated by the mass media and, increasingly, in Hungary's own escapist popular cinema. Equating the post-communist experience with that of post-colonialism, I draw upon Third Cinema discourse, suggesting that *Lost Times*, in attempting to engage with issue of rural poverty and social deviancy, shares the Third Cinema's anti-imperialist sensibilities and its endeavour to fight against social injustice.

While the three films utilise ostensibly conflicting modes of representation, they are united in their use of allegory. However, the nature of these post-communist allegories deviate greatly from the pedagogical allegories of the communist era. Instead, the three films employ allegory as a technique through which to convey the social and political disunity produced by transition. Film theorist Ismail Xavier (2004) argues that allegories often emerge during periods of social and/or political upheaval, providing an adequate means of rendering ideological instability and social crisis cinematically. Xavier states that as the rationale of everyday cognition becomes more abstract and equivocal, modes of representation based upon juxtaposition, disconnection, and what he describes as 'large scale and invisible networks' (350) are better equipped to reflect the social dynamics of the contemporary world. In view of the widespread changes that accompanied the post-communist transition, allegory serves as a mode of discourse that fittingly encapsulates the sudden shift in the logic of everyday life. Indeed, as Nataša Renko and Katherine C. Sredl (2004) state, the people of East Central Europe have 'largely been shoved into the 21st century, global marketplace after forty years of near isolation, [and] the pace of change is breathtaking' (304).

By the same token, allegory provides an appropriate means of engaging with national issues in an era in which the very concept of the nation is losing its centrality within a post-national, globalised world. As Xavier states '[t]he process of economic expansion of globalized markets has been producing a compression of space and time that affects everyone, and it becomes more difficult to have a sense of one's own experience when one keeps looking at the real world on a local basis' (349). Yet, at the same time, the collapse of communism began a period of national revival in East Central Europe and national issues re-emerged on the social and political agenda after a near forty-year absence. Allegory, then, functions as a mode of discourse through which filmmakers negotiate Hungary's ambiguous relationship with the national and engage with Hungary's ambivalent post-communist identity.

2.2. *Glass Tiger* and the Smokescreen of Neoliberal Capitalism.

In 2001, a low budget Hungarian comedy defied critical expectations to become not only one of the year's most popular movies but launched what would become one of Hungary's most successful film franchises; that film was *Glass Tiger. Glass Tiger* marked the feature length directorial debuts of Iván Kapitány and Péter Rudolf, who co-wrote the screenplay with Hilda Hársing and debutant screenwriter Gábor Óliver Buss. The film focuses upon café proprietor Lali (Rudolf) and his loyal band of hapless clientele. Through a series of tenuously linked vignettes, we witness the various happenings that occur in and around the Glass Tiger café, an American themed fast food restaurant situated, seemingly, in the middle of nowhere.

Aesthetically, one may liken *Glass Tiger* to the work of Emir Kusturica. While the film lacks the ethereal aura and magical realist elements that have become characteristic features of Kusturica's work, *Glass Tiger* does exhibit a correspondingly unstructured narrative,

cluttered and excessive mise-en-scène, spectacularly exuberant characters and a sense of the baroque.[80] In her study of the artistry of Kusturica's work, Dina Iordanova (2002) claims that Kusturica's films are comprised of 'an overabundance of little details, that when brought together, make for an overwhelming experience of splendour and profusion' (98). *Glass Tiger* congruously embraces this sense of eclecticism and kitsch, as is evident in the film's flamboyantly exaggerated characters. Róka (Sándor Gáspár), for example, appears in each scene with a bizarre new outfit and an outrageous new haircut. Iordanova also maintains that '[t]he typical Kusturica film is one where multiple subplots intermingle in a fragile narrative that can disintegrate at almost any time' (111). In much the same way, *Glass Tiger* incorporates a number of comedic vignettes, some of which are inconsequential to the film's overarching narrative. Indeed, the lack of narrative thrust created by the film's episodic structure alludes to Lali's own sense of inertia, his failure to respond to the cut and thrust nature of post-communist life.

I argue that *Glass Tiger*'s commercial success is attributable to the way in which the film resonates with contemporary audiences, combining ironic, self-deprecatory humour with an underlying social commentary. Through Lali, a man unsatisfied with life, and who fantasises about material betterment, *Glass Tiger* provides a microcosmic snapshot of post-communist society. It is through Lali that the film engages with the Westernisation of Hungarian culture, the role of consumerism in post-communist identity formations and the failure of neoliberal market capitalism to generate the levels of inclusive growth widely expected following the collapse of communism.

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[80] For examples of Kusturica's style see *Dom za vešanje/Time of the Gypsies* (1988), *Arizona Dream* (1993), *Podzemlje/Underground* (1995), *Crna mačka, beli mačor/Black Cat, White Cat* (1998) and *Život je čudo/Life Is a Miracle* (2004).

I also maintain that *Glass Tiger* highlights the legacy of communism, implying that despite the pervasiveness of Western cultural discourse, those deep-seated habits and tendencies ingrained by forty years of communism remain present and cannot simply be erased and written over, to borrow Kenneth Jowitt's often-quoted blackboard analogy (1992, 286). I argue that the legacy of communism is visible in the film's characters, who continue to hold onto 1980s attitudes, now obsolete and out of place in the contemporary post-communist setting, and through the Glass Tiger café itself, which I contend, functions as a metaphorical device through which the film comments on the façade of Hungary's return to the West.

2.2.1. *Glass Tiger*'s Production and Reception History.

Kapitány graduated from the Academy of Drama and Film Art (*Színház és Filmművészeti Főiskola*) as a cinematographer in 1988 and began his career working predominantly on television commercials and music videos. Together with producer Gabor Kovacs, Kapitány founded the production company Filmpartners, serving as managing director until he left the company in 2001 to form Film Services Ktf, where he currently sits as company director. Between 1995 and 1996, Kapitány acted as Art Director for Hungarian television channel Top TV while also working as director of photography on numerous Hungarian television programmes, including the comedy series *Éretlenek/Immature* (1995). In 1997, Kapitány worked on his first feature film, serving as Second Unit Director of Photography on the popular slapstick comedy *A minister félrelép/Out of Order* (Róbert Koltai and András Kern, 1997).

Rudolf also studied at the Academy of Drama and Film Art but as an actor. While at the Academy, Rudolf starred in the boarding school comedy *Cha-Cha-Cha* (János Kovácsi, 1981) and in the 1956-centred drama *Szerencsés Dániel/Daniel Take the Train* (Pál Sándor, 1983), before graduating in 1983. Between 1983 and 1998, Rudolf performed as a member of the Vígszínház Theatre comedy troupe. During this period, Rudolf also starred in the film *A skórpió megeszi az ikreket reggelire/Scorpio Eats Gemini for Breakfast* (Péter Gárdos, 1992) and featured in numerous Hungarian television programmes including the children's animated series *Süni és barátai/Hedgehog and Friends* (1995) and the comedy series *Patika/Pharmacy* (1994). Rudolf also appeared in *Jakob the Liar* (Peter Kassovitz, 1999), a French, Hungarian, American co-production starring Robin Williams.

Prior to her work of *Glass Tiger*, co-screenwriter Hársing had previously worked as a script editor and had one writing credit to her name, co-writing the script for *A távollét hercege/The Prince of Absence* (Tamás Tolmár, 1991). Buss began his career as a journalist in Miskolc. He wrote the original script while recovering from a car accident and sent it to Rudolf. The original story featured a newsagent named György and conveyed Buss' interest in stories surrounding the losers of transition, those frequently ignored by the mainstream Hungarian media (for further information see Filmhu 2001b).

Glass Tiger was the debut feature production of Kapitány and Kovács' Filmpartners. The film was granted a humble budget of 150 million Forints – approximately €600,000 (Gabor Kovács, personal communication, February 21, 2014), yet despite its modest budget, the film was received with popular acclaim. Released in Hungary in October 2001, *Glass Tiger* went on to attract a national audience of 95,995 viewers by the end of the year (Löwensohn 2002, 226) and over 130,000 viewers by the end of its run (Lemercier, 2010). Such figures placed

Glass Tiger as the third highest grossing Hungarian movie of 2001, behind the government-funded historical drama *Sacra Corona* (Gábor Koltay, 2001) and fellow comedy *Csocsó, avagy Éljen május elseje!/May Day Mayhem* (2001) directed by popular filmmaker Róbert Koltai.[81] *Glass Tiger* has since attracted a cult following and its success has merited two sequels, released in 2006 and 2010.

Üvegtigris 2/Glass Tiger 2 (Péter Rudolf, 2006) received an improved budget of 250 million Forints – approximately €1 million – and went on to attract 304,021 viewers (Löwensohn, 2007, 250), the second most successful Hungarian film of 2006 behind *Szabadság Szerelem/Children of Glory* (Krisztina Goda, 2006), a film that gave the blockbuster treatment to the October Revolution of 1956.[82] *Üvegtigris 3/Glass Tiger 3* (Péter Rudolf, 2010) was granted an even larger budget of 350 million Forints (approximately €1.3 million) and went on to achieve a national audience of 469,984 viewers (*Lumiere* (a)), the highest-ranking Hungarian film of 2010. The three films ultimately established *Glass Tiger* as one of Hungary's most successful post-communist film franchises.

Glass Tiger's success defied the Hungarian critics, who generally met the film with disdain. György Báron of *Filmvilág* (2001), for example, claimed that the film lacked both a coherent

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[81] Róbert Koltai had become one of Hungarian cinema's biggest box office draws in the 1990s following the success of the nostalgic comedy, *Sose halunk meg/We Never Die* (Róbert Koltai 1993) and the slapstick, *A miniszter félrelép/Out of Order* (Róbert Koltai and András Kern, (1997), in which Koltai also had starring roles.

[82] Released for the semi-centennial of the events of 1956, *Children of Glory* was produced by Hungarian-born, Hollywood producer Andrew Vajna – now head of the MNF – whose previous work included *First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982), *Total Recall* (Paul Verhoeven, 1990), *Jacob's Ladder* (Adrian Lyne, 1990), *Die Hard: With a Vengeance* (John McTiernan, 1995), *Evita* (Alan Parker, 1996) and *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* (Jonathan Mostow, 2003). The film was also co-written by Hungarian-born, Hollywood screenwriter Joe Eszterhas, whose prior credits included *Flashdance* (Adrian Lyne, 1983), *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1992) and *Showgirls* (Paul Verhoeven, 1995).

narrative and directorial competence, claiming the jokes to be juvenile, the plot disconnected and the aesthetics overcrowded and unstructured. Sándor Turcsányi of *Magyar Narancs* (2001) echoed Báron's criticism, and likewise questioned Rudolf and Kapitány's undisciplined direction. I argue, however, that *Glass Tiger*'s negative critical reception should be viewed in light of the wider contemporary debates in Hungarian cinema, discussions surrounding the future direction of film in Hungary given the declining market share of local productions. As Anikó Imre (2004) contends, debate raged as to who was to blame for the current predicament of declining audiences. The filmmakers who, for the most part, had struggled to adapt to the new obligations of the market and had lost touch with local audiences, or the audiences themselves, 'the 'uneducated' public, who would rather consume the trash dumped onto European markets from the Hollywood genre film machine than perform the patriotic duty of watching national films' (9). Those defending Hungarian art cinema and the privileged position of the Hungarian auteur viewed commercial cinema with scepticism, fearing that the pursuit of box office revenue would ultimately lead to a trivialising of cinema and the eradication of the traditions of historical, social and cultural engagement.[83] Indeed, in an interview conducted with *Filmhu* (2001a), *Glass Tiger*'s co-director Péter Rudolf contributed to these debates, denouncing the intellectualism typically exhibited in Hungarian film criticism. Rudolf argued that contemporary Hungarian critics and journalists tended to automatically assume that local productions catering towards wider audiences were superficial and puerile. Instead, Rudolf suggests that a film's commercial

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[83] This scepticism was not entirely unjustified. The late 1990s had given birth to a spate of local productions attempting to emulate Hollywood with mixed results. The most notorious of such films being *Európa Expressz/Europa Express* (Csaba Horváth, 1999), a second-rate replica of a Hollywood thriller limited by second-rate production values, a clichéd script and hammy acting (see Horton 1999a, 1999b).

intentions should not be a measure of quality and critics should assess popular films on their own merits.

Internationally, *Glass Tiger* received limited critical attention, largely perceived as another in a long line of Hungarian comedies that failed to translate to foreign audiences.[84] Critics such as Derek Elley, writing for the *Variety International Film Guide* (2001), believed the film to be 'both weak in inspiration and marketability' (161) while David Stratton (2001) considered *Glass Tiger* to be an 'overextended item [that] serves up only occasional laughs from a generally shopworn menu'.

Yet, despite the film's limited critical success, *Glass Tiger* has become somewhat of a cultural phenomenon in Hungary. Such has been the success of *Glass Tiger* and its sequels that a replica of the Glass Tiger caravan is now permanently situated in the village of Tinnye, Pest County – the location where the film was shot. The site is a popular tourist attraction where fans regularly take photographs of themselves in front of the famous café and even sign its walls. The replica is owned by the Glass Tiger Hotel and Restaurant (*Üvegtigris Panzió és Étterem*), the hotel where the cast and crew stayed during production. The hotel fully embraces the film's success, utilising the film's logo and promotional material for marketing purposes. The hotel's dining area is decorated with photographs of the cast and crew during their stay and they even sell *Glass Tiger* themed merchandise.

The Glass Tiger Hotel and Restaurant is not alone in utilising the film for business ends. Indeed, a variety of Hungarian eateries, ranging from kiosk stands to cafés, restaurants, bars

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[84] For further insights on the difficulties Hungarian comedies have faced translating with international audiences, see Riegel 1977.

and pubs have all adopted the name Üvegtigris.[85] While certain establishments just share the name and do not necessarily have any connection to the *Glass Tiger* series, many actively embrace the films by incorporating the logo on signage, menus and advertising. These range from professional reproductions to handmade, painted signs and logos. Many also embrace the eclectic and ramshackle style of the Glass Tiger café, one that has its roots in the traditions of Hungarian fast food.

Following the success of *Glass Tiger*, Kapitány was appointed as Head of the Film and Entertainment department of Hungarian television channel MTV (*Magyar Televízió*), holding the position between 2004 and 2005. In 2006, Kapitány directed his first solo project, *Kútfejek/Pumpheads* (2006) which meant he was unable to contribute to the *Glass Tiger* sequel released the same year. He returned to the role of cinematographer for the third *Glass Tiger* film. Rudolf has since became a mainstay of Hungarian comedy, featuring in the long-running improvisational television series *Beugró/Stand-In* (2007-2012) and in films such as *Csudafilm/Miracle Film* (Elemér Ragályi, 2005), *Egy szoknya, egy nadrág/One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers* (Bence Gyöngyössy, 2006), *Macskafogó 2: A sátán macskája/Cat City 2: Satan's Cat* (Béla Ternovsky, 2007), *Kalandorok/Adventurers* (Béla Paczolay, 2008) and *Nejem, nőm, csajom/Our Women* (Péter Szajka, 2012), not to mention the two *Glass Tiger* sequels, which he directed and co-wrote.

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[85] Such venues even exceed the Hungarian borders; there exists a Hungarian owned Üvegtigris Beach Bar in Nesebar, Bulgaria and a catering van in London named Üvegtigris.

2.2.2. The Unfulfilled Promises of Neoliberal Capitalism.

Having briefly explored *Glass Tiger*'s cultural legacy, I now wish to focus upon the ways in which the film engages with post-communist life and the myths of the Imaginary West. I argue that *Glass Tiger* provides insight into contemporary attitudes towards material culture while exposing a discrepancy between the Westernisation of Hungarian culture and the standards of living many had assumed of Hungary's Western integration. Indeed, from the outset, the film emphasises the extent to which Hungarian culture has been westernised. The film opens on the fourth of July with two disc jockeys discussing the rock band, *Kiss*. We are then introduced to Lali, first seen taking photographs of himself stood next to an American war monument. Lali is an American fanatic; he has a miniature American flag tattooed on his arm, wears a Canadian baseball jersey, and regularly chews a toothpick in the insouciant manner of a Hollywood movie star. Such is his affection for America that has decorated the Glass Tiger café with the stars and stripes of the American flag.

The proceeding scenes introduce the viewer to Lali's various friends and customers, many of whom, like Lali, share a passion for the West. Csoki (Imre Csuja), for example, is a would-be Hell's Angel; he dresses in leather, rides a motorcycle with an American flag attached to its seat and carries a gun. However, rather than riding the traditional Harley Davidson, Csoki rides a Babetta, a Czechoslovakian-produced motorised bicycle. He is irresponsible and obstreperous, incessantly shouting, "Easy Rider, brother! Easy Rider!" ("*ízi rájder öcsém*"), referencing the Dennis Hopper film of 1969. He speaks of his desire to go to America, ride Route 66, see Hollywood, New York, Rodeo Drive and win over Pamela Anderson. Yet, in reality, he is unemployed and lives with his mother.

Later, we are introduced to Gaben (Gabór Reviczky), a car hustler (*autónepper*) who we first see wearing a Las Vegas baseball cap. He references J.R. Ewing from the American TV show *Dallas* and drives a succession of luxury American cars including a Lincoln and a Corvette. Gaben convinces Lali to trade his unfashionable UAZ-469 for a 1971 Chevrolet Impala; a vehicle that he believes will better represent Lali's personality.[86] The Impala is more than simply a vehicle; it is the commodified representation of Lali's desired persona. The Chevrolet, advertised as 'The heartbeat of America', is the United States' bestselling vehicle manufacturer and has become an icon of Americana.[87] For Lali, the Impala embodies the American dream; representing social mobility, liberation and status. It also confirms upon him a sense of belonging within the global, post-communist world.

Lali's wait for the Impala spans much of the film and he soon grows impatient, especially after seeing Gaben arrive at the café in a succession of luxury vehicles.[88] Eventually the Impala arrives and Lali is finally able to attain the social esteem that the vehicle embodies. Unfortunately, before he is even able to fire up the Impala's engine, an articulated lorry reverses into the car, immediately crushing it.

I argue that the destruction of the Impala provides a means of examining the realities of post-communism set against the expectations of Hungary's return to the West. The collapse of communism allowed Hungarians to envisage new forms of personal identity constructed from the vast array of newly available Western consumer products. Under communism, Western

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[86] The UAZ-469 is a Russian-manufactured utility vehicle originally used by the armed forces and paramilitary units in the Eastern Bloc.

[87] Such is the Chevrolet's status within American culture that over 700 songs have referenced the emblematic brand (Krisher 2011).

[88] The silver-tongued Gaben even attempts to deceive Lali by bringing him a Chevrolet Chavette instead of the Impala, claiming: "You told me to bring a Chevvy. Here it is".

material culture had long been tied to notions of choice, individual freedom and expressions of self-identity, tenets held in high esteem by those living under a political system that placed collective identity over that of the individual's. Indeed, for many citizens, post-communist material culture served as a pronouncement of self-expression, dignity and self-worth and an articulation of belonging, validating Hungary's reconnection to the West. The normalisation of Western consumerism in Hungary served as a declaration of the nation's claims to its rightful position in the first world. While the illegitimate communists had temporarily separated Hungary from the West, Hungarians continued to define themselves as such owing to longstanding historical ties and through Hungary's varied contributions to Western civilisation. Consequently, following transition, many citizens viewed material culture and conspicuous consumption as normal and rightful by virtue of their Western connotations. This sense of rightfulness alludes to Krisztina Fehérváry's (2002) discourse on the normal in which she states:

> 'Normal' was commonly used to describe services, goods or constructions new to Hungary since 1989, things in keeping with socialist era expectations of life under a capitalist, free market system. New telephone systems, automatic teller machines, 24-hour convenience stores and courteous sales clerks were examples of a 'normal' world available to most of the population. These were amenities that Hungarians associated with a certain dignity accorded to bourgeois citizens of the 'first world' (374).

Material culture in post-communist Hungary thus served as an expression of personal and collective identity, validating the post-communist citizen's globalised subjectivities. Like Lali, for whom the Chevrolet Impala served as an affirmation of self-respect and status, many post-communist citizens employed Western consumer items as signifiers of social prestige and personal dignity.

However, while consumers gained access to a profusion of Western products and popular culture became awash with Western imagery, the unforeseen hardship of transition drastically impeded many citizen's access to these resources of cosmopolitan identity. Hungary had endured long-term recession since the 1980s and by the early 1990s, foreign debt stood at such an extreme level that strict austerity measures were necessary in order to balance Hungary's budget deficit and attract the foreign investment needed to modernise the economy. Such measures came at the cost of the Hungarian citizens as unemployment figures rose and wages, pensions and social welfare all decreased. Thus, the privatisation that facilitated the influx of Western consumer products into the Hungarian marketplace also resulted in wide-scale financial privation that affected a large portion of the Hungarian population. Indeed, Hungarian-born sociologist Paul Hollander (2002) maintains that ten years after the post-communist transition, only ten percent of the population were as well off, thirty percent belonged to the middle strata and the remaining sixty percent lived precariously near the poverty line (70).[89]

Thus, while consumer advertising engulfed the urban landscape and the latest consumer products filled shops and stores, these items continued to be elusive to those who simply could not afford them. As consumerism became the means through which Hungarians shaped new identities and demonstrated that they indeed belonged to the Western world, poverty created a sense of exclusion. Indeed, as Hungarian journalist, Gusztav Kosztolanyi states,

> Hungarian society is becoming increasingly polarised between the haves and the
> have-nots. The losers are the old, the weak, the disabled and the homeless who

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[89] Compare these figures to similar statistics taken from America. In the year 2000, the poverty rate in the United States stood at 11.3 percent (Dalaker 2001, 1) whereas 48 percent of Americans classified themselves middle class while 15 percent as upper middle class (Jones and Saad 2015).

are pushed even further into the margins due to their relatively small share of wealth… To be included, you must conform to expectations generated by the advertising agencies. The greatest sin of all is poverty (1999a).

Kosztolanyi suggests that the freedoms Western consumer culture had represented during the communist era have since been bastardised by neoliberal agenda. The integration of fully-fledged market capitalism has ultimately produced more losers than winners, operating in the interests of the global elite as opposed to those of the Hungarian people. In his critique of neoliberalism, David Harvey (2005) suggests that,

> [t]he freedom of the market… proclaim[ed] as the high point of human aspiration turns out to be nothing more than the convenient means to spread corporate monopoly power and Coca Cola everywhere without constraint. With disproportionate influence over the media and the political process this class (with Rupert Murdoch and Fox News in the lead) has both the incentive and the power to persuade us that we are all better off under a neoliberal regime of freedoms. (38)

Indeed, *Glass Tiger* encapsulates the neoliberal monopolisation of desire through Lali's longing to own an American car. I argue, however, that the Chevrolet Impala ultimately functions as an embodiment of the myths of the West, an allegorical representation of many citizen's expectations of post-communism. Following the collapse of the old regime, 'Hungarians were told, and many believed, they'd become like neighboring Austrians—a BMW in every driveway.' (Jordan 2010, 99). Communist-era utopian fantasies fuelled post-communist desires for affluence and prosperity, which were only intensified by the overabundance of Western products on the Hungarian highstreets and the omnipresence of consumer advertising. The Impala symbolises such affluence. The prestigious and glamourous Impala, a symbol of Americana, embodies the assumptions that accompanied Hungary's return to the West, fantasies rooted in Hungary's communist past and sold by Western consumer advertising. The Impala's destruction, however, speaks to the realities of

post-communism. Just as the car's destruction denies Lali access to the Impala, the hardships of transition and the unanticipated privation of post-communism left many citizens unfulfilled and with feelings of ambivalence towards the new economic system.

2.2.3. The Glass Tiger Café and the Façade of Westernisation.

However, it is not only through the destruction of the Impala that *Glass Tiger* seeks to engage with the myths of the West and the realities of post-communist life, I argue that *Glass Tiger* explores such myths by emphasising the enduring legacy of communism. The film invites its audience to view neoliberal globalisation as a smokescreen masking the realities of transition with the omnipresence of Western cultural discourse. I maintain that behind these superficial manifestations of Westernisation, one may observe the enduring footprint of communism. The notion of dressing the old in the trinkets of the new is explicit in Lali's place of work, the Glass Tiger café. The Glass Tiger displays in the stars and stripes of the American flag and sells fast food such as hot dogs and hamburgers. Nevertheless, despite its American frontage, the Glass Tiger cannot disguise its communist heritage.

American fast-food restaurants were quick to establish a foothold in Hungary, a process that had begun prior to the fall of the Iron Curtain. McDonald's opened its first restaurant in Hungary in April 1988, the first of such restaurants to be opened within the Warsaw Pact states.[90] Other American fast food chains followed suit. The second Burger King in Eastern Europe opened in Budapest in 1991 and both the first KFC and Pizza Hut in the region opened in Budapest in 1992. Initially, at least, American-style fast food restaurants became

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[90] Now over 100 McDonald's exist throughout Hungary.

sites of elevated cultural prestige and widely perceived as symbols of Hungary's modernisation and Westernisation. Indeed, as anthropologist André P. Czeglédy (2002) suggests, the fast food industry was 'considered by many Hungarians to be emblematic of the general success of the West as an idealized economic, political and social panacea' (159). Frequenting fast food restaurants demonstrated a certain level of cosmopolitanism. Indeed, as American sociologist George Ritzer (2004) suggests, '[e]ating fast food at McDonald's has… become a "sign" that, among other things, one is in tune with contemporary lifestyle' (12).[91]

However, fast food establishments had been present in Hungary long before the late 1980s. The Kádár government sporadically permitted the development of fast food enterprises. Like the workhouse canteen, these establishments served to free the female sector of the workforce from the burdens of meal preparation and housework in order to better utilise them in the workplace. Czeglédy (2002) describes a typical communist fast food establishment as follows:

> These food stands are small-scale, often making use of the semi-permanent facilities cobbled together from a bewildering array of materials. They tend to be sparsely furnished and chaotically decorated. If there is a permanent premises, it is often grubby with use of one or two closely situated countertops on which they may consume their loosely packaged food (146).

If we examine the Glass Tiger café in light of Czeglédy's description, comparisons are immediately visible. The Glass Tiger is itself a tow caravan with a filthy counter top, a separate free-standing counter set up a few feet away and a couple of white plastic outdoor dining tables with matching chairs. Inside the café is equally disordered. The cramped interior is cluttered with the paraphernalia of business and the work surfaces covered with old

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[91] However, not all citizens responded to the arrival of such franchises in the same way (see Harper 1999 and Kriza 2004 for further details).

beer cans and left over food. Other fixtures are heavily stained with grease and other food-related spillages and the walls are covered with posters of featherweight boxer István 'Ko-Ko' Kovács and various topless centrefolds. The signage above the counter is crudely painted and time and neglect have worn the lettering to spell 'ÜVEGTI RIS'. Moreover, the exterior sign, situated at the end of the road, consists of an assortment of makeshift neon lights. The cobbled together nature of the logo stands in stark contrast to the clear and coherent nature of the banners and logos utilised by global, multinational companies. While the golden arches of the McDonald's logo are immediately recognisable, the Glass Tiger's logo is barely legible.

The café has the American flag painted on one corner of the caravan with the text, 'US NAVY 625' written on its frontage. This particular military reference signifies the USS Henry Clay (SSBN-625), a ballistic missile submarine (USS Henry Clay SSBN-625 Home Page 2012). Here, the film ironically likens the Glass Tiger to a form of watercraft notorious for not being seen, thus hinting at the café's lack of trade. The painted lettering also demonstrates the, at times, arbitrary use of Western references employed by companies seeking to latch onto the cultural capital of the West during the early years of post-communism.

Czeglédy also contends that within the communist fast food industry 'the division of labour is invariably a flexible or indistinct one that reflects the lack of hierarchical pretension and division of labour in the premises' (2002, 146). Indeed, working practices at the Glass Tiger are similarly unstructured, actual work is kept to a minimum and often it is not clear who is working and who is patronising. Lali is the proprietor of the Glass Tiger and runs the day-to-day business with the help of his half-witted assistant Sanyi (Lajos Ottó Horváth). However, due to the sporadic nature of business, work is flexible and Lali regularly stands in front of

the counter rather than behind it, eating and drinking with his friends. Such is the blurring of labour divisions that in one scene Lali even tells friend Cingár (József Szarvas) to make something for himself.

Lali's approach to customer service is also deeply engrained in communist mannerisms. Katherine Verdery (1996) distinguishes the different emphasis placed on customer service by capitalist and communist enterprises, stating:

> In our [capitalist] society, the problem is other sellers, and to outcompete them you have to befriend the buyer. Thus our clerks and shop owners smile and give the customer friendly service because they want business; customers can be grouchy, but it will only make the clerk try harder. In socialism, the locus of competition was elsewhere: your competitor was other buyers, other procurers; and to outcompete them you needed to befriend those higher up who supplied you. Thus in socialism it was not the clerk – the provider, or "seller" – who was friendly (they were usually grouchy) but the procurers, the customers, who sought to ingratiate themselves with smiles, bribes, or favours (22).

Unquestionably, Lali more closely resembles the latter of Verdery's archetypes, his attitude defying 'the customer is always right' ethos that the Glass Tiger's Westernised exterior insinuates. Lali give preferential treatment to friends and family – we see, for example, that Lali has a tab system established for his regular patrons – but is disdainful to other customers. Lali swears at customers, threatens them and generally has little regard for service. Instead, he spends his working hours watching television, drinking with his friends and scratching scratch cards.

Perhaps the most notorious example of Lali's attitude to customer service is in the scene where he takes a customer's order for a hamburger. The customer approaches the counter and makes his order, startling Lali as he sleeps. Once roused and on his feet, Lali proceeds to prepare the man's meal. However, the finicky customer constantly nit-picks, refusing the

mushrooms because they are Chinese and claiming his hotdog has too much mustard on it, forcing Lali to prepare his food anew. Lali eventually loses his patience when the customer asks for still water and immediately changes his mind to sparkling. In his frustration, Lali, sarcastically asks "How many bubbles? I have one, five or ten bubbles…the one bubble is expensive as I have to get rid of the rest". He then proceeds to give the man his hotdog with ketchup, as ordered, but completely drowns the food in the condiment. The customer asks for the complaint book to which Lali replies: "Go home and get your mother to cook for you, you little shit" and returns to his seated position by the fridge, indifferently chewing his toothpick. As this scene suggests, Lali's approach to customers resembles that of the communist retailer who, as anthropologist Melissa L. Caldwell (2009) states, 'wielded considerable power, deciding not only whether to serve a particular customer but also which items to sell and of what quantity' (10).

Through the constitution of the Glass Tiger café and Lali's working practices, the film comments on the façade of Westernisation in post-communist Hungary. While the Glass Tiger caravan's exterior may be American in style, the functioning of the café remains inseparably tied to customs and practices developed under communism. The Glass Tiger café thus serves as an analogical device through which the film comments on the post-communist transition and Hungary's return to the West. Despite the appearance of successful transition, as is evident in the neoliberal expansion and the Westernisation of the Hungarian high streets, the film encourages audiences to look beyond this veneer of successful integration to see the realities of transition that lie beyond it. Indeed, behind the smokescreen of Western integration one may see the difficulties Hungarians have faced in adapting to the, at times, alien conditions post-communism and the burden of disregarding and rejecting a way of life that for forty years had been perceived as fixed and certain.

Glass Tiger ultimately ponders who profited from the introduction of market capitalism, the Hungarian citizens or the multinational companies that capitalised on Hungary's virginal marketplace. Yet, rather than simply applying cultural imperialist discourse, the film situates neoliberal globalisation and consumer culture within a specific post-communist context. As Judit Bodnár suggests, 'postsocialism offers a context in which many of the widely documented effects of globalisation may be observed in a clearer, more pronounced form: they are sudden and, hence, less mediated' (2001, 6). Rather than interpreting the post-communist Hungarian as a passive consumer, the issue is complicated by Hungary's communist heritage and the role materialism subsequently played in the formation of post-communist identities.

2.3. *Tamara*, Transition and Hungary's Psychological Transformation.

Where *Glass Tiger* engages with post-communist material culture and the expectations surrounding Hungary's return to the West, I argue that Szabolcs Hajdu's 2004 film *Tamara* focuses upon a more neglected area of Western transitological discourse. I propose to examine the ways in which *Tamara* scrutinises the psychological transformation that accompanied the more well-documented political and economic transformations. The film observes the changing nature of social interaction in post-communist Hungary, highlighting a proclivity toward self-interest and the erosion of traditional forms of community. In doing so, I argue that *Tamara* complicates the myths of the West by bringing to the fore human consequences of transition, an issue frequently overlooked in the discourse surrounding Hungary's Western assimilation.

Tamara centres upon the lives of the Játékos family, an idiosyncratic household made up of Demeter (Domokos Szabó), an eccentric photographer in midst of a creative block, his put-upon wife Bori (Agnes Anna Kovács), and his brother Krisztián (Illés Nyitrai). The Játékos' live on an isolated farm where Demeter has not received company for 112 days. This is until Krisztián unexpectedly invites his friend Tamara (Orsolya Török-Illyés) to stay with them. Tamara's arrival fundamentally changes the lives of the three family members, disrupting their unconventional but ordered way of living. Through the introduction of Tamara, I argue that the film explores the social impact of the post-communist transition. In an interview with *Cineuropa*, Hajdu proclaimed that '[i]t is my strong belief that the mechanisms of a social system are projected even in the smallest community: the family' (Violeau 2007). Through the microcosm of the family, I maintain that Hajdu provides commentary on the attitudinal changes that occurred in post-communist Hungary, a society caught betwixt new and old socio-economic structures with their individual and often conflicting value systems. By examining Demeter, Bori and Krisztián's various responses to the arrival of Tamara, I argue that the film provides insight into the transformation of social outlooks that the post-communist transition induced.

Tamara has a unique and esoteric visual style, combining flamboyant and colourful mise-en-scène, exaggerated performances, oneiric cinematography and strange diegetic fluctuations. Hajdu made a conscious decision to use unconventional visual language, believing that doing so would rid the film of politics. Hajdu stated in a number of interviews that politics had divided post-communist society, dividing father and son, husband and wife. Such was the extent to which politics dominated and fragmented daily life that Hajdu felt the need to free the film from the political world. Therefore, Hajdu set the film in a mysterious, fantasy world, one that would allow him to reflect more closely on the changing nature of human

relations in post-communist Hungary free from the discordant realm of politics (see Sulyok 2004, Varga 2007).

2.3.1. *Tamara*'s Production and Reception History.

Tamara was Szabolcs Hajdu's second feature film following the success of his award-winning debut feature *Macerás ügyek/Sticky Matters* (2001), a surrealist comedy that won the Best Debut Director award at the 31st Hungarian Film Week (*Magyar Filmszemle*). *Tamara* began life as a chamber play performed at the Stúdió K theatre in Budapest in 2001. The play featured Szabó, Török-Illyés, Nyitrai and Tunde Bacskó, who was pregnant during the film's shoot and so replaced by her understudy Kovács. Shot over 33 days on location in Homorod valley, Transylvania on a meagre budget of 50 million Forints (Filmhu 2002), *Tamara* premiered at the 35th Hungarian Film Week before receiving its general release in Hungary in October 2004.

Upon release, *Tamara* received largely positive reviews. Gábor Gelencsér (2004b) of *Filmvilág* praised the way in which *Tamara*'s playful formal properties disguised more complex psychological processes. Anna Meller of Hungarian news website *Origo* (2004) viewed *Tamara* as a charming and fun film, commending the ways in which Hajdu bravely amalgamated various cinematic styles into something original and incomparable. Similarly, *Magyar Narancs* (2004) commented favourably on *Tamara*'s gratifying mood and rejection of traditional cinematic conventions, while Dániel Béres of *Filmhu* (2004) lauded Hajdu's

visual sensitivity, proclaiming the director's courage and conviction to be honourable.[92]

One may view *Tamara*'s positive critical reception in light of the wider generational shifts taking place in contemporary Hungarian cinema. Hajdu, alongside other young filmmakers including György Pálfi, Ferenc Török, Kornél Mundruczó, Nimród Antal and Benedek Fliegauf came to prominence in the early 2000s, winning critical acclaim for breaking away from the tired conventions of the past and revitalising cinema in Hungary, which, during the 1990s, had lost favour with local audiences and prestige internationally. Coming of age in and around the time of the post-communist transition, this new generation differed from their parents in that they had a very different relationship with both the communist past and the post-communist present. A key figure in the rise of this new generation was Sándor Simó who taught at the Academy of Theatre and Film Art and provided young talent, Hajdu included, with the opportunity to direct their debut feature films as part of obtaining their degree.[93]

However, while *Tamara*'s originality was widely recognised in relation to these contemporary generational shifts, the film was not without criticism. Such criticism chiefly

[92] *Tamara*'s praise in the national press mirrored its accolades. The film won the Special Prize of the Jury for best Visual Design at the 35th Hungarian Film Week in 2004. Furthermore, at the 2005 Hungarian Film Critic's Awards (*Magyar Filmkritikusok Díját*), *Tamara* won the special prize, cinematographer István Szaladják won the Best Cinematography award and set designer Mónika Esztán won the prize for Best Visual Design (*Magyar Filmunió* 2005). *Tamara* was also positively received on the international festival circuit, winning the Prémio Cinema Longa-Metragem at the 2005 Avanca Film Festival and appearing at a number of high profile festivals such as the Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival, the Mar del Plata in Argentina and the MedFilm Festival in Rome. *Tamara* was also the first Hungarian film to feature in competition at the Shanghai International Film Festival (Filmhu 2004).

[93] Hajdu, however, found generational classifications problematic, claiming 'our generation is in the foreground of Hungarian film primarily because of historical reasons and not talent' (Violeau 2007).

targeted the film's narrative, which several commentators believed verged on the banal (see Legát 2004 and Meller 2004). Erzsébet Bori (2004), in her summary of the film, suggested that while *Tamara*'s 'world of intimacy' is immersive, Hajdu does not attempt to guide the audience through it (168). Correspondingly, Derek Elley (2004) claimed that Hajdu 'needs to provide more of a bridge for [audiences] to connect with his universe', believing that international audiences simply would not have the patience to decode *Tamara*'s cryptic messages. Gelencsér (2004b) congruously described *Tamara* as a primarily visual experience, suggesting that the film's aesthetic and stylistic eccentricities occasionally obscure the film's complex psychological dimensions. Gelencsér claimed that, at times, character motivations were not explicit due to the grotesquely burlesque nature of the performances, especially that of Szabó's. *Tamara* would ultimately go on to fare poorly at the Hungarian box office securing only 7,408 viewers in over 400 screenings (Löwensohn 2005, 258).

In an interview conducted with Ferenc Varga of *Origo* (2007)*,* Hajdu revealed that he intended *Tamara* to be a reflection on contemporary social phenomena. Yet despite these intentions, the film's social commentary went largely unheeded, with audiences generally perceiving *Tamara* to be an idiosyncratic fairy tale. In response to this fact, Hajdu claimed that he actively endeavoured to engage more directly with the social issues addressed in his next project, the TV film *Off Hollywood* (2007). Indeed, throughout his subsequent oeuvre, Hajdu seems to have found a better balance between style and substance, packaging socio-cultural commentary in more accessible, but no less intricate, cinematic language.[94]

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[94] *Fehér tenyér/White Palms* (2006), *Bibliothèque Pascal* (2010), *Delibáb/Mirage* (2014) and *Ernelláék Farkaséknál/It's Not the Time of My Life* (2016) are all more explicit in their representation of social issues but, at the same time, maintain the complexity of *Tamara*'s formal representation.

2.3.2. Idiosyncrasy as Allegory.

How then does *Tamara* challenge the myths of the West? I argue that *Tamara* provides insight into the effects of post-communism on the individual and the ways in which interpersonal interaction changed following transition. The film engages with the unanticipated complexities of post-communist life, placing emphasis on the changing nature of human relations, addressing issues of post-communist atomisation, self-interest and alienation. The film's central premise, in which titular character Tamara arrives at the Játékos family farmhouse and inadvertently uproots their sheltered but ordered lives, invites allegorical readings. I argue that through Tamara's various effects on the Játékos household, the film alludes to the destabilisation of the post-communist transformation and the changing nature of social behaviour that accompanied transition. Hajdu establishes this allegory through the film's unique visual style, paralleling the idiosyncratic filmic world with the abnormal world of communism, which the incoming Tamara proceeds to disrupt and destabilise.

The film opens with an aerial shot of the unpopulated Transylvanian countryside that extends into the distance revealing no signs of human settlement. After some time, the camera slowly descends to reveal a single farmhouse isolated within the valley, its periwinkle blue colouring standing prominently against the greens of the surrounding countryside. As the farmhouse enters the frame non-diegetic music begins, a 1960s Bubblegum pop-inflected soundtrack that calls to mind both circus music and Muzak. The colourful house and kitsch music strike a contrast to the naturalism of the rural surroundings.

We then encounter the film's various narrators, the farmyard animals. The animals not only

speak a gobbledygook language translated into Hungarian via subtitles, but they are also an assortment of bright colours. Throughout the film, the animals closely scrutinise the various interactions of the characters with a certain pomposity. However, their commentary renders ambiguous the spatial and temporal dimensions of the diegesis. While the animals are part of the diegetic world and even interact with the characters - though not vocally - they often comment upon events before they happen and have access to information they would not be privileged to within the diegesis, such as the content of Demeter's dreams. Therefore, despite their presence within the diegesis, the animal's commentary regularly fluctuates between diegetic and extra-diegetic voiceover. Through both the ambiguous rendering of diegetic space and through the inexplicably colourful talking animals, Hajdu situates the audience in an unconventional and elaborate world in which the natural order of logic and reason become irrational and irrelevant.

Alongside the film's strange commentators and their ambiguous position within the diegesis, *Tamara* also incorporates a heightened acting style that is correspondingly eccentric. Domokos Szabó, in particular, plays Demeter with baroque expressivity, utilising exaggerated facial expressions and gestures to portray the frustrated artist. The audience first encounter Demeter wondering around the farmyard wearing a pair of off-white, three-quarter length trousers, a red neckerchief and a black fedora. The animal commentators inform the audience of Demeter's inability to dress himself and we see a number of discarded garments scattered in the sand surrounding the house. Demeter then attempts to put on a sweater. He spasmodically squats to a kneeling position, dragging his head across the garment positioned on the ground. After this method proves ineffectual, Demeter endeavours to don the non-compliant apparel by throwing it over his head and raising both arms in an endeavour to catch the sweater on its descent.

Following this, the animal narrators introduce the audience to Bori, first seen returning from town having bought some potatoes and checked the family's near empty bank account. As with Demeter's introduction, we learn that Bori too exhibits a number of strange habits and eccentricities. The animal narrators impart that in return for undertaking the domestic duties Bori makes one request; that she be given "a safe, warm palm or a kiss on an intimate part", which Demeter is compelled to exercise on a daily basis. However, this is no ordinary display of affection but an unusual custom in which Demeter, in a series of hyperbolic gestures, kisses Bori's shoulder, thigh and back.

Finally, the animals introduce Demeter's brother Krisztián, first seen running frenziedly towards to the farmhouse accompanied by another track from the film's Bubblegum pop score. As Krisztián sprints, his hat falls off necessitating that he turn back to retrieve it. Again, Krisztián's introduction places emphasis on his quirks and peculiarities. He enters the house and the animal commentators inform the audience of his addiction to "pleasant sensualism" whereupon Krisztián performs an exaggerated stretching routine, which, while not being anatomically accurate, cracks his joints satisfyingly, distracting Demeter from the game of chess he plays with Bori.

Through the film's quirky characters and exaggerated performance style, Hajdu further enhances the aura of abnormality established by the film's score and the animal commentators. To complement the eccentric nature of the performances, the camera is in almost constantly motion, panning and tracking around the farmyard and alongside the characters at a languid pace. The fluid motion of the camera bestows upon the film an oneiric quality that, accompanied by the film's circus-esque score, recalls the gentle rhythm of a

carousel. The film also utilises other visual techniques such as fast and slow motion, and reverse footage that serve to further destabilise reality and enhance the film's sense of peculiarity.

By depicting the diegetic world in a manner that is characteristically abnormal in both theme and style, I argue that *Tamara* presents a complex allegory of communist Hungary. Krisztina Fehérváry's (2002) posits that during the early years of post-communism, the word normal (*normális*) came to evoke that which was natural, rational and reliable. By contrast, the abnormal came to denote the opposite, that which was unnatural, illogical and unnecessary. However, in the context of transition, the term normal came to constitute that which may have been extraordinary to the local context but was normative of a conceptual vision of life in the West. Conversely, the abnormal came to constitute that which was familiar but not in keeping with this mythical conception of Western living. Consequently, as Féherváry maintains, under communism

> everyday life was generally 'abnormal' under conditions of constant material shortages, all-encompassing bureaucratic entanglements, and political anxiety. Hungarians have thus regularly used 'not normal' and its equivalents to refer negatively to the familiar and the expected, to the accustomed workings and environments of everyday 'abnormal' life (373).

Owing to the hard dictatorship and the crushing of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, Hungarians largely perceived themselves as the victims of communism, involuntary participants in the socialist experiment. Few citizens espoused the communist ideology, instead perceiving the system to be abnormal, immoral and illegitimate. This perception only intensified as access to the West increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Viewed in conjunction with Western-style democracy and liberalism, synonymously tied to freedom and individual human dignity, the communist system, characterised by heavy bureaucracy, state surveillance and corruption,

was comparatively unnatural and abnormal. The centralised economic system further accentuated this perception of abnormality. While Hungarians found themselves in a privileged position within the Eastern bloc in that shortages of everyday products were rarely experienced, utilities and other commodities such as televisions, telephones and cars, items that were readily available in the West, had long waiting lists. Such inefficiency further added to communism's aura of abnormality.

Thus, through the film's abnormal stylisation, I argue that Hajdu symbolically alludes to common sensibilities in Hungary regarding life under communism. During the communist years and following its demise, Hungarians widely perceived the communist system to be unnatural, perplexing and alien and it is this sense of abnormality that Hajdu captures in the idiosyncratic filmic world.[95]

2.3.3. Expanding the Allegory: The Arrival of Tamara.

Having interpreted *Tamara*'s opening as an analogy of communism, one may elaborate further; I argue that it is possible to discern Tamara's arrival as an allegory of the introduction of fully-fledged market capitalism and the change of social attitude that accompanied transition. The first shot of Tamara is via her boots, self-consciously framed in a single shot that begins as a medium close-up of a commentating rooster stood atop of a fence post. In a pedestal shot, the camera descends the fence post to a position parallel to the ground where it

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[95] Viewed in light of this communist allegory, the Játékos' reclusion is suggestive of the segregation of the iron curtain, symbolically visualised in the isolation of the opening image and through the fact that the Játékos family have not received company for 112 days. Similarly, Demeter's uneventful acceptance of Tamara's imminent arrival, despite having previously refused guests, serves to symbolise Hungary's 'remarkably un-revolutionary' transition (Creet 2013, 34).

begins to track Krisztián and Tamara's feet as they walk. The camera's calculated positioning places emphasis on Tamara's boots ahead of any other feature, moving from a height that would have presumably framed her face. Such framing places emphasis on Tamara's footwear, drawing the viewer's attention to her fashionable attire and their unsuitability for the farmyard terrain, made evident as she stumbles and trips.

The following shot frames Tamara in medium close-up as she walks towards the camera with Krisztián. The shot again frames their feet, cropping just above the knee. As the pair walk towards the camera the cinematography suddenly shifts into slow motion with the characters continuing their journey for a few extra paces before the image cuts. Slow motion attaches significance to that which, on first inspection, may appear innocuous. In slowing the cinematography, the framing of the shot is emphasised, inviting the audience to read significance into her footwear, a factor that on first appearance may appear banal.

We gain further glimpses of Tamara from the point of view of Bori as she tries to catch sight of her guest from the farmhouse using binoculars. Despite Bori's efforts, Krisztián's positioning and the surrounding foliage obscure her view. What Bori does discover, however, is that Tamara does not like getting dirt on her clothes and updates Demeter when Tamara cleans her legs with a handkerchief. Bori is also able to discern that Tamara has painted nails, which she imparts to Demeter with a real sense of surprise.

Returning to Tamara and Krisztián, the camera now frames the two of them in mid-shot from the waist down, giving prominence to Tamara's boots, miniskirt and belt. Shortly thereafter, the camera frames Tamara in a more traditional medium close-up framing her upper body, but she has her back to the camera as she examines some of Demeter's discarded artwork.

Once again, the camera's viewpoint gives prominence to Tamara's apparel, we see that she wears a beige leather jacket and a red scarf, worn as an accessory, but tellingly, we still do not see her face.

The premeditated effort to frame Tamara in a manner that focalises her clothing, I argue, links her to the arrival of globalised capitalism in Hungary. This is by no means to suggest that the garments worn by Tamara only became available after of transition. Instead, I argue that the prominence of Tamara's attire in her introduction serves as a means of signifying the change in social attitudes that the post-communist transition instilled. When Tamara is finally revealed she is elegant, well-groomed and contemporary, described by the horse as "discreet, aesthetical and beautiful". She dresses in the latest fashion, accessorises and wears make up. I argue that Tamara represents the new attitudinal disposition towards body image and appearance that accompanied transition, a disposition fostered by the expansive availability of consumer items and enhanced product knowledge acquired through consumer advertising and the proliferation of Western-style lifestyle magazines, periodicals and tabloid newspapers. As journalist and novelist, Slavenka Drakulić (1992) maintains, under communism '[t]rying to be beautiful was always difficult; it involved an extra effort, devotion perhaps. But most women didn't have time or imagination enough to try it' (27). Following transition, image consciousness became a politicised act, articulating the individuality that the old regime had suppressed while providing evidence of one's affinity with the contemporary, globalised world.[96]

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[96] Indeed, as Coulter, Feick and Price (2002) maintain, between 1991 and 1995 the Hungarian cosmetic and toiletries market increased by 40 percent (1288).

Tamara's arrival thus alludes to the new outlooks that came to the fore during the early years of transition. The fashionable and contemporary Tamara represents individualism, self-expression and self-direction, ideals held as fundamental to the post-communist mind-set. Indeed, throughout the course of the film we find that despite her initial timidity, Tamara is entirely motivated by self-interest. She wishes to get close to the once famous photographer Demeter and become his muse.

Even before Demeter and Tamara make each other's acquaintance, Tamara takes a notable interest in his discarded artwork as she makes her way to the farmhouse. Such is the attention that Tamara gives the pictures that Krisztián is compelled to call her away from them. During the first night, a restless Bori watches over Krisztián's cabin speculating as to why the lights remain on. We later learn that Tamara has also stayed up, viewing more of Demeter's photographs. The next morning Tamara persistently enquires about Demeter, asking Bori an assortment of personal questions about their relationship, such as whether Demeter is faithful, whether he is a womaniser and whether Bori thinks the two of them have been together for too long. Later, during a party intended to celebrate Krisztián's plans to work abroad as a living statue, Tamara openly flirts with Demeter in sight of both Bori and Krisztián, bewitching him with her beauty.

It is only later, when Tamara has a camera delivered to the farmhouse as a gift for Krisztián, that her true intentions are exposed. For Demeter, the gift provides a moment of realisation; affirming that he and Krisztián are being used. In reaction, Demeter relays a parable in which a tick jumps from a tree onto the back of a passing man. A skinny wolf confronts the man and the tick transfers to its back, feeds on it, but only enough to sustain, and waits to find the fattest man who it can feed on for years. Through the parable, Demeter insinuates that

Tamara is using Krisztián in order to get access to him and win fame by modelling for his photographs.

I argue then that Tamara serves as an allegorical figure, one that not only represents post-communist individualism through the emphasis placed on her looks and style but also through her actions, Tamara can be seen to embody post-communist self-interest and narcissistic selfishness. The introduction of market capitalism fundamentally transformed social conduct in Hungary, emphasising the individual over the community and, in doing so, cultivated selfish habits, a growing sense of self-entitlement and a lack of empathy.

Such attitudes are visible in Tamara's relationship with Krisztián. Despite being Krisztián's guest, Tamara pays him little attention during her visit and instead focuses her attention on Demeter. She treats Krisztián as her lackey, riding on his back as he carries her luggage and reprimanding him for interrupting her as she enquires about Demeter's whereabouts. Even in their more playful moments, Tamara subjugates Krisztián. When Krisztián pretends to lasso Tamara using an imaginary rope, she refuses to keep still for him. Yet, when Tamara takes over the role of the cowboy, she rides Krisztián like a pony, slapping his side to calm him and commanding that he canter. Finally, Krisztián collapses and Tamara kicks an apple into his mouth.

Tamara's attitude towards Bori is similarly manipulative. She undermines Bori at any opportunity as she vies for Demeter's affection. In one such scene, Tamara calls attention to the fact that Bori dyes her hair, which Bori initially denies. The framing of this scene is particularly striking, visualising Tamara's aggressive manner towards her rival. Positioned inside the farmhouse, the camera frames Tamara and Bori through a window as they stand

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outside. A frame within a frame motif confines the two women within a tight space, visualising the tension between them. Both Tamara and Bori stand to the right of the window with Bori positioned at the very edge of the frame and Tamara placed proximate to her on her left. The left-hand side of the window remains empty until Demeter and Krisztián later enter the scene. However, as Tamara questions Bori about her hair, the tight positioning of the two women gives the impression that Tamara is attempting to literally force Bori out of the frame, visualising Tamara's efforts to supplant Bori.

2.3.4. The Játékós Reaction: Psychological Responses to Post-Communism.

However, Tamara is not the only character who provides substance for social analysis; through the three Játékos family members, one may garner insight into the fragmentation of post-communist society. In an interview with Máté Sulyok of *Filmkultúra* (2004), Hajdu spoke of his desire to engage with post-communist atomisation. Hajdu claims that under communism, the state had served as a common enemy, uniting citizens and creating a general sense of social cohesion. Following transition, however, Hungary witnessed the advent of new social phenomena and individuals increasingly found themselves in conflict with one another.[97] The capitalist system's emphasis on self-reliance induced a growing sense of privatism as the efforts of day-to-day living resulted in less time for maintaining friendships (see West 2002). At the same time, capitalism gradually transformed post-communist citizens into modern consumers, encouraging self-serving materialistic sensibilities.[98] One of the

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[97] Hajdu is not alone in highlighting this now moribund sense of camaraderie that existed under communism, also see Clark 2009.
[98] Hungarian privatism and material subjectivity have their roots in communism. The hard dictatorship and the failed Uprising of 1956 all but destroyed the public sphere in Hungary and left a legacy of political estrangement. The public realm became something to be viewed

consequences of this change in attitude has been an erosion of community, which Hajdu explores through the Játékós family.

Tamara's arrival immediately causes rifts within the Játékos household, most notably between Demeter and Bori. Tamara infatuates Demeter and, consequently, he ignores his spouse. During the first night of Tamara's stay, Demeter has erotic dreams about her, the details of which are disclosed by a close-at-hand yellow chicken. In Demeter's sadomasochistic fantasy, Tamara locks him in a box, cuts him into pieces with a saw and then begins to fondle him, which, as the chicken reveals, causes Demeter to become aroused. Demeter's flirtatious behaviour causes unrest between himself and Bori, which Demeter further exacerbates by declaring his intentions to photograph Tamara in the nude. That night, Bori sits alone in contemplation. When approached by Demeter, the pair argue. Bori tells Demeter that she has observed a change in him, one that she finds uncharacteristic and unpleasant. She also expresses her unease with Tamara, who she describes as "smart, hip and devious". However, rather than reassuring Bori, Demeter simply goes mute. Bori asks Demeter whether he would like to have sex with Tamara but Demeter remains silent. In frustration, Bori knocks off Demeter's hat to which Demeter responds violently, grabbing Bori by the neck and knocking her to the ground. Hajdu utilises Bori and Demeter's deteriorating relationship to allude to the declining sense of fellowship and the breakdown of interpersonal communication that accompanied transition, rendering communication failure

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with suspicion, a site possessed and policed by the enemy, which instilled an insular and individualist disposition within a large segment of the population (see Drakulić 1987, 159-168). Privatism and self-interest were further cultivated under the more liberal governance of János Kádár, as Hungarians were provided greater access to consumer products in exchange for their compliance. Kádár's policies; however, served to further undermine the communism's collective ideology and supplanted capitalist notions of consumer consciousness and individualism.

literally through Demeter's refusal to talk. However, once Demeter refuses to communicate, his only means of discourse is violence.

I contend, however, that the Játékós family members not only provide evidence of a declining sense of community brought about by the establishment of new, post-communist mentalities advocating individualism and self-interest. Individually, I argue that Demeter, Bori and Krisztián all provide insight into the various ways in which citizens have responded to the post-communist transformation.

Initially, at least, Demeter represents the winners of transition. Immediately upon arrival, Tamara invigorates Demeter, not only emotionally but also creatively. His desire to photograph Tamara in the nude is somewhat of a revelation considering that he had previously been in the midst of a creative block, destroyed his old work, gone into hiding and refused company. I argue that the concept of an artist rediscovering his creative vigour is analogous to the discovery of self-expression that the post-communist transition facilitated. Demeter thus embodies the mentality of those who embraced post-communist individualism and adapted to the changing social milieu.

Demeter's infatuation with Tamara, however, is short-lived. Upon the delivery of the camera, Demeter finally believes he understands Tamara's true intentions. Following this revelation, his disposition towards his guest changes dramatically. He questions Tamara's reasons for visiting the farmhouse and her intentions towards Krisztián, bringing her to tears in the process. Demeter's frustration stem from the uncertainty that Tamara has brought into his and his family's life. However, his change in attitude also reflects the psychological shifts that

took place in post-communist Hungary. Despite the initial hopes that transition produced, many were left frustrated by the complexities of the new post-communist milieu.

Alternatively, through Bori's relationship with Tamara, the film examines the new culture of competition and resentment brought about by the market economy. Tamara's stylish dress sense and bewitching guile leaves Bori feeling vulnerable. Tamara always looks glamorous, never seen without make-up or in unflattering clothes. She places vanity over practicality and is often seen struggling on the uneven terrain of the farmhouse due to her impractical footwear. The less image-conscious Bori becomes envious of Tamara, especially given the attention that Demeter pays their new guest. Bori's resentment towards Tamara speaks to what Enikő Bollobás (1995) describes as an 'atmosphere of envy' (165), a common disposition in post-communist Hungary. The egalitarianism of communism resulted in the homogenisation of society whereby living standards were equal across society – theoretically at least. Following transition, however, the new possibilities for self-development, personal initiative and success were embraced by some while others found them alien. Those who failed to adapt to the new social climate were left disillusioned and tensions rose between the winners and losers of transition, fuelled by feelings of envy and frustration. Such discord resulted in accusations of foul play aimed at the affluent. Indeed, as Krisztina Fehérváry (2002) argues, 'comfortable lifestyles were not only burdened by associations with corruption, illegal entrepreneurial activities and abuse of privilege, but were also tainted by pretensions to an undeserved class status' (381). Equally, Bori's resentments towards Tamara articulate a similar sense of vulnerabitlity and envy produced by competition, as both women vie for Demeter's affection.

Finally, I argue that Krisztián serves as a symbolic embodiment of the victims of transition. He is completely subservient to Tamara. At no point does he try to assert himself despite Tamara's uncongenial behaviour. Hajdu accentuates Krisztián's passive nature in his unveiling as a living statue, the immobility of his performance visualising his utter submission to his guest. Krisztián's passivity stands in stark contrast to the new individualism that the post-communist milieu cultivated. Krisztián represents those who failed to adapt to the changing conditions of post-communism; those who failed to divest themselves of now outmoded mentalities of dependency. Under communism citizens were discouraged from taking initiative and, for many, these engrained social habits proved difficult to relinquish following transition.

Ultimately, *Tamara* presents a complex rendering of the post-communist transition from the perspective of its psychological impact. By setting the film in an idiosyncratic fairy tale world Hajdu foregrounds the human consequences of transition free from the economic and political dimensions that came to dominate much of the discourse surrounding transition. The Játékos family's various responses to Tamara, as has been demonstrated, provide insight into some of the ways in which Hungarians have responded to the regime change and the new conditions of post-communism. However, the film's conclusion suggests that these responses are transitory. Indeed, despite his initial reservations, Krisztián spends a year abroad and Tamara waits for him, embracing him on his return with a warmth and affection not previously exhibited. During Kristián and Tamara's absence, Demeter and Bori have reconciled and we see them holding hands as the foursome reunite. What's more, Demeter has managed to dress himself. The film's resolution suggests that what we have witnessed over the course of the film is an allegorical representation of what Henri Vogt (2005) describes as post-revolutionary ambivalence; that is to say, the uncertainty and conflicts

produced by the liminal period of adjustment in which the old and the new temporarily co-exist, creating uncertainty and frustration. However, as Vogt claims, and to which the film's conclusion testifies, the challenges that this period of adjustment produced were temporary and as citizens familiarised themselves with the new post-communist setting, this ambivalence slowly subsided.

As I hope to have demonstrated, *Tamara* provides a challenge to the utopian myths of the West by drawing attention to the unforeseen and often neglected consequences of transitional change. As Henri Vogt states, following transition, 'many no doubt believed that they had entered the perfect capitalist society – capitalism represented their utopian future' (81). Hajdu instead seeks to complicate this utopia by emphasising the often-overlooked human consequences of capitalist integration and the breakdown in social kinship that the capitalist system produced.

2.4. Post-Communist Post-Coloniality: Exploring Social Inequality in *Lost Times*.

The final film explored in this chapter marks a radical departure from the slapstick humour of *Glass Tiger* and the idiosyncratic charm of *Tamara* and instead presents life in rural Hungary in a far more sober and unsentimental manner. The film in question is *Utolsó idők/Lost Times* (2009), the debut feature film of Áron Mátyássy. Set in the summer of 1997 in a small village on the Hungarian Ukraine border, the film follows the lives of Iván Priskin (József Kádas), an out of work car mechanic, and his autistic sister Eszter (Teréz Vass). In lieu of gainful employment, Iván resorts to smuggling diesel from across the border. He dreams of escaping from the tedium of village life and "doing something big" but his commitment to his sister compels him to stay. The siblings' lives are irrevocably changed; however, when Eszter is

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raped. The police proceed to investigate but their enquiries are largely limited to harassing Iván about his criminal past and ultimately the case is left unresolved, closed under the verdict "offender unknown". Meanwhile, Iván begins a relationship with Ilus (Eszter Földes), an ambitious student preparing to go to university. The couple soon drift apart, however, when Ilus moves to a dormitory in the city. With life increasingly getting on top of him, Iván, by happenstance, stumbles across the perpetrators of his sister's rape and exacts violent revenge.

Lost Times is aesthetically hybrid, combining direct cinematography with moments of poetic lyricism. The film strives for verisimilitude; utilising naturalistic performances, unobtrusive, observational handheld camera work, and placing emphasis upon everyday life.[99] It would be an overstatement, however, to suggest that *Lost Times* constitutes a form of docu-fiction given the incorporation of more stylised and figurative elements. For example, Mátyássy sporadically retards the flow of the narrative to allow for digressionary asides that emphasise the mise-en-scène, endowing the cinematography with implicit symbolic meaning.[100] Indeed, Mátyássy repeatedly presents desolate rural imagery that accentuates the village's isolation. Yet, at the same time, these neglected landscapes also serve a metonymic function. Analogous to the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, Mátyássy employs the landscape as a

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[99] In this sense, *Lost Times* can be likened to the quasi-documentary films produced in Hungary during the late 1970s and 1980s by filmmakers such as Pál Schiffer, Pál Zolnay, István Dárday, and Pál Erdőss, a style that has been largely absent in post-millennium Hungarian cinema.

[100] One may argue that *Lost Times* shares commonalities with the French Poetic Realists of the 1930s. Akin to Jean Vigo's *L'atalante* (1934), *Lost Times* incorporates poetic interludes that communicate moments of subjectivity. Likewise, one may liken *Lost Times* to films such as *La bête humaine/The Human Beast* (Jean Renoir, 1938), *Le Quai des brumes/Port of Shadows* (Marcel Carné, 1938) and *La Règle du jeu/The Rules of the Game* (Jean Renoir, 1939), all of which foreground and poeticise the mise-en-scène and, in doing so, elevate the metonymic, symbolic and/or psychological qualities of their respective settings.

'physical "continuation" of the character's inner world' (Kovács 2007, 150). Thus, *Lost Times*' forsaken landscapes become suggestive of Iván's feelings of entrapment and hopelessness. The empty images offer no prospects or certainties, alluding to Iván's sense of powerlessness, his inability to control his own destiny and the futility of his efforts to better himself.

Lost Times' direct and immediate style is confrontational. Through the film's candid and unsentimental representation of rural Hungary, Mátyássy compels his audience to face the more inimical effects of the post-communist transition and, in doing so, challenges the Western myths of social equality as enabled by democracy and market capitalism. Through my analysis, I propose to examine how *Lost Times* engages with the realities of post-communist life. By presenting an image of rural Hungary red in tooth and claw, the film challenges the images of affluence disseminated by the mass media and exhibited in the consumer realm. Instead, *Lost Times* presents the inequality produced by an unbalanced politico-economic system that functions in the service of the capitalist elite. Through the film's questioning of capitalist hegemony, I argue that *Lost Times* shares a common thematic preoccupation with the Third Cinema. I propose, therefore, to explore how Third Cinema discourse provides a useful framework through which *Lost Times* engages with the post-communist experience.

2.4.1. *Lost Times*' Production and Reception History.

After earning a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Philosophy and Film Theory at Eötvös Lóránd University, Mátyássy studied at the Academy of Theatre and Film Art under the

tutelage of Sándor Simó and later Ferenc Grunwalsky.[101] During his time at the university, Mátyássy worked on a number of short and documentary projects, films that tended to focus upon intimate stories of people living in rural and suburban areas; see, for example, the short films *Agyagba öntött forma/Forms Moulded in Clay* (2001) and *Rohatt dolog/Damned Thing* (2002). Mátyássy was the fourth member of his year group to release their debut feature, the first being Ágnes Kocsis' whose *Friss levegő/Fresh Air* was released in 2006, followed by Anna Faur's *Lányok/Girls* in 2007 and Attila Gigor's *A nyomozó/The Investigator* in 2008, all of which were critically well received but endured mixed box office successes.[102]

Shot over the course of 42 days on a budget of 120 million Forints (Edit Hudák, personal communication, June 12, 2017), *Lost Times* debuted at the 40th Hungarian Film Week, winning the festival's main prize, the Golden Reel.[103] The film also won the László B. Nagy Award at the 2009 Hungarian Film Critic's Awards, where Teréz Vass also won the Best Actress Award. Following this success, *Lost Times* screened at a number of prestigious international film festivals including the 2009 Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, featuring in the East of the West competition, the Montreal International Film Festival, where the film received a Golden Zenith nomination and at the 45th Chicago International Film

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[101] The Academy of Theatre and Film Art appointed Grunwalsky as Símo's successor following Símo's death in 2001. Grunwalsky had previously worked as a director and cinematographer, his most notable works tending to be collaborations with other directors, for example, Grunwalsky co-wrote *Örökbefogadás/Adoption* (Márta Mészáros, 1975) and served as the cinematographer for *Nekem lámpást adott kezembe az Úr, Pesten/Lord's Lantern in Budapest* (Miklós Jancsó, 1999).

[102] *Fresh Air* went on to win the Sándor Simó Prize for Best First Film at the 37th Hungarian Film Week and *The Investigator* won Best Genre Film, Best Screenplay, Best Actor (Zsolt Anger) and Best Editor (Zoltán Kovács) at the 39th iteration. However, at the box office *Fresh Air* achieved a local audience of only 8,880 (Löwensohn 2008, 247), *Girls* only 4,391 (Löwensohn 2008, 248) and *The Investigator* a more impressive 33,643 (Löwensohn 2009, 230).

[103] Albert Márkos and Veronika Harcsa also won the Best Original Music Award.

Festival.[104] *Lost Times* received a general release in Hungary in October 2009 but the film fared poorly at the local box office, attracting only 4,267 attendees in over 400 screenings.

Upon release, *Lost Times* divided the Hungarian critics. Róbert Hegedus (2009) of *Filmpont* described the film as a sensitive social picture, praising the way in which Mátyássy avoided exaggerated social criticism in favour of more subtle and underlining insinuation interwoven into the personal drama of the narrative. Writing for weekly news magazine *Héti Válasz,* Márton Jankovics (2009) applauded the way in which Mátyássy rendered the film's potentially sober subject matter in a manner he found to be exciting and engaging. Jankovics would go on to describe *Lost Times* was something of an anomaly, a Hungarian film that successfully walked the line between art and accessibility. Gergely Zöldi (2009), writing for *Kultúra.hu*, applauded Vass and Kádas' performances and, in accordance with Jankovics, commended *Lost Times* for avoiding becoming yet another in a long line of gloomy Hungarian productions. Akin to Jankovics and Zöldi, Bori Bujdosó (2009) of Hungarian news website *Origo* described *Lost Times* as both intelligent and audience friendly. Bujdosó claimed that despite the film's ostensibly sombre premise, Mátyássy's elegant, non-intrusive direction, which she compared to the work of Terence Malick, bestowed upon the material a fitting sensitivity.

However, not all criticism was quite so complimentary. Miklós Fáy (2009) of Hungarian newspaper *Népszabadság* proclaimed *Lost Times*' plot to be predictable, its characterisation

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[104] *Lost Times* also featured in competition at the Mannheim International Film Festival, the Ghent Flanders International Film Festival and the Panorama of European Cinema Festival in Athens. The film was also screened at the London East End Film Festival, the Denver International Film Festival, Haifa International Film Festival, the Cairo International Film Festival and the Warsaw International Film Festival.

inconsistent and its soundtrack incompatible with the film's visual style. Fáy's biggest criticism, however, lay in his belief that *Lost Times* is too derivative of the Hungarian films of the 1980s, a period in which narratives built around an individual's struggle to escape their everyday lives were commonplace. In his review for arts and culture website *Revizor*, Zoltán András Bán (2009) argued that Mátyássy ultimately fails in his endeavour to capture the realities of village life and the trials, tribulations and the passions of its inhabitants. Instead, he argues that all *Lost Times* tenders is awkward dialogue, clichéd characters and stilted performances. Bán also suggested that the soundtrack's use of English and French vocals contradicts the film's sociological intentions.

As much of the criticism suggests, *Lost Times* testifies to the still-prevalent debates surrounding tradition and modernisation in Hungarian cinema and a widely perceived need to strike a balance between artistry and commercial accessibility. Indeed, many critics believed that *Lost Times* had successfully found such a balance and as Mátyássy himself stated, one newspaper had described *Lost Times* as a Hungarian art house film that is actually watchable (Schwinke 2009). Yet, despite seemingly bridging the divide between art and approachability, *Lost Times* still performed poorly at the local box office. Indeed, during this period, the commercial viability of Hungarian productions took on an increased urgency given the debt accrued by the MMK throughout the mid to late 2000s, debt that would ultimately result in the disbanding of the Hungarian public film body in 2011 and installation of the centralised MNF (see Varga 2012).

2.4.2. *Lost Times* and the Discourse of Third Cinema.

Lost Times depicts life in post-communist Hungary with candour, foregrounding an under-represented area of the country and a cinematically marginalised social group. This is not to suggest that post-communist Hungarian filmmakers have neglected cinematic representations of rural Hungary; indeed, this thesis testifies to the variety of ways in which filmmakers have approached the Hungarian countryside during the post-communist years. Nevertheless, Mátyássy distinguishes himself from his contemporaries by presenting rural Hungary as a lived domain made up of actually existing social problems.[105] While *Lost Times* does not depict sociological reality – the narrative is fictional – the film nevertheless reflects upon it, presenting an image of post-communist life at odds with that depicted in Hungary's burgeoning popular cinema, with its aspirational consumer values, and that of the existential cinema for which Hungary has historically been renowned. Mátyássy instead endeavours to present rural Hungary with authenticity, as a place that his audience will recognise and identify. Indeed, in an interview with Anita Libor (2009) of *Filmhu*, Mátyássy spoke of his belief that films should reflect society and the everyday human relationships that take place therein. He asserts that the countryside is not the experimental terrain of the artist nor a philosophical arena but rather an actual place made up of forests, pastures and villages, all of which are full of familiar human struggles and conflicts. In this sense, Mátyássy's conception of cinema is comparable to that of the Third Cinema in that both 'attempt to speak a socially pertinent discourse which both the mainstream and the authorial cinemas exclude from their regimes of signification' (Willemen 1989, 10).

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[105] While other Hungarian filmmakers have depicted rural life with the same level of authenticity, their renderings are invariably laden with complex subtext and/or intricate cinematic meanings, see for example my analysis of *The Porcelain Doll* or *Father's Acre*.

The original doctrines of Third Cinema were revolutionary in tenor, advocating new forms of provocative, anti-imperialist cinema through which to unmask still-prevalent structures of empire and coloniality. The discourse of filmmakers/theorists such as Rocha ([1965] 1997), Solanas and Getino ([1969] 1997), and Espinosa ([1969] 1997) were fundamentally anti-bourgeois, denouncing existing power structures while espousing a genuinely popular mode of cinema grounded in material life. Over time, however, the principles of Third Cinema evolved from the subversive Latin American manifestos of the late 1960s. Indeed, as Michael Chanan (1997) suggests, '[t]he original Third Cinema was premissed [*sic*] on militant mass political movements of a kind which in many places no longer exist, and upon ideologies which have taken a decisive historical beating' (388). Following the re-appraisal of the original manifestos in the 1980s, the discourse of Third Cinema broadened to incorporate wider questions of identity and self-representation in developing and post-colonial nations, issues of diaspora and cultural hybridity, and the continued legacy of colonialism. In a re-definition of the term Third Cinema, Argentinean filmmaker Fernando Solanas states:

> What determines Third Cinema is the conception of the world, and not the genre or an explicitly political approach. Any story, any subject can be taken up by Third Cinema. In the dependent countries, Third Cinema is a cinema of decolonization, which expresses the will to national liberation, anti-mythic, anti-racist, anti-bourgeois, and popular (Quoted in Chanan 1997, translated from Solanas' 'L'influence du troisième cinéma dans le monde' originally published in *CinèmAction* 1979, 66).

Lost Times echoes these ideological sentiments. I argue that the film strives to demystify the neo-colonial myths of capitalism by exposing the social injustice produced by the neoliberal post-communist system and its underlying structures of empire and coloniality. In this sense, *Lost Times* subscribes to Teshome H. Gabriel (1982) conception of Third Cinema. In his influential text *Third Cinema in the Third World*, Gabriel argues that

> [t]he principal characteristic of Third Cinema is really not so much where it is made, or even who makes it, but, rather, the ideology it espouses and the consciousness it displays. The Third Cinema is that cinema of the Third World which stands opposed to imperialism and class oppression in all their ramifications and manifestations (2).

While the term "Third World" has been open to scrutiny, denounced as indistinct, derogatory and now obsolete given the collapse of the Second World and the global milieu that ensued, Gabriel's quote nevertheless provides a point of entry for examining post-communist Eastern Europe through the lens of post-colonialism. In *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) briefly parallel the post-communist and post-colonial experience by foregrounding a ''Third Worldization' of a Second World increasingly dependent on the West' (27). David A. Kideckel (2009) further elaborates upon this parallel, identifying a number of key commonalities exhibited in both post-communist and post-colonial societies. These include a division between rural and urban culture, an unbalanced, unidirectional neoliberal economy, a susceptibility towards aggressive and reactionary nationalisms, and a problematic relationship with history.

A further commonality, and one pertinent to this particular study, is the continuing economic and cultural dependency of both post-colonial and post-communist nations on former colonial powers. Ania Loomba, in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* ([1998] 2005), argues that while the contemporary, global milieu may indeed be classed as post-colonial – in that once colonised nations have acquired formal independence – the inequalities of the past remain. She argues that the post-colonial era has maintained many of the colonial imbalances, highlighting a continuing 'economic, cultural and (to varying degrees) political penetration of some countries by others' (12). Such forms of economic and cultural incursion have also

been visible in post-communist societies and as Ewa Mazierska, Lars Kristensen and Eva Näripea (2014) contend,

> practically none of the nations of the former Eastern Bloc have remained untouched by the realities of this new global order that coordinates the circulation of cultural values, commodities and wealth, and which is not very different from the old-style colonialism (14).

A case in point being the EU's Eastern Enlargement. József Böröcz (2001) highlights the geopolitical hierarchy between the Western European centre, whose sustained political, economic and cultural centrality is the product of their imperialist history, and the Eastern European periphery. This hierarchical structure has resurrected symptoms of empire and coloniality, producing unequal patterns of exchange and establishing new structures of dependency.[106]

Transitologists have since highlighted a Latin-Americanisation of capitalist Hungary, comparing the effects of the post-communist economic transition with that experienced in post-authoritarian South America. Such commonalities include a huge disparity of income between the rich and the poor whereby an elite segment of society acquire significant wealth – in Hungary's case this has invariably been former members of the communist party (see

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[106] Indeed, as Böröcz states: 'The privatization of the assets of the post-socialist economies, coupled with the tax preferences for foreign direct investment and the generic structural adjustment policies imported by the democratically elected governments have already siphoned off unprecedented proportions of the national product of the applicant societies… EU-based corporations constitute by far the largest investor groups in central and eastern Europe now, while the former state socialist bloc's significance in the investment portfolio of EU corporations is miniscule' (18).

Hanley 2000) – while the rest of society falls drastically behind, high level of corruption and the prevalence of a black economy (see Bollobás 1995, Kovács and Kollár 1999).[107]

Thus, given the shared characteristics of the post-colonial and post-communist experience, I argue that the discourse of Third and/or post-colonial cinema provides a constructive theoretical framework through which to examine *Lost Times*. While *Lost Times* lacks the revolutionary militancy of early Third Cinema films such as *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol/Black God, White Devil* (Glauber Rocha, 1964), *La hora de los hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces* (Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, 1968), *O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro/Antonio das Mortes* (Glauber Rocha, 1969), the film does share Third Cinema's broader preoccupation with class oppression and desire to question prevailing global hierarchies and post-colonial systems of dependency. I argue that *Lost Times* seeks to present the upshots of Hungary's capitalist integration and the inequalities and social deviancies that have developed as a direct consequence of global capitalism's strategies of neo-colonialism. Akin to films such as Nelson Pereira dos Santos' *Vidas Secas/Barren Lives* (1963), *Lost Times* presents a vision of social life in direct conflict with that presented in the mass media, which fosters political indifference by nurturing self-interest through rampant

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[107] Despite these parallels, scholars have been reluctant to acknowledge post-communist post-colonialism and it is only in more recent years that this discourse has come to be more readily accepted. Mazierska, Kristensen and Näripea (2014) suggest that this is because Soviet colonialism does not fit neatly into Marxist definitions of modern colonialism, which views colonialism as a capitalist undertaking used to extract wealth and natural resources from the colonies. David Chioni Moore (2001) attributes the lack of scholarship in part to Marxist leanings of post-colonial scholars and a consequent unwillingness to situate the Soviet Union alongside villainous Western colonisers such as Britain and France. Additionally, both Moore and Anikó Imre (2012) have argued that unlike the post-colonial nations, post-communist nations have largely sought to return to the West and reconnect with their suppressed European heritage. As Imre states, an association with post-colonial discourse in Eastern European scholarship would threaten 'the dual ethno-cultural heritage essential to claiming Europeanness and to self-protection against the realities of peripheral economic and political development' (49).

consumerism, distracting citizens from political and social participation. *Lost Times* seeks to reconnect that link between cinema and social life and, in doing so, generate social awareness and encourage engagement within the public sphere.

2.4.3. "The Stronger Dog Fucks": The Harsh Realities of Transition.

How, then, does *Lost Times* articulate its critique? Fredric Jameson, in his 1986 essay *Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism*, claimed that

> Third-World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic – necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society* (author's italics) (69).

While Jameson faced criticism for his totalising treatise (see Ahmad 1987, Shohat and Stam 1994, Bensmaïa 1999), allegory nevertheless remains a productive discourse through which scholars have approached Third and/or post-colonial cinema, and one valuable for my own analysis of *Lost Times*. While the film focuses upon the intimate story of Iván and his endeavour to better himself and escape the impoverishment of rural life, I argue that his individual struggle for social advancement serves as a stratagem through which Mátyássy examines capitalism's failure to generate inclusive growth and deliver all-encompassing social mobility across post-communist society more broadly. Similarly, I argue that Eszter's rape is symbolic of transition's effects on the socially vulnerable, those least able to cope with the drastic changes brought about by transition and life under the market economy.

Lost Times also shares Third/post-colonial cinema's anti-imperialist rhetoric and preoccupation with the ongoing legacy of colonialism. Teshome H. Gabriel (1989) views

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Third Cinema as a form of popular memory. Gabriel contends that while official history is dogmatic and inhibits societies from articulating their own histories, popular memory is emancipatory, it is a mode of dissident political memory, one advocating reassessment, testimony and change. *Lost Times*, I argue, shares this impulse for testimony, giving voice to a marginalised part of society by presenting the rural experience of post-communism, one at odds with the prevailing discourse of Western capitalism. Accordingly, in their 1969 manifesto *Towards a Third Cinema* (*Hacia un tercer cine*) ([1969] 1997), Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino stated that in the face of neo-colonialism '[t]ruth… amounts to subversion. Any form of expression or communication that tries to show national reality is subversion' (39). This statement, I maintain, is key to understanding *Lost Time*'s articulation of critique. While *Lost Times*' narrative is fictional, the film draws upon actual social events. Indeed, Mátyássy claimed that he assembled significant plot elements from stories he had either heard or read about in newspaper articles (Aron Matyassy Lost Times interview Karlovy Vary 2009). By depicting underrepresented social realities, the film challenges post-communist capitalist hegemony and the images of affluence disseminated by the mass media by emphasising the destitution produced by global capitalism's neo-colonial influence.

For this reason, the film's geographical setting is highly revealing. By setting the narrative in Northern Hungary, a region that since transition has received the least amount of financial investment (see Kiss 2007), has had the highest rate of registered unemployment (see Vukovich 2008, 132) and has subsequently witnessed high levels of poverty, Mátyássy highlights the spatial inequalities produced by neoliberal market capitalism.

The rural setting also allows Mátyássy to insert various subplots and background/character details, events grounded in social reality, that expose some of the more unfavourable aspects

of Hungary's privatisation process. The film's depiction of the old plant serves as a case in point. Over the course of the film, we learn that a factory once operated proximate to the village, serving as a central hub of employment for the villagers. Following the collapse of the collectives, however, the factory closed, leaving a large number, including Iván's father, unemployed. The factory now stands derelict, a dilapidated shell where Ilus finds solitude to do her school work. When Iván and Ilus are alone at the factory, Iván reveals how his father had enjoyed his job but had turned to alcohol following the plant's closure, dying prematurely at the age of 42.

This subplot, however brief, highlights what was for many citizens a reality. Following transition, Hungarian heavy industry, which had served as a significant source of employment for those living in rural areas, ground to a halt as unprofitable factories closed or were radically downsized. As a result, unemployment rose dramatically during the early years of post-communism and many citizens, particularly those living in rural areas, had difficulties sourcing alternative work. Rural Hungary was, for the most part, economically under-developed, resulting in a lack of alternative employment in sufficient numbers. Compounding this was the fact that many citizens living in rural Hungary found that the skills they had acquired working in heavy industry were now obsolete and services and institutions of personal development, customarily found in more developed areas, were not easily accessible.

Unemployment had additional social ramifications, one being, as *Lost Times* testifies, alcoholism. According to a study conducted by the University of Debrecen in 2000, mortality resulting from excessive alcohol consumption in Hungary stood at over three times that of the European Union average for men and two and a half times that for women (Balogh 2013).

Thus, while Iván's father serves as little more than supplementary character details, providing insight into Iván's motivations for wanting to leave the village, his situation nevertheless underscores a very real social issue, one with a long legacy in Hungary.

Another social upshot that *Lost Times* explores is crime.[108] From the outset, criminal acts are commonplace and carried out with a nonchalance that suggests that they are a regular part of daily life. When the audience first encounter Iván, he is in the process of smuggling diesel. We first see him and friend Dénes (László Attila) at a petrol station discussing cars. The scene appears perfectly innocuous but for an earlier close-up shot of the Ukrainian signage on the petrol station forecourt.[109] The image then cuts to Iván and Dénes continuing their conversation in Iván's car as they approach the Hungarian border. An unkempt officer slowly approaches and Iván gets out of the car to meet him. Between drags of his cigarette, the officer requests that Iván open the car's boot. Iván complies, revealing the boot to be empty but for a single bank note. The officer scowls at Iván before bending to take the money, doing so in a gesture that suggests he is inspecting the vehicle. He then casually folds the note, slips it into his pocket, closes the boot and waves Iván past. Following this, we see the officer approach the next vehicle from a shot taken from the back seat of Iván's car where we see the driver also hands the officer a bank note.

We later learn that Iván makes this trip two or three times a day as evidenced by his passport, filled with the same Ukrainian passport stamp. Iván stockpiles oil with the hope of establishing an unauthorised petrol supply for the impending fuelling station due for

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[108] Indeed, the number of reported crimes rose exponentially following the collapse of communism from 185,355 in 1988 to 600,621 a decade later (Balogh 2009).

[109] The Д visible on the forecourt signage conveys that Iván and Dénes are not in Hungary, confirmed moments later by the Ukrainian flag displayed on the border control building.

development on the forthcoming new road. He estimates that he stands to make 60 Forints profit per litre by selling the petrol in Hungary. However, Iván is not alone in a desire to exploit the ambiguities and inadequacies of Hungary's newly established post-communist border laws, the mafia too intend to supply illegal fuel to the newly established filling station. Inevitably, the mafia confront Iván, driving him to the proposed site of the station where they inform him that they intend to be its sole suppliers. They then beat Iván and leave him in a heap on the ground.

Through the petrol smuggling subplot, *Lost Times* explores the ways in which white collar and organised criminal groups exploited Hungary's infant market economy, taking advantage of the legal loopholes and flaws of legislation that emerged during the transition process. As Gusztáv Kosztolányi (2000a) states, high excise duties on products such as oil, alcohol and cigarettes led to a rise in smuggling and an ineffectual system of delayed payments for custom duties saw a proliferation of exploitations and abuses. Furthermore, since heating oil was not subject to the same high taxation as diesel, heating oil was imported in droves and subjected to oil bleaching (*olajszőkítés*) or "blonding" so that it could be sold as diesel.[110] This led to the rise of the so-called "oil-mafia" in Hungary, organised criminal units who allegedly bribed police officers and even had connections to members of parliament. Oil smuggling and "blonding" ultimately cost the Hungarian economy hundreds of millions of Forints in lost revenue and led to a huge corruption scandal that resulted in numerous libel cases being brought against the committee responsible for investigating oil-mafia dealings.

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[110] Heater and diesel oil are virtually identical chemically and so to stop the resale of heater oil as diesel, producers added red dyes to heater oil as a method of distinguishing them. However, the illegal process of "blonding" saw sulphuric acid added to heater oil to remove the colouring.

The oil-mafia scandal completely undermined the integrity of Hungarian politicians across the board and exacerbated feelings of distrust amongst the Hungarian public.[111]

However, while organised crime features as a subplot, Mátyássy is keen to focus more upon blue-collar crime committed by everyday people. From Bandi (András Balogh), friend of Iván's father who illegally cuts down trees for timber to the Szukics brother (Csaba Czene), who Ilus catches stealing scrap metal from the disused factory, crime is an everyday occurrence. Indeed, despite Iván's past involvement with organised crime when, as a teenager, he was a member of a gang who smuggled cigarettes, his oil smuggling venture is conducted alone. He is an opportunist, taking advantage of his proximity to the border and the lax and corruptible border guards.

Lost Times does not merely focus on crimes of gain; however, the film also presents more vindictive, hateful crimes. For example, at the local kocsma Iván runs into former associate Csali (Attila Kasvinszki), who we learn has just got out of prison following a violent altercation with a man who consequently needed to have his pancreas removed. Similarly, when Iván and Eszter visit friends Tibor (Attila Tóth) and Juli (Melinda Major), a couple who live a self-sufficient life on the outskirts of the village, Tibor asks whether the villagers hate them for their alternative lifestyle. He informs Iván that someone had punctured his tires and their constant harassment is making their lives impossible.

However, the most prominent representation of violent crime is, of course, Eszter's rape. Mátyássy stated that he built the circumstances surrounding Eszter's rape upon actual events

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[111] For further details on the Hungarian oil crisis, see Kosztolanyi 2000a, 2000b, 2000c.

in which the perpetrators had no recollection of their actions because they were drunk (Aron Matyassy Lost Times interview Karlovy Vary, 2009). Eszter's attack serves to highlight a rising trend in Hungary, alcohol-fuelled violent crime. As Hungarian criminologist Miklós Lévay (2012) states, alcohol has been a significant contributing factor in the rise of violent crime in Hungary. Lévay declares that a third of all violent crimes in Hungary are committed by persons who, at the time of their offence, were inebriated (122).

Ultimately, the world depicted in *Lost Times* serves as an indictment of an unbalanced and uncaring capitalist system. Through the film's depiction of rural life, Mátyássy exposes the inequalities produced by the capitalism transition. From the outset, the film portrays rural Hungary as a forsaken domain, a site of political neglect where day-to-day life is a struggle and an ethos of every man for himself prevails. Crime is ubiquitous, presented as a means of survival in a society lacking lawful employment opportunities and, throughout, a sense of hopelessness prevails. By drawing upon actually existing social problems *Lost Times* positions itself as subversive. Mátyássy deconstructs the images of capitalist prosperity presented in the mass media and in commercial cinema, including that of Hungary's expanding popular cinema, which has tended to focus more upon contemporary urbanites living in modern, metropolitan areas and has tended to display a certain level of prosperity and wealth.[112] *Lost Times*' oppositional approach, I argue, can be understood as an attempt to

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[112] Examples of such films include *Valami Amerika/A Kind of America* (Gábor Herendi, 2002), *Állítsátok meg Terézanyut!/Stop Mom Theresa!* (Péter Bergendy, 2004), *Fej vagy írás?/Heads or Tails?* (Andor Legyel, 2005), *Egy szoknya, egy nadrág/One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers* (Bence Gyöngyössy, 2006), *Csak szex és más semmi/Just Sex and Nothing Else* (Krisztina Goda, 2005), *Egy bolond százat csinál/One Fool Makes Many* (Bence Gyöngyössy, 2006), *Kaméleon/Chameleon* (Krisztina Goda, 2008), *Pánik/Panic* (Attila Till, 2008), *Valami Amerika 2/A Kind of America* 2 (Gábor Herendi, 2008), *S.O.S. szerelem!/S.O.S Love* (Tamás Sas, 2007), *9 és ½ Randi!/9 ½ Dates* (Tamás Sas, 2008), *Rózsaszín*

demystify the capitalist ideology present within Hungary's popular cinema – and within the mass media more generally – by drawing attention to the realities of life in post-communist Hungary that the popular media have tended to marginalise.

Through *Lost Times*' endeavour to directly unite cinema and social life, together with the film's desire to present the consequences of imperial global capitalism's new structures of empire and coloniality, I argue that Mátyássy shares the impulse of many Third/post-colonial filmmakers by challenging capitalist mythology. Through the film's stark depiction of rural life, Mátyássy greatly undermines global capitalism's self-celebratory myths of opportunity, social mobility and inclusive growth by depicting those left behind by the capitalist transition and emphasising the austerity that the capitalist system produces. *Lost Times* presents a subversive challenge to dominant ideologies by confronting audiences with underrepresented social realities.

2.5. Conclusion.

As my analysis has shown, the rural provides a useful framework for examining the political myths surrounding Hungary's return to the West. *Glass Tiger*, *Tamara* and *Lost Times* all utilise their rural settings to explore some of the unforeseen and undocumented consequences of the post-communist transition and, in doing so, confound Western capitalist mythology asserting that global capitalism best promotes democracy and freedom, and best guarantees wealth and prosperity for all. Through their engagement with the complexities of the new political and economic milieu, the three films highlight a discrepancy between the myths of

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sajt/Camembert Rose (Barnabás Tóth, 2009) and *Poligamy* (Dénes Orosz, 2009) to name but a few.

the West, shaped considerably by mythopoeic preconceptions established under communism, and post-communist realities.

Glass Tiger utilises its rural setting as a means of alluding to those left behind by transition. The film concentrates on a group of characters that continue to hold onto now obsolete sensibilities, sensibilities embedded within the political and social culture of the 1980s. Building on established stereotypes of rural backwardness, the film's rural setting becomes a device through which Rudolf and Kapitány suggest a disparity between the Hungarian populace and the new global world in which they now find themselves. This discrepancy is visualised in the very location of the Glass Tiger café. The caravan is situated on a rural lay-by, a site located on an undetermined stretch of road between destinations. Rudolf and Kapitány set the film in a non-place to use Marc Augé's (1995) term, a location that serves to highlight Hungary's continued state of cultural in-betweenness. This sense of ongoing cultural reformation is further emphasised in the Glass Tiger café itself with its American frontage and communist-rooted working practices.

Szabolcs Hajdu's *Tamara*, alternatively, transforms the rural setting into a strange, idiosyncratic world used to comment on the changing nature of human relationships in post-communist society. Hajdu allegorically links the abnormal filmic world and characters to the abnormal conditions of life under communism, before introducing titular-character Tamara as a means of exploring transition's social impact on traditional forms of community. Hajdu's distinct representation of the rural purges the filmic world of politics. Through the film's imaginary rural setting, which offers no concrete sense of time or place, nor any specific political alignments or agendas, Hajdu provides a space through which to examine the erosion of social relations and the decline of a collective consciousness in post-communist

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Hungary.

The final film examined in this chapter, *Lost Times*, utilises the rural setting as a means of highlighting the social and spatial inequalities brought about by the post-communist transition. Mátyássy presents the realities of those seemingly forgotten by transition. The isolated village setting is constricting, offering little in the way of opportunity, comfort or hope. It is a place were only the strongest survive. Crime is consequently endemic and the existing systems of law and order are inadequate and ineffective. *Lost Times* utilises this strikingly forthright vision of rural life, one based on actual social realities, as a means of contrasting the images of affluence presented in the mass media, providing a counter-narrative to the visions of prosperity and consumption increasingly visible in Hungary's popular cinema.

While the three films adopt radically divergent styles - *Glass Tiger* employing a Kusturica-inspired baroque kitsch aesthetic, *Tamara* a surreal and heavily stylised formal language and *Lost Times* a poetic realist visual style - parallels can be drawn to the ways in which they engage with the myths of the West. The three films utilise allegory as a mode of social commentary, examining the social upshots of the post-communist transition through private/individual narratives that emphasise personal challenges and struggles. *Glass Tiger*, as I have argued, utilises Lali's personal ambition, and failure, to purchase a Chevrolet Impala as a means of addressing the disparity between Hungary's post-communist expectations and the realities of transition. By the same token, *Tamara* engages with the post-communist transformation of social relations through the personal narrative of the Játékos family, whose lives and relationships are massively disrupted by the incoming Tamara, a symbol of post-communist individualism. Likewise, *Lost Times* utilises the personal struggles

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of Iván and Eszter to engage with the spatial inequalities produced by the capitalist transition and the hardships of life free from state paternalism.

But why do the filmmakers working in a post-communist society now free from the censorship of the state deem it necessary to address social issues through allegory? Allegory, I argue, provides a fitting means of articulating the essential ambiguity of the post-communist experience. Allegory's indirect signification encapsulates the uncertainty that characterised post-revolutionary Hungary, as entrenched moral codes and values were found to be moribund in the new social climate. Yet, intrinsic to the wider post-communist experience was a sense of ambivalence that exceeded the short-lived period of transitional change, one produced by the instability, nonlinearity, and fractal nature of postmodern life. Through allegory, a mode of representation whose multiple layers of signification correspond with the multifariousness of postmodernity, the three films acquire a means of sufficiently articulating the fundamental tumultuousness of post-communist life.

Ultimately, while the three films analysed in this chapter have different preoccupations and focus on different elements of Hungary's post-communist transition, *Glass Tiger*, *Tamara* and *Lost Times* share a common desire to complicate the discourse of transition and challenge the myths surrounding life under the democratic and capitalist regimes. While Western transitologists initially declared Hungary's transition a success, chiefly because of Hungary's successful integration of neoliberal market practices, the three films examined over the course of this chapter challenge such assumptions by focusing on issues deemed negligible by Western economists and transitologists, those being transitions effects on the Hungarian people. *Glass Tiger*, *Tamara* and *Lost Times* all seek to engage with questions of social integration, questions that produce answers that are not quite so palatable to the Western

economic agenda.

Chapter Three:

Challenging the Myths of Memory.

3.1. Introduction.

In his winning proposal for the design of Budapest's Memento Park (*Szoborpark*),[113] Hungarian architect Ákos Eleőd stated:

> Every violent form of society formalises the need and the right to reanalyse, touch up and appropriate their own past in order to shine favourable light on the "historical necessity" of their regime. Democracy is the only regime which is capable of looking back to its past, with all its mistakes and wrong turns, with its head up (in Réthly 2010, 6).

Eleőd speaks of the potential for objective historical dialogue that democracy accorded Hungary following transition. Yet, as Hungarian historian Péter Hanák (1994) rightly observes, '[a] strong democracy does not immediately spring up from the rubble of the toppled Communist systems' (42). Indeed, despite the renewed possibility for open public discourse, history in post-communist Hungary has been party to various political and social manipulations, with political myths propagating over honest dialogue and genuine efforts to come to terms with the traumas of recent memory. The reasons for this are manifold; however, it is not my intention to address these matters here. Instead, my interests lie in the ways in which select Hungarian filmmakers have addressed issues pertaining to history, myth and collective memory through cinema. That is to say, I examine the ways in which cinema contests the politics of memory in contemporary Hungary. The three films examined in this chapter bring to the fore the complexities surrounding memory in post-communist society and the social, political and historical determinants that have led to a prominence of political myths in the post-socialist milieu. It is not my objective to examine history as represented in Hungarian cinema; this task would warrant greater scope and insight than I am able to

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[113] Situated on the outskirts of the Hungarian capital, Memento Park is an outdoor museum housing communist-era public sculptures and monuments.

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provide within the limits of this chapter. Rather, my aim is to examine how particular post-communist filmmakers address issues of cultural memory and collective identity with the aim of challenging commonly held suppositions and myths prevalent in present-day society.

The three films to be addressed in this chapter are *A porcelánbaba/The Porcelain Doll* (Péter Gárdos, 2005), *Hukkle* (György Pálfi, 2002) and *Másnap/After the Day Before* (Attila Janisch, 2004). Upon watching these films, what is immediately apparent is their disregard for the canonistic tropes of the historical film.[114] Historical events are not intrinsic to their respective plots nor do they present actual historical figures. Yet, one may link the films to the historical film genre by virtue of their motivations. As Robert A. Rosenstone (2012) claims, historical films have the ability to 'intersect with, comment upon, and add something to the larger discourse of history out of which they grow and to which they speak' (34). I argue that the three above-mentioned films share this impetus. Through their complex formal configurations, I argue that the films address a need for historical reassessment by challenging established narratives and providing a channel for alternative modes of inquiry and divergent viewpoints.

Why then do the three filmmakers deem it necessary to present issues of history and historical memory through non-representational formal language? First, I contend that the deviation from traditional forms of historical representation positions the three films as counter narratives in opposition to dominant historical discourse. Since transition, a number of high profile historical films have garnered criticism for the underlining political motivations behind their production. Big budget historical films such as *Bánk Bán* (Csaba

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[114] See Zemon Davis 2000, Burgoyne 2008 and Rosenstone 2012 for more in-depth elucidations upon the classification of the historical film.

Káel, 2001), *Sacra coruna/Sacred Crown* (Gábor Koltay, 2001) and most notoriously *A Hídember/The Bridgeman* (Géza Bereményi, 2002) have been widely perceived as transparent attempts by the Fidesz government to forge historical parallels between then Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and some of Hungary's greatest national heroes.[115] The use of non-representational cinematic language; that which deviates from the established canons of the mainstream historical film, suggests a desire to discover new modes of historical expression that fittingly encapsulate the multifarious dimensions of post-communist memory politics. This form of anomalous historical representation provides a means of articulating unofficial, alternative discourse that challenges canonistic history and gives voice to marginalised narratives, as well as those omitted from public debate entirely.

Secondly, I argue that through their complex cinematic language, the three films allude to the still-contested nature of post-communist Hungarian historical memory. Indeed, as Catherine Portuges (2001) states '[a]t the start of a new millennium, the conflict between the desire to forget, deny, repress, and the simultaneous impulse to witness, remember, uncover, and

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[115] See Becker 2002 and Cunningham 2004 for further details on the controversial politics attached to *The Bridgeman*. However, *Bánk Bán, Sacred Crown* and *The Bridgeman* do not represent the Hungarian historical film as a whole. Issues of the past have been a central preoccupation in post-communist Hungarian cinema and filmmakers have adopted a variety of formal strategies when addressing historical subject matter. Films such as *Sztálin menyasszonya/Stalin's Bride* (Péter Bacsó, 1991), *Haggyállógva Vászka/Letgohang Vaska: A Tale from the Labour Camp* (Péter Gothár, 1996), *Csinibaba/Dollybirds* (Péter Tímár, 1997), *Sunshine* (István Szabó, 1999), *Moszkva tér/Moscow Square* (Ferenc Török, 2001), *A temetetlen halott/The Unburied Man* (Márta Mészáros, 2004), *Magyar vándor/Hungarian Vagabond (*Gábor Herendi, 2004), *Világszám! Dodo és Naftalin//Colossal Sensation* (Robert Koltai, 2004), *Sorstalanság/Fateless* (Lajos Koltai, 2005), *Szabadság szerelem/Children of Glory* (Krisztina Goda, 2006), *Taxidermia* (György Pálfi, 2006), *Made in Hungary* (Gergely Fonyó, 2009), *Oda az igazság/So Much for Justice* (Miklós Jancsó, 2010), *A vizsga/The Exam* (Péter Bergendy, 2011), *A nagy füzet/The Notebook* (János Szász, 2013), *A berni követ/The Ambassador to Bern* (Atilla Szász, 2014) and *Saul fia/Son of Saul* (László Nemes, 2015) all testify to the varied ways in which post-communist filmmakers have addressed historical themes and subject matter.

record a century's experience, poses profound challenges to the limits of visual representation' (119). Thus, through figurative forms of historical and mnemonic representation, the three films emphasise the ongoing process of post-communist Hungary's reintergration with nation history and renegotiation of national identity. By presenting themes of collective memory through intricate forms whose meanings audiences must decipher – often necessitating in re-examination – the three films denote the very process of memory negotiation currently taking place in contemporary Hungary.

Thirdly, I argue that the use of more complex, symbolic language in the depiction of themes of history and historical remembrance provide a means of expressing what James E. Young (2000) describes as the vicarious past. Young examines the ways in which post-trauma generations engage with the past through the arts. In lieu of lived experience, Young claims that the succeeding generation of artists tend towards art that emphasises the very fact that historical trauma may only experienced vicariously, through testimony and mediated re-renderings. With first-hand experience ultimately unattainable, a number of artists have chosen to foreground their indirect connection to past events, accentuating their distance from actual happenings. Young states that, 'by calling attention to their vicarious relationship to events, the next generation ensures that their "post-memory" of events remains an unfinished, ephemeral process, not a means towards definitive answers to impossible questions' (2). Consequently, the unwillingness of the filmmakers to present depictive, delineative history speaks to this sense of generational detachment, one exacerbated by forty years of communist memory politics.

The lack of direct references to the actual historical events in the films analysed is thus symbolic of Hungary's separation from national history during the communist years. Indeed,

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during the authoritarian years of communism (1948-1965), the party manipulated Hungarian history to better suit socialist ideology and suppressed histories that did not comply with communism's grand narrative. During the Stalinist era, ideological-charged political myths regarding Hungary's participation in the Holocaust circulated that served to both legitimise Soviet rule and appease the recalcitrant Magyar population. Such myths proffered the more palatable view that Hungarians had been non-compliant victims of Nazi tyranny. The communist government embedded the myth of Soviet liberation into Hungarian daily life by adding it to the school curriculum, through the erection of monuments – including the famous Liberty Statue (*Szabadság szobor*) atop of Gellért's Hill in Budapest – and by establishing April forth as a national holiday.[116] The lack of an open public sphere created distance from the realities of collaboration that, over time, normalised Hungarian victimhood in the nation's collective memory.

In response to the draconian policies of the hard dictatorship, citizens adopted what Elemér Hankiss (1990) describes as 'strategies of self-demobilization' (45), an increased apathy towards political life and a resistance to official forms of historical memorialisation. Mythologist Henry Tudor (1972) states that such conditions provide fertile ground for the development of political myths. Tudor claims that, 'political myths often find their audience among people who think themselves as having lost a political society or as having not yet gained one' (138-139).[117] Such myths were able to flourish due to the creation of the second public sphere, which provided an alternative, unofficial forum for political debate. However, as historian Tony Judt (1996) claims, information exchanged in the second public sphere was

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[116] April forth being the date in which the Soviet Union dispelled the Nazi's from Hungary in 1945.
[117] Tudor describes such myths as 'anti-political myths' (1972, 138).

widely perceived to be legitimate 'simply by virtue of being private and unofficial' (53). Indeed, as Béla Rásky (2007) argues, 'biographical lies often became "discursive truths"' (218); in other words, distortions of the truth often served as 'antagonistic strategies of survival' (218).

In the more liberal climate of János Kádár's leadership, the Hungarian populace entered into what philosopher János Kis (1989) described as a 'pact of forgetting' (28). In exchange for greater individual liberties and enhanced material well-being, Hungarians agreed to acquiesce to socialist governance and the socialist proclamation of history. As the Hungarian economy blossomed in the mid-1960s and early 1970s, historical national grievances, while never truly forgotten, were temporarily nullified by the improved living standards and growing consumer consciousness. However, as the Hungarian economy began to deteriorate in the late 1970s and 1980s, national consciousness slowly reenergised as a new generation of intellectuals and political actors, including an increasingly vocal populist opposition, emerged. Hungary's new democratic opposition sought to challenge the myths of communism by disseminating alternative narratives not present in official discourse. This active opposition, however, remained small in numbers and predominantly made up of intellectuals.[118] The masses, alternatively, continued to view the political realm with misgivings.

As the communist regime imploded and Hungary once again became a democracy, the subject of national history returned to the political and social agenda. However, post-communist society's reconnection with national history was characterised by a deep sense of ambivalence, torn by what Catherine Portuges (1990) describes as 'the double impetus of

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[118] Dissidents referred to themselves as the '0.1 per cent' (Hoensch 1996, 271)

memory and forgetfulness' (64). Despite the potential for honest engagement with the issues of the past, mainstream historical discourse was prone to selectivity and approached in accordance with social and political need. The large-scale political, economic and social upheaval that accompanied transition resulted in therapeutic revisions to Hungarian historical memory, shaped by the immediate psychological needs of post-transitional society.[119]

National consciousness regenerated in the uncertain climate post-communism, providing the atomised Hungarian citizen a source of social solidarity and collective identity. Pre-communist historical narratives were resurrected as Hungary searched for usable traditions and, in response to contemporary fears surrounding European supranationalism and globalisation, certain sections of society began to attribute golden age status to the ultra-nationalist inter-war period. István Csurka, leader of Hungary's first openly right wing party, the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP), frequently propagated anti-Western sentiments, proclaiming both the free market and Western-style liberalism to be empty rhetorics concealing a Judeo-Bolshevik-Liberal conspiracy that would ultimately result in a Zionist takeover of Hungary. Csurka viewed globalisation as a threat to Hungarian national sovereignty and, in response, initiated nostalgic venerations of the Horthy era, a period of national autonomy and nationalist self-determination.[120] Historian E.J.

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[119] The adversities of transition fuelled Hungary's longstanding victimhood complex. Hungary's predisposition towards self-victimisation greatly influenced post-communist historical memorialisation, propagating the view of the Hungarian caught amidst political crossfire of which they have had little to no control. Hungary is a nation beset by tragedy, at least in self-perception. From defeat at the Battle of Mohács in 1526, which left the Kingdom of Hungary under the rule of the Ottoman Empire to the failed uprising of 1956, Hungary's traumatic history has embedded victimhood firmly within the Hungarian national psyche and shaped how citizens typically recall and interpret national history (see Traub 2015).

[120] In 2000, Csurka attempted to rehabilitate László Bárdossy, Hungarian Prime Minister between 1941 and 1942 who had been executed for war crimes in 1946. However, as

Hobsbawm (1990) suggests that such forms of late twentieth century nationalism can be understood as a fearful reaction to the contemporary global milieu, an 'attempt[] to erect barricades to keep at bay the forces of the modern world' (164).

History in Hungary has also been subject to frequent political manipulations and distortions, none more contentious than the launching of the House of Terror (*Terror Háza*).[121] Opened in February 2002, the museum became 'an integral part – probably the most important event – of the 2002 election campaign' (Rév 2005, 299). Curated by Mária Schmidt, advisor to then Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, and opened by Orbán himself just six weeks before the general elections, the museum opened to widespread accusations of political bias. Given the museum's historical distortions and disproportionate weighting of communist and Nazi exhibits, many detractors claimed that the museum had been 'designed to provide visual evidence linking the Stalinist terror of the 1950s with contemporary Socialists' (James 2005, 3). [122] The Orbán government's manipulation of history faced widespread criticism. Hungarian historian András Mink stated that the museum 'brings down the memory of terror into false, cheap and repulsive political propaganda' (Fuller 2002). Similarly, Laszlo Bruszt, professor of sociology at Central European University, claimed that the museum 'should be opened when this section of the past is no longer a subject of daily political fights in the present' (Fuller 2002).

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historian, Raphael Vago (2011) contends, 'it was not Bárdossy on trial so much as the entire Horthy era' (235).

[121] The House of Terror is a museum situated in Budapest whose exhibits recall and mourn the atrocities committed by both the fascist and communist regimes.

[122] The intention of the museum was to provide a site of remembrance, focusing on the atrocities committed by both the fascist and communist regimes. However, according to Julia Creet (2013), only one tenth of the museum's content is dedicated to the history of Nazism and the terrors of the Arrow Cross.

Consequently, owing to Hungary's social and political heritage and the effect of said heritage on post-communist memory politics, I argue that the favouring of encoded cinematic language over delineative historical renderings foregrounds a mode of representation that suitably encapsulates the complexities of post-communist historical memory. The films under analysis engage with historical themes and motifs through indirect and seemingly unrelated subject matter as a means of articulating the disjunctions, distortions and amnesias of Hungarian collective memory.

The first film under analysis is Péter Gárdos' *The Porcelain Doll*, which, I argue, contests common suppositions of history in contemporary Hungary. By utilising magical realist discourse and George Lipsitz's (1990) theory of counter-memory, I examine the ways in which Gárdos challenges post-communist collective memory. Through the juxtaposition of historical themes and fantastical elements, I argue that *The Porcelain Doll* destabilises traditional notions of history, undermining dominant historical assumptions and advocating a need for reappraisal. I also examine magical realism's oxymoronic contradictions as a visual motif. I argue that through the film's combination of realist and formalist aesthetics, Gárdos questions notions of truth and authenticity, visually reiterating the thematic juxtaposition of Ervin Lázár's novellas.

The second film discussed in this chapter is György Pálfi's *Hukkle*. My analysis explores the ways in which Pálfi challenges mythopoeic history. *Hukkle* presents what initially appears as an Arcadian depiction of rural life. However, over the course of the film, Pálfi undermines this sense of Arcadia through the film's subtly inserted mariticidal narrative. By employing Laura U. Marks' (2000) theory of intercultural cinema, I intend to examine *Hukkle* as a counter-narrative. I argue that by destabilising the heavily sentimentalised representation of

rural Hungary, Pálfi challenges restorative nostalgia in post-communist Hungary. Through the film's penetrative and, at times, invasive cinematography I argue that Pálfi invites his audience to examine the seemingly bucolic representation of rural Hungary more closely. By doing so, Pálfi suggests a need to challenge the rose-tinted myths of collective memory and engage with the more burdensome issues that lie beneath.

The final film explored in this chapter is *After the Day Before,* a film that deals with themes of inheritance and repressed memory, subject matter pertinent to historical remembrance in post-communist Hungary. Through the film's complex non-linear narration and disorientating cinematography and editing, *After the Day Before* undermines the audience's perception of proceedings in a way that mirrors the central protagonist's nebulous memories as he struggles to piece together the strange happenings within the village. I argue that the film's disjointed narrative and destabilising visual style provides a means of exploring issues of historical memory in Hungary, which since the post-communist transition have been characteristically discontinuous, selective and prone to amnesias. Janisch's non-conventional formal approach, I suggest, positions the film as a counter narrative. Utilising Dana Polan's (1985a, 1985b) theory of Brechtian political cinema, I explore how *After the Day Before* subverts dominant forms of historical memory.

3.2. *The Porcelain Doll***: The Unstable Parameters of Historicity and Myth.**

Péter Gárdos' seventh feature film, *The Porcelain Doll* marks somewhat of a stylistic and thematic departure from the seasoned director's previous work.[123] Based upon Ervin Lázár's novel, *Csillagmajor/Little Town of Miracles* (1996), the film consists of three fable-like stories set in the fictional farming village of Rácpácegres. From *Csillagmajor*'s fifteen novellas, Gárdos selects *A bajnok/The Champion*, *A porcelánbaba/The China Doll* and *A kerseűfű/The Knotweed*, stories that feature sequentially in Lázár's anthology. The first vignette, based on *The Champion,* follows the physically awkward Hötöle (Bálint Péntek) who is ordered to compete in a series of athletic challenges against a group of soldiers. However, to the frustration of their commanding officer (Lajos Bertók), Hötöle defeats his ostensibly more athletic opponents one by one. As Hötöle looks set to take the finish line in a race against what appears to be a far more able competitor, the officer shoots him. Yet despite his fatal wounds, Hötöle is first to cross the finish line before eventually collapsing. The soldiers hastily flee as the villagers place Hötöle's lifeless body in a feeding trough. Here, his grandmother proceeds to wash away his bullet wounds, restoring life to his limp body.

In the second vignette a man introducing himself as Csurmándi from the head office (Sándor Csányi) arrives at the village and proceeds to inform the villagers that they now own everything around them. The villagers stare back vacantly, except for Mrs. Bütös (Judit Németh) who sobs. When asked why she is crying Mrs. Bütös states that she wishes her son

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[123] Gárdos is best know for his debut feature, *Uramisten/The Philadelphia Attraction* (1984), in which an injured former acrobat attempts to learn the secret of a retired escapologist's most famous illusion, and *Szamárköhögés/Whooping Cough* (1987), a film that presents the chaos of the 1956 uprising from the perspective of a ten year old boy and his dysfunctional family. *Whooping Cough* won a Gold Hugo at the 23rd Chicago Film Festival and the Fipresci Award for Best Film in Official Competition at the Montreal World Film Festival in 1987.

could have lived to see the day. When one of the villagers states that no one can resurrect the dead, Csurmándi replies "for "us" nothing is impossible". He then instructs Mrs. Bütös to excavate her son's remains and place him in a designated spot behind the houses. As Csurmándi returns to his car, another mournful mother pursues him, pleading that her daughter might receive the same treatment, to which Csurmándi consents. As the villagers bring the bodies to the designated site, another villager expresses her desire to see her mother brought before Csurmándi. A few of the villagers protest, stating that they may only bring children, but at the grieving woman's insistence, the villagers exhume the mother and place her alongside the children. With the bodies laid out as instructed, the villagers await Csurmándi's return. However, Csurmándi does not return and, at midday, a wind gathers, quickly turning into a gale that causes the three bodies to suddenly decompose and disintegrate.

The final vignette follows an elderly couple Konrád and Lizi Pámer (Lipót Gombár and Mrs. György Kleineisel) who flee their home in the neighbouring town and find refuge in Rácpácegres. Despite some dissenting voices, the villagers welcome the couple and provide them with residence in a small, dilapidated house that they help to restore with furnishings from their own homes. The authorities eventually track down the Pámer's and force them to leave, despite the protests of the villagers. As soldiers lead the couple away, they wander into a wheat field where they proceed to lie amongst the wheat stalks. The soldier goes in pursuit of them only to find two indentations in the wheat where once the couple had lain. The following night, one of the villagers abruptly wakes to the sound of crying. Pursuing the source of the lamentations, he returns to the wheat field in which the couple had vanished, finding a sapling growing in each of the indents. He carefully digs them up and plants them in the cemetery of the couple's hometown where, over time, they grow into flourishing trees.

The Porcelain Doll's three vignettes, like their source material, provide examples of magical realism; a narrative mode I believe to be congruent to the study of political myth, history and remembrance in post-communist Hungary.[124] Magical realism is, by its very nature, an oxymoron that derives meaning from the inherent contradiction of its terminology. Through their juxtaposition, the distinctions between the real and the magical are called into question. As literary theorist Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) suggests, 'the extent to which one should accept the real as the version of events or the magical as the version of events is continuously undermined by the existences of the other version in the text' (67). For this reason, magical realism is often described as a subversive narrative form, one utilised as a means of challenging perceived certainties and assumptions. Thus, given magical realism's ability to question the validity of commonly held suppositions, I contend that *The Porcelain Doll* utilises the genre as a means of challenging the ascendant discourse of Hungarian historical memory.

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[124] Magical realism has a long tradition within Eastern European cinema, championed by directors such as Emir Kusturica, Jan Švankmajer, Jan Jakub Kolski and Juraj Jakubisko, amongst others. One of the important Hungarian filmmakers in this regard is Zoltán Huszárik. While Huszárik's work often straddles the line between experimental cinema and magical realism, his feature films *Szinbád/Sinbad* (1971) and *Csontváry* (1979) and shorts such as *Elégia/Elegy* (1965), *Capriccio* (1969) and *A piacere: tetszés szerint/As You Like It* (1976) have undoubtedly influenced magical realist filmmakers in both Hungary and abroad. Huszárik's work privileges form over narration, emphasising sensorial pleasure (or displeasure, in the case in *Elegy* and *As You Like It*) through rich imagery described by Bryan Burns (1996) as 'kaleidoscopic allusion[s]' (163). Other examples of Hungarian magical realism include Gyula Gazdag's *Hol volt, hol nem volt/Hungarian Fairy Tale* (1987), Ildikó Enyedi's *Az én XX sszázadom/My Twentieth Century* (1989), Péter Gothár's *Haggyállógva Vászka/Letgohang Vaska: A Tale from the Labour Camp* (1996), Enyedi's *Simon magus/Simon, the Magician* (1999), Szabolcs Hajdu's *Tamara* (2004), Diana Groó's *Csoda Krakkóban/Miracle in Cracow,* (2004), Hajdu's *Bibliotéque Pascal* (2010) and Béla Tarr's *A torinói ló/The Turin Horse* (2011). For further insight into magical realism in East European Cinema, see Skrodzka 2012.

3.2.1. *The Porcelain Doll*'s Production and Reception History.

Ten years prior to the production of *The Porcelain Doll*, a producer sent Gárdos a three-page novella written by Ervin Lázár asking him whether he would be interested in adapting it into a film. While Gárdos was attracted to its atmosphere and characters, the novella was aimed at children and Gárdos was unsure whether he was interested in making a children's film. Gárdos contacted Lázár to discuss the project and Lázár allowed Gárdos to read twelve unfinished novellas that would later feature in *Csillagmajor*. Gárdos instantly fell in love with the material, reading all twelve novellas within half an hour. With Lázár's consent, Gárdos wrote an initial screenplay based upon these unreleased novellas entitled *Lúria* but was unable to obtain finance for its production. Nine years later, Gárdos wrote a scaled down version of the original script containing only three of *Csillagmajor*'s novellas under the title *The Porcelain Doll*.

Co-produced by Tivoli Film Productions and Duna Television, *The Porcelain Doll* received a very modest budget of 70 million Forints (Palotai 2005).[125] Yet despite the film's financial limitations, *The Porcelain Doll* went on to win the Gene Moskowitz Prize at the 36th Hungarian Film Week and Gárdos won the Best Director award.[126] The film also received a nomination for a Golden St. George award at the Moscow International Film Festival and featured in competition at international film festivals in Toronto, Jerusalem, Kolkata, Vancouver, Istanbul, Reykjavík, Munich and Noordelijk.

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[125] Such was *The Porcelain Doll*'s budget that Gárdos shot the film on video, upscaling the footage to 35mm for the film's cinematic release.
[126] Sándor Csányi also won the best supporting actor award for his role as Csurmándi.

Upon release, *The Porcelain Doll* received praise in the Hungarian press. In her review for *Filmhu,* Krisztina Horeczky (2005) stated that despite the regrettable fact that the film had been shot on video, *The Porcelain Doll* was a work of astonishing beauty, applauding Tibor Máthé's elegant cinematography and both Bértok and Csányi's performances. Imre Szabolcs of *Héti Válasz* (2005) argued that what separated *The Porcelain Doll* from its contemporaries was its sense of emotional sincerity. He praised Gárdos' handling of his chiefly amateur cast but argued that the film lacked sufficient unity, seeming more like three short films rather than one cohesive feature length. Erzsébet Bori, writing for *Magyar Naranc* (2005), stated that she was somewhat taken aback by the fact that it was Gárdos, a so-called popular filmmaker, who had directed *The Porcelain Doll*.[127] She situates her analysis within contemporary debates surrounding Hungarian cinema's middle generation, pondering whether Gárdos' return to stories of moral crisis can be perceived as a step backwards given the generational shifts currently taking place in Hungarian cinema. However, despite these generational concerns, Bori, like Horeczky, spoke highly of Bértok and Csányi's performances as well as those of the film's amateur cast, stating that it is as if they were not playing a role but rather living their daily lives or perhaps reliving those of their ancestors.

Yet, regardless of *The Porcelain Doll*'s critical success, the film was a box office failure. Released in Hungarian cinemas in October 2005, the film attracted only 7,166 viewers in over 500 screenings (Löwensohn 2006, 245).

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[127] Indeed, Gárdos' previous post-communist releases, *A skorpió megeszi az ikreket reggelire/Scorpio Eats Gemini for Breakfast* (1992), *A Brooklyni testvér/The Brooklyn Brothers* (1995) and *Az utolsó blues/The Last Blues* (2002), were examples of popular cinema, despite their tepid box office receptions.

3.2.2. Blurring the Lines between History and Fable.

What then does *The Porcelain Doll* reveal about history and historical memory in post-communist Hungary? I argue that *The Porcelain Doll* presents history in a manner akin to the oxymoronic nature of magical realism. Gárdos historicises Lázár's magical realist novellas while simultaneously denying explicit periodisation. By adopting such a self-contradictory approach to history, I argue that the film attempts to blur the lines between history and fable and, in doing so, undermines the authority of perceived certainties of post-communist historical memory.

Gárdos (2006) stated that he chose to set the three narratives in three distinct historical periods, the first in the early 1920s, the second in the early 1950s and the third in the mid 1950s. This marks a departure from the original novellas in that, while one may infer the spatio-temporal settings, the novellas provide no explicit historical contextualisation.[128] It must be noted at this point that not all of *Csillagmajor*'s novellas are historically focused, explicitly or otherwise. Indeed, the novellas that make up *Csillagmajor* may more accurately be categorised as surrealist folk tales.[129] Thus, not only does Gárdos consciously select three

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[128] For example, in *The Champion,* Lázár avoids periodisation by refusing categorical exposition of the soldiers. Lázár merely states: 'On a gentle day in late fall, the soldiers of the foreign army swarmed over the puszta. They were in gray and wore hats with earflaps on their head' ([1996] 2015). Similarly, in *The China Doll* it is only from Csurmándi's declaration that "from this day forth, everything here is yours!" that one may assume historical meaning ([1996] 2010).

[129] These tales were 'based upon the author's experience growing up in a small remote Hungarian village where the people were poor in goods, but rich in tales' (Judith Sollosy in Lázár [1996] 2007, 28). Sollosy, *Csillagmajor*'s English translator, describes the book as 'a hallucinatory exploration into that part of the soul where beauty, hope, and yearning live in close proximity with the harsh realities of life' (2012). Hungarian literary critic Csaba Károlyi (2007) similarly contends that rather than being overtly historical, *Csillagmajor*'s

of Lázár's most historically oriented novellas but by setting these three narratives in three specific time periods Gárdos transforms Lázár's historically indefinite narratives into firmly historical ones.

By setting the first novella in the early 1920s, I argue that the first vignette alludes to the period of large-scale paramilitary violence known as the White Terror (*Féherterror*). In the wake of Béla Kun's short-lived communist government of March-August 1919, counter-revolutionary paramilitary units blossomed under the command of former members of Miklós Horthy's independent national army (*nemzeti hadsereg*). The most notable members were Pál Prónay and Iván Héjjas who led a period of violent repression in which those suspected of communist affiliation were persecuted, humiliated, tortured and/or executed. Targets included active and alleged communists, Jewish people; given that many members of the former communist government had been Jewish, Social Democrats and peasants, the lower-strata of whom had welcomed collectivisation (Romsics 2015, 191). While these paramilitary groups were largely in allegiance with Horthy, in part because he turned a blind eye to their activities, they exhibited a large amount of autonomy, even after Horthy's coronation as regent in March 1920. The terror exhibited by the militia became increasingly indiscriminate over time, compelling the government to dissolve the national army in January 1922.[130]

Whereas Lázár's novella provides only the briefest of descriptions of the soldiers Gárdos, by contrast, links the soldiers to a specific period in Hungarian history. Deviating from the source material, the soldiers in Gárdos' representation of *The Champion* are Hungarian, wear

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novellas can be seen as autobiographical vignettes, life stories that avoid both nostalgia and moral impositions (114).

[130] See Hoensch 1996, Bodó 2004, 2006, 2010 and Romsics 2015 for further information on this period.

uniforms closely resembling those worn by Horthy's national army and Lajos Bertók, in the role of the officer, even bears a passing resemblance to paramilitary leader Iván Héjjas. The nature of the soldier's unprompted arrival into Rácpácegres is also concordant with Héjjas' militia groups who, according to historian Béla Bodó (2010), almost exclusively targeted remote villages and farmsteads that were not easily defendable.

Bodó (2004) suggest that '[f]or the Hungarian paramilitary units, like for other proto-fascist groups, violence against the poor and the marginalized was a source of glory, a necessary retribution for past humiliation and a guarantee of national rebirth and ultimate victory' (141). I argue that the athletic competition initiated by the officer is symbolic of this desire for glory that Bodó identifies. The officer selects his fittest, most able soldiers to compete against the weak and ungainly Hötöle, fully expecting victory and confirmation of his unit's ultimate superiority. Congruously, in the political climate of defeat, uncertainty and volatility that characterised post-War Hungary, the militia groups sought to establish a sense of control and national triumph by targeting the powerless.

Similarly, by setting the second vignette in early 1950, Gárdos brings to the fore the historical core latent within *The China Doll*. Viewed in conjunction with the historical climate of the early 1950s, one may view *The China Doll* as an allegory of communism. In his introduction, Csurmándi makes several remarks that link him to the newly installed communist regime. He begins by stating that he is from the head office, interestingly a line not present in Lázár's original novella but one inserted by Gárdos to insinuate Csurmándi's affiliation with the centralised communist system. Csurmándi follows his introduction by stating, "you know me,

right?" a line alluding to the personality cult of Mátyás Rákosi.[131] Yet, perhaps the most conclusive indication of Csurmándi's connection to communism is his declaration that the villagers now own everything around them, a statement connoting communist nationalisation, which began in 1948.

Csurmándi's vow to erect the dead, I argue, speaks to communism's utopian promises. As András Gerő (2008) states, '[t]he communists believed that they would assume God's responsibilities' (51) under the assumption that the communist ideology would ultimately produce a heaven on earth and, thus, relinquish the need for God. Csurmándi embodies a likeminded conviction and similarly assumes the role of God through his professed ability to resurrect the dead.

Furthermore, the willingness of the grieving mothers to trust Csurmándi and uncritically follow his instructions speaks to the mentality of the vulnerability that characterised the Hungarian peasantry in immediate post-War years and the hope offered by the proposed utopia of communism. Historian Peter Kenez (2006) claims that '[a]fter the dreadful suffering of the war there were people who believed that an entirely new way of social organization was not only possible but desirable' (179). Indeed, the utopianism of communism spoke to large sections of post-war Hungarian society, especially given that Hungary had remained a semi-feudal state up until the Second World War.[132]

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[131] Images of the General Secretary were ubiquitous in public places such as schools, offices, meeting halls, markets and railway stations.
[132] Indeed, after the war, 40 percent of the peasantry were landless or dwarf holders with barely enough land to sustain a living (Kenez 2006, 108).

However, Csurmándi's broken promises of resurrection allude to the failure of communism to fulfil its utopian promises. The realities of communism deviated greatly from the utopia promised. Communist philosophy asserted moral and historical authority due to the fundamental assumption that socialism was the inevitable conclusion of man's ideological evolution. Consequently, communism maintained that its ends, however morally dubious, justified the means of achieving the evolution of fully-fledged socialism. The Rákosi government forcibly coerced peasants into joining the collectives and those that refused faced discrimination, high taxation, expropriation and commassation – in which the regime forcibly exchanged land between the collectives and private landowners, to the detriment of the latter. Collective members faced great hardship; centralised quotas were unfeasible, especially given that the Ministry of Agriculture rationed essentials such as fertilizer and had to allocate agricultural machinery due to their limited supply. By 1952, the average income of peasants in the cooperatives declined 30.8 percent of that earned in late 1948 (Gati 1994, 373). Cooperative members also lived in fear of the Hungarian State Protection Authority (*Államvédelmi Osztálya*, ÁVO), who ritualistically searched homes to ensure that members were not hoarding produce.[133]

Gárdos sets the final vignette, based upon what might be considered the most historically specific of the three Lázár's novellas, in the mid 1950s. *The Knotweed* historical specificity stems from the fact that the novella focuses upon a Swabian couple facing expulsion, a reality for many Hungarian Swabians after the Second World War. Following the Potsdam conference of July-August 1945, it was decreed that German minorities in East Central Europe be compulsorily transferred back to Germany as a means of securing lasting peace in

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[133] See Seton-Watson 1950, Gati 1994, Hoensch 1996, Kontler 2002, Lendvai 2003 and Kenez 2006 for additional insight into this period.

the region. Prior to this, Hungary's Swabian population had constituted one of the nation's largest minority groups after Hungary had become a virtually ethnically homogeneous state following the signing of the Treaty of Trianon. However, in the years preceding the war, relations between the Hungarians and the Swabians deteriorated as the Third Reich's demanded Swabian autonomy, which increased during the war years to the point of threatening Hungarian sovereignty (Spira 1972, 195-196).

Swabian deportation commenced in January 1946, allowing Hungarians to distance themselves from complicity with the Third Reich. Contemporary discourse positioned Hungary's Swabian minority as Nazi collaborators, deflecting culpability from the Hungarian masses. Estimated figures suggest that 230,000 Swabians were deported from Hungary under the supervision of the Allied Control Council (Eberhardt 2003, 311), the majority of whom were transferred to US and Soviet internment camps. Deportation officially ceased following Rákosi's Prime Ministerial Decree in October 1949, with all other repatriation restrictions lifted the following March. Between 1952-55 Swabian resettlement took place.[134]

Through the tale of Konrád and Lizi Pámer we are provided a microcosmic view of this particular chapter of Hungarian history in which issues of forced expulsion, refugeeism, ethnic hostilities and resettlement are all played out. The couple's disappearance at the climax of the vignette thus becomes symbolic of not only the erasure of a long-established minority group, whose lineage can be traced back as far as the thirteenth century, but also to the erasure of this dark chapter of Hungarian history within contemporary public discourse.

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[134] See Spira 1972, 1990, de Zayas 1977, Clarkson 2003, Eberhardt 2003, Institute for Research of Expelled Germans 2009 and Douglas 2012 for further historical contextualisation.

While the three vignettes depict three distinct periods of Hungarian history, they can be linked by the manner in which they allude to common suppositions of history in Hungary. *The Porcelain Doll* addresses this supposition through the depiction of Rácpácegres. Village life is highly romanticised. While far from prosperous, Rácpácegres is a place of simple virtues, innocence and community, and its inhabitants are self-sufficient and seemingly want for nothing. However, life in Rácpácegres is compromised by the imposition of external political stimuli. The three narratives all feature outsiders imposing their will on the villagers, whether in the form of soldiers, a representative from the head office or the authorities pursuing the Swabian couple. The villagers are victims of political processes. Gárdos' representation of village life, I argue, alludes to a common perception of history in Hungary. Given Hungary's turbulent history at the hands of multiple external occupiers, Hungarians have been inclined to position themselves as driftwood on the tides of history, victims of political happenings beyond their control.[135] Gárdos congruently presents the villagers in light of this widely held national self-conception.

Yet, while Gárdos brings to light the historical significance underlying each of the three vignettes, he simultaneously undermines any sense of historicity through the denial of explicit periodisation. While certain elements of the mise-en-scène are suggestive of a particular historical era, the car driven by Csurmándi, for example, is a Pobeda; a vehicle manufactured in the Soviet Union from the mid 1940s to the late 1950s; these period-specific elements of mise-en-scène are in no way emphasised or foregrounded. Additionally, Gárdos (2006) states that he actively sought to destabilise the audience's perception of time through

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[135] See Gerő 2008 and Traub 2015 for further information on the historical origins of this national disposition.

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the mise-en-scène. The film is consciously inconsistent in its selection of props and costume. A case in point being the guns carried by the soldiers in the first vignette; despite the vignette's 1920s setting, Gárdos claimed that some of the guns carried by the soldier only came into use in the 1950s.

Furthermore, Gárdos undermines the film's historical specificity by employing the same cast throughout the three vignettes. The film makes no attempts to establish that the passage of time between each vignette and characters even wear the same clothes across the three narratives. Consequently, despite the three narratives encompassing a period of over thirty years, the villagers never age. Thus, rather than providing a sense of elapsed time, *The Porcelain Doll* seemingly places the village of Rácpácegres in a historical vacuum. By presenting time in this manner, any notion of historical specificity becomes problematic, especially given Gárdos' claims that the film embraces not one but three periods of history.

Yet, perhaps the most discernible way in which the film undermines historicity is through the inclusion of the supernatural elements. Gárdos' decision to explore history through Lázár's surrealist novellas accentuates these abnormal and unexplainable aspects within the film. I argue that these fantastical elements serve to defamiliarise common perceptions of the past and undermine the dominant narratives of Hungarian national history. *The Porcelain Doll* subverts the authority of dominant narratives that position the Hungarian as the passive victim of history by including radical elements that serve to destabilise and subvert this assumed truth. As literary theorist, Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) claims:

> The root of this [magical realism's] transgressive and subversive aspect lies in the fact that, once the category of truth has been brought into question and the category of the real broken down or overturned, the boundaries of other categories become vulnerable. The reader becomes aware that if the category

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of the real is not definite then all assumptions of truth are also at stake (67-68).

Indeed, *The Porcelain Doll* shares the motivations of the post-colonial magical realists in that the film seeks to challenge dominant historical assumptions. For post-colonial authors and filmmakers, magical realism provides a means of addressing the tension between indigenous history and that dictated by Western Imperial discourse. Through *The Porcelain Doll,* I argue that Gárdos similarly contests the dominant proclamation of history in post-communist Hungary; history increasingly shaped by political myth, nationalist ideology and a longstanding victimhood complex. However, where post-colonial magical realist discourse typically challenges the historical proclamations of an external coloniser, I argue that *The Porcelain Doll* challenges the Hungarian mainstream's selective and therapeutic proclamations of history that have emerged in response to the hardships of post-communism, the fragmentation of society and the need for communal identity.

Through the combination of the historical and the mythical, *The Porcelain Doll* exploits a mode of representation that transcends the boundaries of hegemonic historical discourse. The film thus presents what American and Black Studies scholar George Lipsitz (1990) describes as a counter-memory. Lipsitz's theory of counter-memory combines elements of both historical and mythical remembrance as a means of reframing historical discourse. As Lipsitz states:

> Story-telling that leaves history to the oppressor, that imagines a world of desire detached from the world of necessity, cannot challenge the hegemony of dominant discourse. But story-telling that combines subjectivity and objectivity, that employs the insights and passions of myth and folklore in the service of revising history, can be a powerful tool of contestation (212-213).

Individually, Lipsitz views both history and myth as inadequate means of addressing the past. History, he argues, is dictated by the dominant ruling class and so neglects the experiences of the marginalised and/or subjugated. Lipsitz also maintains that history excludes individual, subjective experience; that which deviates from history's linear meta-narrative. Myth, alternatively, provides the opportunity for marginal and/or subjective discourse but does so within the confines of existing power structures, leaving history in the hands of the elite. Counter-memory, on the other hand, seeks 'to expand the scope of history' (218) by amalgamating history and myth, applying empathy and subjectivity to cognitive historiography. Lipsitz asserts:

> Counter-memory is a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal. Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that totality, counter-memory starts with the particular and then builds outward toward a total story. Counter-memory looks to the past for hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives. Not unlike myths that seek to detach events and action from the fabric of any larger history, counter-memory forces revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past (213).

Where Lipsitz views counter-memory in relation to subjugated groups such as women and blacks, I argue that his theory is applicable to the study of post-communist memory politics given the dominance of exculpatory historical narratives and the uncompromising manner in which these narratives are preserved and defended. Thus, through the amalgamation of the historical and the mythical *The Porcelain Doll* attempts to reframe contemporary historical discourse.

3.2.3. *The Porcelain Doll*'s Aesthetic Oxymoron.

Gárdos presents the destabilisation of history aesthetically, rendering Lázár's novellas in a visual style that encapsulates the self-contradictory nature of magical realism. On the one hand, Gárdos depicts Rácpácegres with a real sense of verisimilitude. Filmed on location in Kunszentmiklós, Bács-Kiskun, the film depicts Rácpácegres as a living and breathing world, rich in detail and personality. From the chickens and geese that roam freely around the sandy farmyard, to the thatched-roofed houses missing areas of plaster, the washing hanging on the line, the villager's traditional attire, and the tools and paraphernalia used in the completion of daily chores, the film strives for authenticity. The mise-en-scène creates a semblance of actuality, presenting the filmic world as a genuine place in which real lives are lived out. Further accentuating the film's claims to verisimilitude, Eddie Cockrell of *Variety* (2005a) claimed that prior to filming Gárdos lived amongst the villagers to absorb the daily experience of village life.

The cast predominantly consists of non-professional actors, village dwellers from Pest County and Bacs-Kiskun.[136] The use of an amateur cast bestows upon the film a sense of authenticity and sincerity. Gárdos elicits more genuine performances from his amateur cast by encouraging them to draw upon personal experiences in portrayal of their characters.[137]

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[136] As Gárdos (2006) recalls, the majority of the cast came from poor families, many of whom did not even own televisions. One cast member had never even visited a cinema.

[137] After a particular experience during the audition process in which a woman was asked to recreate a scene that she had experienced in real life, Gárdos (2006) stated: 'I realised something: all I had to do was find those stories in the lives of these amateurs that happen in the Ervin Lázár novellas. Or similar or nearly similar. If they could live these stories like their own stories… then all I had to do was to bring out these hidden stories of theirs'. The employment of Stanislavskian acting methods facilitates more believable performances derived from real emotions and experiences.

Furthermore, Gárdos claimed that he actively looked for expressive faces, stating 'I was afraid that if I didn't find really good faces for a film like this then it wouldn't work'. Indeed, it is through faces that the film attains a sense of honesty. Faces convey the experience of rural life. The weather-beaten faces of the villagers express the toil of rural life, their tough, leathery skin and deep wrinkles suggesting long hours of labour. Tibor Máthé accentuates faces through his cinematography; the camera slowly glides around the characters capturing significant moments through facial expressions.[138]

However, concurrent with *The Porcelain Doll*'s depiction of verisimilitude, Gárdos employs a number of destabilising techniques that undermine this sense of reality. The use of non-professional actors, while granting the film a sense of honesty, also serves to create emotional distance. Performances, at times, appear rigid and affected, undermining the psychological believability of the characters and Gárdos consciously includes shots of the cast looking directly into the camera, breaking the illusion of reality. The inclusion of such footage suggests a wilful desire to subvert the realism already established within the film. Indeed, the breaking of the forth wall is one of the fundamental tenets of Brechtian distanciation.

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[138] For instance, after Hötöle is shot by the officer as he approaches the finish line during a race, the camera remains fixed upon his face in close-up. His widening eyes give weight to the impact of the bullets and his cheeks puff as he struggles for air. Yet, at the same time there is a fixed determination to Hötöle's face as he nears the finish line, his eyes are unblinking and he teeth are gritted as he runs the final few metres. Then in mid-shot the boy crosses the finish line, the camera pans as he comes to a stop capturing his euphoric final expression. He then collapses as the camera follows his descent before finally resting on a close shot of his lifeless face. Similarly, the impact of Konrád and Lizi's disappearance is emphasised through the facial expressions of the villagers. As they all gather round the two indents in the wheat field, the camera, mounted on a Steadicam, pans in medium close-up from left to right as the villagers look on in mourning. The men remove their hats but the image does not reframe to accommodate these actions, but instead remains tightly fixed on their facial reactions, tilting to accommodate the villagers varying heights. The emphasis on face thus bestows upon the film a disarming sense of sincerity.

Furthermore, Gárdos alludes to the inherent contradictions present within magical realism through the film's cinematography and editing. Cinematographer Máthé shoots much of the action using handheld cinematography or with a Steadicam, bestowing upon the film a documentary-like quality. However, by placing these elements alongside more stylised cinematography and editing, I argue that *The Porcelain Doll* contradicts any sense of authenticity that the film's documentary approach establishes.

The conspicuous nature of *The Porcelain Doll*'s cinematography and post-production is particularly evident during Csurmándi's visit to Rácpácegres. Csurmándi pulls up near to the farmyard's entrance and the villagers gather round. What follows is a number of shot reverse shot exchanges between Csurmándi and the villagers as the head office delegate introduces himself. During these shots, the camera remains in motion, capturing the expressionless faces of the villagers as they learn that they now own everything around them. When Mrs. Bütös speaks of her son and Csurmándi approaches, the image cuts to a point of view shot in which we see the assembled villagers part as Csurmándi draws near. This point of view shot is significant in that the interchanging of objective and subjective perspectives destabilises the verisimilitude of the fictional world. The cinematic spectator is always conscious of his or her own role as viewer and so through the subjectified perspective – a viewpoint not ordinarily available to them – the film shatters the illusion of reality.

As Csurmándi and Mrs. Bütös converse, the film utilises a traditional shot reverse shot system while ethereal non-diegetic music bestows upon the scene a sense of the supernatural. During this sequence, the image cuts to a medium close-up of Csurmándi as he performs an ambiguous, dismissive gesture, somewhat inexplicably shot in slow motion. Through the manipulation of time, albeit for the briefest of moments, Gárdos again disrupts the illusion of

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reality. Further temporal manipulations appear shortly thereafter. The image cuts to an extreme long shot of the villagers gathered around Csurmándi, taken from a position proximate to his parked car. As one of the congregation informs Csurmándi that Mrs. Bütös' son has been dead for five years, a Steadicam shot, accelerated in post-production, tracks from its position beside the car to a medium close-up of Csurmándi as he states "for "us" nothing is impossible", with non-diegetic sound effects accentuating the dramatic nature of the shot.

We then cut to a high angled shot of Csurmándi and Mrs. Bütös taken amongst the branches of a nearby tree. The crane mounted camera sweeps down to a high-angled mid-shot of Csurmándi accelerated in the editing process. During this shot, we hear sounds of a church bell tolling and that of a passing airplane within the diegesis. The crane shot registers both the presence of the aircraft and Csurmándi's reaction to it. The image then cuts to a two shot of Csurmándi and Mrs. Bütös as a crop duster flies by overhead. What is remarkable about this particular sequence is its artificiality. The sound effects of the passing plane and the ringing bell sound synthetic and the chromo key effects used to present the airplane again draws the spectators attention to the ersatz nature of the film. I argue that Gárdos utilises this self-consciously imperfect visual effect as a means of eroding the film's claims of verisimilitude. Significantly, the plane does not feature within Lázár's novella nor does it serve any narrative purpose within the vignette. It is merely present for its own sake, to break the illusion of reality.

Through *The Porcelain Doll*'s aesthetic formation, Gárdos underscores the significance of the real/fantastical duality. Through casting, performance and mise-en-scène the film renders the fictional world of Rácpácegres in a manner that is lifelike, naturalistic and honest. However,

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the film's heavily stylised cinematography and pronounced post-production disputes and contradicts any sense of authenticity previously established. *The Porcelain Doll* thus visualises the oxymoronic nature of magical realism and, in doing so, endeavours to blur the boundaries of reality and objectivity.

Through the combination of historicity and fantasy, *The Porcelain Doll* presents an uncanny rendering of history, one that is familiar in its allusion to actual historical events while simultaneously unfamiliar in its use of incongruous, magical elements. David Mikics (1992) emphasises the affinities between magical realism and the uncanny, stating that 'magical realism is a mode or subset of the uncanny in which the uncanny exposes itself as a historical and cultural phenomenon' (373). Sigmund Freud ([1919] 1955) describes the uncanny as 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression' (210). Freud views the uncanny as external traumatic stimulus found to be unacceptable to the conscious mind and so repressed by ego defences; unconscious mechanisms that filter forces deemed too disturbing, preventing their access to consciousness. This repressed memory is then rendered unfamiliar within the unconscious. As Freud states, it 'proliferates in the dark… and takes on extreme forms of expression, which when they are translated and presented to the neurotic are not only bound to seem alien to him, but frighten him by giving him the picture of an extraordinary and dangerous strength of instinct' ([1915] 1957, 149).

Viewed in this light, one may interpret the version of history presented by Gárdos; that is, history rendered uncanny by destabilising magical elements, as a repressed history revived into consciousness. The conjunction of the familiar and unfamiliar within the film's representation of history provides a forum for the examination of repressed historical memory

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in Hungary. Indeed, film scholar, Aga Skrodzka (2012) views magical realism in Eastern European cinema as a means of coming to terms with issues of national history and collective remembrance, stating:

> Magic realism helps the provincial subject to make sense of the centre-enforced currents of history by introducing a pause in history, by exposing history as always a mixture of magic and logic. This strategy is especially important when people are victimised by a history that they can neither control nor fully comprehend (2).

Skrodzka also suggests that magical realism provides a means of approaching the complex issues surrounding post-communism and the uncanny nature of Eastern Europe's position within the New Europe. I argue, alternatively, that in the case of *The Porcelain Doll*, Gárdos presents a cathartic vision of history with the aim of inciting a reappraisal of Hungary's recent and deeply traumatic past. *The Porcelain Doll* may be understood as a challenge to the prevailing proclamations of history in post-communist Hungary; history shaped by political myth and knee-jerk post-transitional reactions. Through the destabilisation of the real, which serves to exemplify dominant historical discourses, Gárdos provides a platform for new and alternative perspectives.

3.3. De-Centred Subversion: *Hukkle*'s Contestation of Hungarian Revisionist Historiography.

Where *The Porcelain Doll* suggests a need for alternative ways of approaching post-communist Hungary's dominant, self-exculpatory historical narratives, I argue that György Pálfi's debut feature *Hukkle* (2002) engages with issues surrounding historical self-deception and the falsification of memory. Through my analysis, I examine the ways in which the film contests revisionist historiography in post-communist Hungary, history built upon therapeutic

values operating in response to the hardships of transition and the disillusionment of life under the new political and economic systems. By presenting the rural in the vision of an Arcadian Golden Age, only to subsequently destabilise this idealised image through the film's formal composition and de-centred narrative, I argue that *Hukkle* presents a challenge to common suppositions regarding national history. Pálfi invites the viewer to look beyond the more palatable and socially agreeable rendering of history in order to reveal a darker reality lurking beneath its surface.

Since its release, *Hukkle* has perplexed many who have sought to categorise it. Commentators have described the film as an ethnography, a nature documentary, a dark comedy and a detective thriller. [139] Told using minimal dialogue, amplified audio and probing cinematography, the film explores a remote Hungarian village that, at the outset, appears idyllic; cinematographer Gergely Pohárnok captures this seemingly bucolic environment in penetrative detail, capturing the unseen and unheeded lives of the flora and fauna that initially appear to live in symbiosis with the human village dwellers. However, as the film progresses we find that a series of ominous murders have been taking place. Amongst the collection of

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[139] Indeed, the film evokes comparisons to a wide variety of international cinema. *Hukkle* exhibits the intricately elaborate aesthetics of French filmmaker Jean-Pierre Jeunet, as seen in films such as *Delicatessen* (Jeunet and Marc Caro, 1991) and *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain/Amélie* (2001). The film's documentary approach and vignette style depiction of the daily lives of a small insular community is reminiscent of Ermanno Olmi's *L'albero degli zoccoli/The Tree of the Wooden Clogs* (1978). The emphasis placed upon the local flora and fauna recalls Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennau's documentary, *Microcosmos: Le peuple de l'herbe/Microcosmos: The Grass People* (1996). *Hukkle* also shares an ambiguous suggestion of murder akin to Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966) and even incorporates stylistic parallels to Dziga Vertov's *Chelovek s kino-apparatom/Man with a Movie Camera* (1929). *Hukkle* also parallels *Narayama bushikō/The Ballad of Narayama* (Shôhei Imamura, 1983) in its representation of a society inhumanely dealing with those deemed to no longer have any worth to their community and *Hukkle*'s lack of dialogue and equal prominence of man and animal can be likened to Cannes Europa Cinemas Label winner *Le Quattro Volte/The Four Times* (Michelangelo Frammartino, 2010).

meticulously detailed rural imagery, it emerges that the womenfolk are systematically poisoning their spouses and kin. A local detective investigates but is ultimately unable to put a stop to the women's horrific deeds. At the film's conclusion, the only men that remain in the village are bachelors and the final scene takes place at a wedding, suggesting the ensnaring of another victim.

3.3.1. *Hukkle*'s Production and Reception History.

Pálfi studied at the Academy of Theatre and Film Art under Sándor Simó with *Hukkle* serving as his thesis film.[140] According to Pálfi, the concept of *Hukkle* came from music. In an interview with *Indiewire* Pálfi stated:

> I wanted to make a musical without music. I wanted to create my music with only natural voices, noises, and sounds. And when this idea came to my mind, I went to a little village, and looked for some original sound with original stories. I put the criminal story into the script, after having seen that every community had some secret. I selected the biggest one (in Kaufman 2003).

In the same interview, Pálfi revealed that 'magic pictures' had also served as an influence for the film. He declared:

> I remembered a children's magazine…. In this old black-and-white magazine, you could see many idealistic life situations and you had to look for some other things in the same pictures. For example, you see a soldier in the pictures, and you have to find his wife. And the wife is hiding somewhere inside the picture.

Hukkle premiered at the 33rd Hungarian Film Week in January 2002, where it won both the Best Debut Film Award and shared the Gene Moskowitz Award with Kornél Mundruczó's

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[140] *Hukkle* begins with a dedication to Simó who died in September 2001.

Szép napok/Pleasant Days (2002). The film followed this success with a number of prestigious International Film Festival appearances before getting a general cinematic release in Hungary in October 2002.[141] By the end of the year, the film had obtained a local audience of 19,318 viewers (Löwensohn 2003, 290). However, given *Hukkle*'s success internationally, the film achieved viewing figures of 68,483 in European cinemas alone (*Lumiere* (b)). *Hukkle* has since been screened at over 120 film festivals worldwide and acquired numerous international distribution deals.[142]

The film's critical reception was largely positive with both the national and international press declaring *Hukkle*'s experimentation to be bold and refreshing. Writing for *Filmkultúra*, Attila Sólyom (2004) argued that Pálfi 'has created one of the most special and interesting Hungarian films of recent years'. Sólyom examines the ways in which the film's detached style equates man with nature, positioning humankind as merely a predator in an indifferent cycle of life. Interestingly, Sólyom ponders whether *Hukkle* would remain a one-off and questioned whether the film's international success would become a springboard for more innovative cinema in Hungary. Congruous to Sólyom, András Földes (2002) of *Index.hu* emphasises the way in the film places man and beast on equal footing. He describes *Hukkle* as a scintillating work, applauding the ways in which Pálfi forces the audience to find and extract the narrative from the fabric of the movie. Yet, at the same time, Földes argues that *Hukkle* crams too many ideas into its concise 75-minute runtime. Andrew James Horton (2002) of *Kinoeye* praised *Hukkle*'s departure from the 'miserablist' tendencies in Hungarian

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[141] Amongst its accolades, *Hukkle* received the European Discovery Award at the European Film Awards of 2002, the Mención Nuevos Directores Special Mention at the 2002 San Sebastián International Film Festival, a Special Mention at the 2003 Paris Film Festival, as well as the Golden Firebird Award at the 2003 Hong Kong International Film Festival.
[142] The most notable of such distribution deals being with Soda Pictures in the UK, Memento Films in France and Home Vision Entertainment in the USA.

cinema during the 1990s. While he claims that some of the film's more overt special effects are, at times, intrusive, he ultimately argues that 'it's hard to imagine somebody not liking the film'. Sándor Turcsányi (2002), in his review for *Magyar Naranc,* described *Hukkle* as a precise, beautiful and interesting film, praising its style and rhythm, in particular, the scene in which the family gather for dinner. However, Turcsányi claimed that while Pálfi clearly has a unique vision different from the majority, he argued that the film lacked substance, claiming that if they ever make *Hukkle 2*, he would not be interested. Sheila Johnston (2002) of *Screen* claimed that the movie's eccentricity 'are both its chief assets and its trickiest features'. She praised the film's 'immaculate execution and the wealth of comic invention' but pondered whether distributors would be willing to take a risk on such a unique film.

Hukkle has subsequently become emblematic of the generational shifts that took place in Hungarian cinema shortly after the millennium. Owing to the film's international success – a rarity for a Hungarian film at the time – and its bold aesthetics and narrative experimentation, *Hukkle* marked a shift away from the cold, introspective cinema synonymous with Hungary in the 1990s. The success of *Hukkle* marked the beginning of a period of vibrancy in Hungarian cinema, in which a new generation came to prominence and Hungarian cinema re-emerged on the international scene (see Papp and Buglya 2011).

3.3.2. *Hukkle* as Historical Counter-Narrative.

How then does *Hukkle* position itself as a cinematic counter-narrative challenging historical memory in post-communist Hungary? Firstly, we may approach this question by establishing how *Hukkle* connects to issues of the past. Despite *Hukkle*'s contemporary setting, the film bases its narrative upon actual historic events that took place during the 1920s in the Tiszazug

region of the Great Hungarian Plains (*Alföld*). For over a decade, women had been poisoning both babies and elderly men deemed to have no practical worth to the community. As the police learned of what had transpired and the women went to trial, their misdeeds were stifled from the public sphere. The courts treated the incidents as distinct, unconnected cases and in many instances; trials were delayed by years in order to downplay the enormity of the crimes.[143]

By rendering this suppressed historical episode cinematically, Hungarian film scholar György Kalmár (2013) suggests that *Hukkle* 'fills the void left by the silences of official history'. Kalmár, employing Laura U. Marks' Deleuzean theory of intercultural cinema (2000), argues that *Hukkle* functions as a form of counter memory. Marks' study focuses upon the ways in which intercultural filmmakers seek to establish new forms of cinematic language that appropriately articulates their cultural in-betweenness, and through which to address erased and marginalised histories overlooked by official discourse. According to Marks, one of the ways in which filmmakers convey their intercultural status is by emphasising nonaudiovisual sense experience; that is to say, by encouraging alternative forms of perception, one such example being what Marks has termed haptic visuality. Unlike optical visuality, which maintains the distance between the viewer and the object, haptic visuality calls upon alternative sense experiences such as touch and kinaesthetics to create multisensory affection-images, images that evoke a visceral, contemplative response in the spectator. Kalmár applies Marks' phenomenological framework to *Hukkle*'s rural imagery, claiming that said images 'evoke childhood memories: the scenes of village life, summers at the grandparents in the countryside, the morning milking of cows, the sight, sound and smell of old wooden

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[143] For further historical details, see Bodó 2002 and Kalmár 2013.

furniture, spring gardens, the touch of the old iron handle of a country wooden gate' (2013). It is through the evocation of personal memories that Kalmár claims *Hukkle* positions itself as a form of counter memory, drawing upon alternative, unofficial sources of memory with the aim of providing a platform for histories omitted from official discourse.

Marks' notion of intercultural cinema also informed Anikó Imre's (2009) understanding of *Hukkle* as a counter narrative. Marks notes that '[i]ntercultural cinema is not sanguine about finding the truth of a historical event so much as making history reveal with it was not able to say' (29). Marks follows Deleuze in his belief that cinema cannot present truth through discursive representation because both the visual and the verbal function as two separate, though mutually reinforcing, modes of discourse exclusive from one another. Instead, the visual and the audible must be viewed as distinct layers of meaning that highlight the limitations of the other's representational scope; that is to say '[t]he seeable and the sayable approach each other asymptotically, showing each other to be false even as they require each other to be true' (Marks 2000, 30). In emphasising this audio-visual disjunction, intercultural filmmakers ultimately strive to undermine the validity of discursive historical representation. Imre approaches *Hukkle* using this same framework, suggesting that the film's lack of national dialogue and use of amplified, manipulated sound disrupts the natural, rural imagery by emphasising its constructedness and artificiality. Through the disunion between the auditory and the visual, Imre claims that *Hukkle* positions itself in a minority relationship with national history. Consequently, according to Imre, the village can be seen as 'a frozen image of the past, a memory of the idealized national community that, the film's ironic distance and painstakingly constructed realism imply, may never have existed in the first place' (217).

In concordance with both Kalmár and Imre, I argue that *Hukkle* may indeed be examined in relation to the discourse surrounding counter memory. However, I would also suggest that the film simultaneously focuses upon surrogate historical memories. I argue that *Hukkle* examines the constructed nature of post-communist historical remembrance utilising the discourse of intercultural cinema. Marks states that '[a]s in many intercultural films and videos, the act of excavation performed by these works is primarily deconstructive, for it is necessary to dismantle the colonial histories that frame minority stories before those stories can be told in their own terms' (2000, 25).[144] In light of Marks' analysis, I claim that *Hukkle* deconstructs therapeutic forms of historical memory, memory operating in response to post-communist fragmentation and renewed fears surrounding national death that have emerged as an apprehensive response to global supranationalism.

Hukkle presents the act of deconstruction metaphorically, through the representation of the rural. From the outset, the film present village life as idyllic. However, over the course of the film Pálfi destabilises this romanticised image, slowly accentuating the dark secrets that lurk beneath the surface of the film's ostensibly bucolic pastoral setting. In doing so, I argue that *Hukkle* symbolically challenges common conceptions of national history in post-communist Hungary. By depicting an overly sentimentalised vision of rural life, *Hukkle* symbolically transforms the rural into a site of restorative nostalgia, to use Svetlama Boym's (2001) term. Boym argues that restorative forms of nostalgia emphasise a return to origins, 'to a prelapsarian moment' (49). Restorative nostalgics seek to reconstruct a lost – and often mythicised – homeland and do so by glorifying restored and/or invented traditions. Boym

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[144] While *Hukkle* does not necessarily focus upon a colonial history, the film's challenge to dominant forms of historical memory nevertheless draws parallels to the motivations of intercultural filmmakers.

claims that restorative nostalgia frequently lies at the heart of nationalist discourse and this is no more evident than in the politics of Hungarian populist István Csurka. Csurka has 'claim[ed] to fight for the preservation of the Hungarian soul against the soiling influence of Western symbols and values' (Tismaneanu 1998, 84), drawing upon pre-communist populist/urban cleavages and resurrecting the discourse of the populist writers (*népi írok*) of the inter-war period. Indeed, Csurka has repeatedly positioned Hungary's urban centres as sites of anti-Hungarian cosmopolitanism, declaring the essence of the Hungarian soul to lie in the nation's rural heritage and the traditions of its peasantry. Consequently, post-communist Hungary has witnessed a romantic revival of peasant culture and völkisch traditionalism.[145] I argue that *Hukkle*'s Arcadian representation of rural Hungary draws upon these contemporary trends, transforming the film's bucolic representation of the rural landscape into an evocative site of collective memory and nostalgia.

Indeed, the film's opening firmly establishes the countryside as a highly romanticised site of nostalgia. Following the surfacing of the snake that opens the film, Pálfi presents an establishing shot of the village.[146] Quaint white cottages sporadically dot the lush green valley as the surrounding hills cast long shadows. We hear the sound of birds singing and dogs barking and, rather curiously, the echoed sound of a man hiccupping. The hiccupping man (Ferenc Bandi) is soon made known to us as he fills a jug with milk and takes a seat outside his house where he proceeds to watch the world go by. As his hiccups continue the image cuts to a close-up shot of ants scurrying around the bench on which he sits, which creaks and tilts with every hiccup. A goose stretches its head through a fence to reach food; a

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[145] See Hockenos 1993, Némedi 1995 and Kiss 2002 for further insight into Hungarian populism and the rhetoric of István Csurka.
[146] *Hukkle* was shot in the village of Ozora, situated in the north of Tolna County.

cat yawns and stretches while idly grooming itself; a cricket leaps at the sound of the man's hiccups. A boy herds goats from his bicycle while another cyclist passes; the amplified audio accentuating the sound of rusty chains. A horse and cart passes the hiccupping man, the coachman asleep at the helm, hunched over while gently snoring. Sheep nonchalantly graze in the field while a young shepherd sits under a tree with her dog and listens to her personal stereo. A ladybird lands on her chest and walks up the wire of her headphones as she basks in the sun. She gathers it in her hand and closely examines it as it crawls over her fingers. The image then cuts to an elderly woman as she picks flowers, she sings to herself while she is under the observation of a rabbit and later a stalk. The stalk then takes flight and the image cuts to an aerial shot of the village and the surrounding fields.

Such idyllic rural imagery continues throughout *Hukkle* and establishes a sense of Arcadia akin to that disseminated in Golden Age mythology. The film presents village life as a natural and organic way of living, a place of simple virtues, tranquillity and plenitude. The repeated shots of nature alongside those of the village dwellers suggest a harmonious relationship between man and beast. The film's emphasis on the local wildlife also bestows upon the film an Edenic quality. Animals have been recurrent symbols in the representation of the Garden of Eden as a means of suggesting the abundance of the land bequeathed to man by God. This is evident in the work of artists such as Jan Brueghel whose *The Garden of Eden with the Fall of Man* (1613) foregrounds various animals, placing predator and prey side by side, as a vision of paradise. Pálfi's repeated emphasis on the local flora and fauna, likewise, presents a utopian vision of village life.[147]

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[147] This harmonious relationship, like the Arcadian imagery more broadly, is later destabilised as the film progresses. We see for example the beekeeper crush a bee between

Analogous to the notion of *Hukkle*'s image of a mythical Golden Age, the film presents time in antithesis to the frantic pace of modern life. The film progresses at a self-consciously slow pace, accentuated by the lack of narrative thrust. The subtly hidden plot is interspersed between diversionary rural snapshots that serve little narrative purpose and instead prolong temporality. Furthermore, none of the villagers are goal driven, at least not ostensibly. Most of the villagers are seen relaxing or busying themselves with daily chores that seemingly have no bearing on the narrative.

Slowness is also emphasised cinematically. The pace of the editing is unhurried with shots invariably lasting between ten and thirty seconds in length. Interposed amongst these longer shots are sporadic cutaways that reveal intimate details. These cutaway shots quicken the rhythm of the film in so much as they are of a shorter duration. However, they also serve to extend time by providing deviations and detours that intrude upon and disturb the natural progression of the narrative.

Likewise, while much of the film is made up of static, close-up or medium close-up shots that cut to concordantly intimate images, the camera also has a propensity for detached and unhurried motion. The slow moving camera serves as a means of accentuating the leisurely pace of life, again by emphasising duration. The lethargic tracking shot of the men bowling provides a fitting example. As one of the bowlers takes his shot the camera, positioned parallel to the lane, tracks his movement as he walks to the end of the queue. Without regard for the now stationary bowler, the camera continues tracking as another man briefly enters

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his fingers, a deer lying in the path of an oncoming threshing machine and the inadvertent poisoning of a family cat.

the frame as he retrieves the ball and walks off to the right of screen. The camera finally comes to a halt as the skittles enter left of frame. The shot is 47 seconds in length and, at first, appears to have no particular narrative significance.[148] The moving camera in this scene, and numerous like it, consciously lacks dynamism, following one arbitrary figure after another without any real concern for their actions, finally coming to rest on an image with no human presence, until the man who retrieves the ball re-enters frame.

3.3.3. Deconstructing the Myth.

Thus, the opening sequences present an image of the rural congruous to that celebrated and elevated in revisionist histories and restorative myth; that of a Golden Age, an Eden. However, having established such a vision of rural life, Pálfi then proceeds to destabilise it. Destabilisation is achieved through the discourse of intercultural counter cinema. Laura U. Marks (2000) suggests that minor cinema; that is to say, cinema wishing to both challenge and expand the limits of established and accepted historical discourse, must do so within the parameters of the prevailing discourse it wishes to challenge.[149] She claims,

> [d]iscourses are not only restrictive but enabling. While they limit what can be said, they also provide the only language in which to say it. In order to find expression, emerging thoughts and things must speak in the terms of the discourses that are established, though at the same time they break away from them (28).

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[148] Pálfi repeats this shot of the men bowling thrice as a means of presenting the rising number of victims. The first scene is the most densely populated, filled with men chatting, the second significantly less so and the final version of the shot includes a single man bowling alone.

[149] Minor cinema incorporates diasporic, intercultural, colonised, postcolonial, neo-colonial filmmakers as well as other marginalised groups/individuals striving to broaden the scope of established historical discourse.

Dominant cultural, political and historical discourses are often alluded to cinematically through dominant filmmaking practices, codes of representation built around classical narrative cinema. Peter Wollen, in his 1972 essay *Godard and Counter-Cinema*, states that this classical style can be categorised by narrative transitivity, whereby the narrative flows progressively; identification, either with a central character or characters; transparency of cinematic techniques; a single diegesis, that is to say, an individual world in which time and space follow logical, unbroken sequencing; closure and pleasure. *Hukkle,* in accordance with Marks, utilises the established language of dominant cinema. The film incorporates traditional components from the thriller genre in which '[t]he viewers are motivated by narrative suspense to figure out why the murders occur and how the film will end' (Imre 2009, 217). However, as David Martin-Jones (2006) suggests of minority cinema, *Hukkle* 'takes a major cinematic voice and makes a minor use of it, making it stutter or stammer' (36).

Hukkle makes minor use of a major cinematic voice by de-centring narrative. The film's central mariticidal narrative is far from explicit and, throughout, narrative elements are shrouded under the surface of the traditional imagery of country life, described by Anikó Imre (2009) as 'aesthetic distractions' (203). Indeed, György Kalmár (2013) states, '[i]t takes time till one realizes that there is a narrative, or at least there can be a narrative, established among the various pictures of plants, animals, inanimate objects and people'. *Hukkle*, while adhering to the logic of cause-and-effect narrative structuring, eschews narrative linearity. The digressive rural imagery utilised throughout the film serves to retard narrative progression and render narrative connectivity indistinct.

Furthermore, scenes of narrative significance blend seamlessly into the juxtaposing rural imagery in such a way that narrative development becomes unclear. The scene in which the midwife (Mrs. József Rácz) picks lilies provides a fitting example. This scene, removed from the narrative, appears to present a very romantic image of the countryside. The midwife sings to herself as she leisurely picks lilies; the sky is blue, birds sing, crickets chirp and bees buzz as the camera slowly roams around the field to reveal a passing stork, which then takes flight. Preceding this scene, we see time-lapsed shots of the lilies growing. Initially, the hastened growth of the lilies appears to provide further evidence in support of the theory that *Hukkle* presents village life as Edenic, in that the land appears as if to be yielding of itself. However, it is only in light of later scenes that the significance of the lilies becomes apparent. In subsequent scenes, the midwife is seen decanting an ominous white liquid into small bottles and, later still, we observe her distributing them among the womenfolk on the production line of a clothing factory. Following this, we see a number of different women adding the mysterious liquid to food, which they serve to their husbands who, shortly thereafter, die. Thus, despite *Hukkle*'s lack of explicit narrative statements, one may infer that the poison used to kill off the village's male population derives from the lilies picked by the midwife.

The film also de-centres narrative through characterisation. Classical narrative cinema traditionally utilises character motivations as a means of advancing the plot. *Hukkle,* alternatively, complicates such notions by lacking a central character who we follow in pursuit of their goals. The one character who we may identify as the film's central protagonist is the hiccupping elderly man who features recurrently throughout the narrative and whose hiccups serve as the motivation for the film's title.[150] However, he is conspicuous in his lack

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[150] *Hukkle* being an onomatopoeic word.

of action and simply sits and observes the world as it passes him by. His hiccups, however, serve as a means of connecting the film's divergent narrative strands, localising them to a centralised focal point. Additionally, *Hukkle*'s more active characters, the womenfolk, poison their kin without emotion. They show neither remorse nor concern of reprisal; carrying out their murderous deeds with the same nonchalance as their daily chores and tasks. Consequently, the film denies the audience any real sense of emotional affinity, which is further exacerbated by the film's lack of dialogue. The lack of dialogue restricts subjectivity and, as such, we learn nothing of the women's motivations.

Thus, while utilising dominant genre conventions, *Hukkle* positions itself in opposition to the dominant language of cinematic narration, which, as German philosophers and sociologists, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer ([1944] 2002) suggest, 'train[s] those exposed to it to identify film directly with reality' (100). According to Adorno and Horkheimer, classical narrative cinema, cinema based around immersion and character identification, ultimately reduces the spectator to a state of passivity by nullifying individual imagination and spontaneity. *Hukkle* instead encourages active spectatorship; the film's complex narrative structure necessitates attentive participation on the part of the spectator, who is encouraged to piece together its dislocated narrative strands into a cohesive whole. Pálfi himself declared that

> the film is an experimental movie that respects the audience… The film is a game too, and I think, if somebody likes to play, he or she will like my film too. This is not a weird film for me; it only uses a different storytelling system (in Kaufman 2003).

Through the film's de-centred narrative configuration, Pálfi encourages his audience to scrutinise the film's representation of rural Hungary to reveal the true horrors of the film's

underlying mariticidal narrative.

By utilising a mode of representation that advocates critical spectatorship, *Hukkle* shares the political motivations of Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. In accordance with the Brechtian alienation effect, a theatrical concept that seeks to heighten the audience's perception of the constructed nature of social reality through the artificiality of the theatre, *Hukkle* seeks to emphasise the devised nature of revisionist historiography within post-communist Hungary. Analogous to Brecht's notion of epic theatre, Pálfi distances his audience through the film's disjointed narrative and refusal of affective character identification, encouraging his audience to induce wider social and political meanings. In doing so, Pálfi urges his audience to question more than just the rose-tinted representation of village life; the film guides the spectator towards wider social and political contemplation.

3.3.4. Under the Surface: Perspective as Visual Metaphor.

It is through *Hukkle*'s formal configuration that the audience are encouraged to question the idyllic representation of the rural that the film establishes from its outset. As György Kalmár (2013) rightly observes, '[m]edium shots – which follow the heritage of Renaissance portrait-painting, framing the person's upper body, staging the human figure as central focus-point of artistic representation – are conspicuously rare in this film'. Kalmár suggests that the film's deviation from traditional cinematic language positions *Hukkle* as a cinematic counter memory and, indeed, this is a valid argument. I would further this claim by suggesting that *Hukkle*'s formal language provides the spectator with a perspective through which to scrutinise the ostensibly Edenic images presented. The film's magnified visual style, predominantly made up of close-up imagery and amplified audio, functions as symbolic

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device that foregrounds active cinematic engagement on the part of the audience. Through heightened cinematography and audio – *Hukkle* was the first Hungarian film to utilise a Dolby Digital Soundtrack (Kalmár 2013) – the film accentuates the seemingly banal, drawing attention to that which would otherwise go unheeded and in doing so directs the audience to consider the film's intimate details. The probing, close-up imagery provides a means of looking beyond the surface, a form of observation that transcends the superficially idyllic vision of village life to unveil its true nature.

Indeed, the film opens with a sequence literally taken from a perspective underneath the surface. Before introducing the village, Pálfi presents an extreme close-up shot of a snake. The image does not focus upon its head but instead an indeterminate section of its body. After a few seconds, the snake begins to unfurl, the amplified audio emphasising this motion. The image cuts to several similar close-up shots taken from indistinct sections of the snake's body as the chiaroscuro lighting accentuates its scales. These shots serve to give priority to smaller details that would be lost through more traditional framing. Only then do we see the snake's head as it emerges from the rocks. I argue that the snake, like the serpent whose deception ultimately cast Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, serves to disrupt the illusionary Eden that the film will proceed to depict through its representation of village life. However, it is not the snake itself that holds significance but rather the way it is presented. Through the subterranean cinematography utilised in the depiction of the snake, Pálfi creates a visual metaphor in which audiences are encouraged to look beyond the surface of the film's ostensibly paradisiacal vision of village life to reveal the darker realities that these images conceal.

Penetrative perspectives and those taken from positions beneath the surface become a recurring motif throughout the film. It is from a shot in which the camera descends into the water as it follows a piece of bait cast by a fisherman that we are first made aware of the body that lies undetected in the river. Through penetrative motion, the camera breaches the soil to reveal a mole as it tunnels below the earth. We later see the accelerated germination of a lily seed which begins underground and then erupts through the earth to the surface. Yet, perhaps the most conspicuous of these sequences is the scene in which the fisherman returns home with his catch. His wife prepares the fish but only the husband eats. The camera tilts upwards from a medium close-up shot of the angler's plate and slowly pans around the room, revealing the rest of the family watching him as he dines. The camera proceeds to tilt downwards, reframing the angler as he consumes a spoonful of food. During this motion, the shot transforms into an X-ray image of his skull as he chews and swallows. The camera follows the mouthful of swallowed food as it travels down the man's throat to his stomach when the image then transitions to an X-ray photograph on a hospital wall. The repeated use of subterranean and/or penetrative, permeative cinematography reiterates the visual metaphor established at the very beginning of the film, emphasising the need to look beyond the superficial, surface details that shroud the more disagreeable secrets that the villagers possess. Akin to the political and social philosophy of Brecht's theatre, *Hukkle*'s visual metaphor holds wider social implications. By encouraging the audience to analyse the Arcadian rural imagery using probing cinematography, Pálfi suggests a need to look beyond the rose-tinted renderings of history prevalent in contemporary society in order to engage more openly with the harsher realities of the past.

In a similar fashion, many of the key scenes that implicate the women folk in the murder of their spouses are shrouded and obscured by elements of the mise-en-scène or other rural

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imagery that requires the audience to, again, look beyond surface details. For example, we see a man walking a pig to a nearby farm in order for it to breed. As the pigs copulate, we see the man and another woman watching the animals mate; the man framed in close-up as he drinks a glass of pálinka. The shot cuts to a similar close-up of the woman, her head filling the right side of the frame. The handheld camera conspicuously shifts leftwards to a position between the shoulders of both the man and woman and refocuses to capture movement behind a lime green fence. The image cuts to a closer shot that reveals the shadowy figure to be the midwife seen earlier picking lilies. Again, the shot is framed from behind the fence, the shaky handheld imagery sporadically framed by the unfocused green rails of the fence. Here we see the woman decanting a mysterious chalky liquid into small bottles. What is noteworthy about this sequence is the way in which Pálfi encourages the audience to look beyond the surface detail. Here, the film presents a typical rural scene in which a man takes his pig to stud and the cinematography forces the audience to look beyond it, literally over the shoulders of the man and woman, to reveal vital narrative details that lurk behind the rural imagery, details that pose questions of the film's bucolic representation of rural life.

A further example can be found in the scene in which an elderly resident hosts a dinner for her family. Through detailed close-up imagery, we see the woman plucking a chicken, chopping onions and preparing a roux with strudel flour. The scene emphasises the rich colours and textures of the food in a manner that recalls Zoltán Huszárik's *Szinbád/Sinbad* (1971), a classic of Hungarian cinema and significantly a film about nostalgic reflection. The family enjoy their meal as a bottle of Tokaji wine is passed around the table in a sequence that ostensibly emphasises traditional family values. However, the elderly woman does not join the family at the dinner table and instead attends to her husband's meal that needs to be liquidised. She pours the contents of her husband's plate into a food processor but before

returning the pureed food back to his plate, the image cuts to the kitchen, from a perspective taken from outside of the kitchen window. The handheld camera shoots through a net curtain as we watch the woman reach into the cupboard through the yellow sunflower patterns of the curtain. The image cuts to a close-up of the cupboard, a zoomed shot taken from the same position outside of the window. The woman takes out a small bottle wrapped in newspaper, a bottle similar to those decanted by the midwife seen in an earlier sequence. She tips a capful of the liquid into the blender and returns to the table emptying the contents of the food processor onto her husband's plate. The husband and his grandson, who inadvertently eats from the food processor, later die. Again, the film presents a key narrative moment reticently, cloaking the scene behind elements of mise-en-scène that necessitate we take a look beyond the surface and behind the facade of traditional rural life.

Throughout *Hukkle,* Pálfi continuously undermines the illusion of Arcadia initially presented by encouraging his audience to look beyond the surface of the bucolic rural imagery through the film's probing and penetrative cinematography. In doing so, Pálfi seeks to challenge the dominant discourse of historical remembrance. By destabilising the Arcadian representation of rural life, *Hukkle* seeks to contest prevalent post-communist historical mythologies built around restorative nostalgia, myths that serve as reactionary and therapeutic responses to what Vladimir Tismaneanu describes as "the sentiments of discontinuity, fragmentation, and overall confusion of the post-communist stage" (6). *Hukkle* guides its audience towards the realities that underlie the dominant historical myths through the film's de-centred mariticidal narrative, suggesting that underneath the heavily idealised rendering of the past lies a more disturbing reality that needs to be addressed and reconciled.

3.4. Negotiating the Labyrinth: Navigating the Rural as a Site of Memory in *After the Day Before.*

Where *The Porcelain Doll* scrutinises Hungary's tempestuous past by historicising Ervin Lázár's novellas and *Hukkle* bases its de-centred, mariticidal narrative upon true, though publicly repressed, historical happenings, Attila Janisch's *Másnap/After the Day Before* (2004) differs insomuch as it is an entirely fictional film with no ostensible connection to actual historical events. Despite this fact, I argue that through the film's engagement with themes of inheritance and distorted memories, *After the Day Before* seeks to engage with post-communist Hungarian memory politics. Through the film's central narrative, in which an unnamed photographer (Gaspar Tibot) travels from the city to the provinces to locate an old farmhouse he has inherited, I argue that *After the Day Before* allegorically explores Hungary's reconnection with national history following transition. Upon arriving at a small village, the photographer gets involved with some hostile locals, including a young woman (Borbála Derzsi) who is subsequently murdered. Through a variety of destabilising techniques such as flashbacks, repetitions, narrative fragmentation and dream sequences, the film conceals the photographer's true role in the crime from both the viewer and the photographer himself. I propose to examine how the photographer's amnesias, self-deceptions and reproachfulness serve as narrative devices used to comment upon post-communist Hungary's failure to come to terms with some of the difficult issues of the past. The photographer's nebulous memory calls attention to the legacy of 'organized forgetting' in post-communist Hungary (Shafir 2002), while his willingness to lay blame upon others speaks to a similar inclination in Hungary's reappraisal of history following transition.

3.4.1. *After the Day Before***'s Production and Reception History.**

After the Day Before was the third feature length film made by Attila Janisch following his graduation from the Academy of Drama and Film Art in 1984.[151] While at the Academy Janisch directed, amongst others, the short film *A másik part/The Other Side* (1984), inspired by Alain Robbe-Grillet's novel *Le Voyeur/The Voyeur* (1955). The short was in many ways the precursor of *After the Day Before* in that both films build upon the same premise. Stylistically, however, *The Other Side* lacks the brooding atmosphere and formal experimentation that Janisch would develop throughout his oeuvre. His debut feature *Árnyék a havon/Shadow on the Snow* (1991) laid these aesthetic foundations, however, it was in the 1997 release, *Hosszú alkony/Long Twilight* that Janisch's visual style fully matured. An adaptation of the Shirley Jackson horror short, *The Bus* (1967) adapted for the screen by Janisch's regular collaborator András Forgách, *Long Twilight* earned critical acclaim for its aesthetic formalism and narrative experimentation, elements that Janisch would further develop in *After the Day Before*, released seven years later.[152]

After the Day Before debuted at the 35th Hungarian Film Week, winning the best film award. Cinematographer, Gábor Medvigy shared the best cinematography award with Gyula Pados for his work on *Kontroll* (Antal Nimród, 2003), Gáspár Tibor won best actor and Kati Lázár won best supporting actress. The film followed this success with screenings at several high

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[151] Janisch studied under the tuition of legendary Hungarian filmmaker, Zoltán Fábri.

[152] *Long Twilight* shared the grand prize at the 28th Hungarian Film Week with the popular musical comedy *Csinibaba/Dollybirds* (Péter Timár, 1997) while Janisch scooped the best director award. Yet, despite these achievements, *Long Twilight* attracted a local audience of only 4,260 people (Somogyi and Surányi 1998, 263).

profile international film festivals where the film received mixed reviews.[153] Eddie Cockrell (2004) of *Variety* described *After the Day Before* as 'uncompromising, risk-taking Euro arthouse filmmaking at its best' but questioned the film's mainstream appeal. Following the film's exhibition at the Seattle International Film Festival, Andrew Wright (2005) of Seattle-based newspaper *The Stranger,* applauded Janisch's ability to sustain tension throughout the film's near two-hour duration but, like Cockrell, believed that *After the Day Before* would not necessarily appeal to the masses. Debóra Pécsi (2004) of *Filmhu* praised both Tibot's restrained performance and Medvigy's cinematography but claimed that the film was not easily digestible and had the potential to alienate audiences. Erzsébet Bori (2004) in her round up of the 35th Hungarian Film Week argued that *After the Day Before* lacked sufficient progression from *Long Twilight.* Bori commended the film's beautiful imagery but rebuked its underdeveloped narrative, stating '[i]t is… difficult to decide whether the deficiencies of the narrative arise from the clumsiness of the message or the brutal depiction of the impossibility of cognition. This, of course, does not make the film any more convincing' (166).[154]

The criticism aimed at *After the Day Before* largely focused upon a perceived lack of motivation for the photographer's crimes, an issue exacerbated by the film's non-linear chronology. However, in an interview with *Filmhu*, Janisch stated that the film actively strives to destabilise the parameters of cause and effect. As Janisch states:

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[153] Such festivals included the 2004 Karlovy Vary Film Festival, in which the film received a nomination for a Crystal Globe, the 2005 Seattle International Film Festival, where the film won an Emerging Master award, the Montreal International Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, the Edinburgh International Film Festival and the Hong Kong International Film Festival.

[154] *After the Day Before*'s box office performance reflected the film's mixed critical reception. In domestic cinemas, the film attracted an audience of only 3,710 viewers in 172 screenings following its general release in November 2004 (Löwensohn 2005, 257).

> We thought it was important that the film's structure mirror the nature of the crime. The crime is unexplainable and appears to lack motivation according to a linear, chronological unfolding of events. In fact, the crime emerges in its ruthless consistency from the minute details of each scene building up a mosaic of events, events that seem quite irrelevant in the moment of their occurrence. The film's structure suggests a more difficult relationship between cause and effect (in Hungler 2003; translated by Diana Popa).

Indeed, Janisch cites B.S. Johnson's experimental novel *The Unfortunates* (1969) and the work of Nouveau Roman novelist and filmmaker Alain Robbe-Grillet as key influences on *After the Day Before*.[155] Akin to Robbe-Grillet's structurally experimental *L'année dernière à Marienbad/Last Year at Marienbad* (Alain Resnais, 1961), *L'immortelle/ The Immortal One* (Alain Robbe-Grillet 1963) and *Trans-Europ-Express* (Alain Robbe-Grillet 1967), *After the Day Before* transgresses the canonistic norms of mainstream narrative cinema.[156] *Cahier du Cinéma* critics Jean-Luc Comolli and Paul Narboni ([1969] 1971) argue that formal subversion serves as a mode of discourse through which filmmakers counterpose and undermine prevailing ideologies. They argue that 'every film is political, inasmuch as it is determined by the ideology which produces it' ([1969] 1971, 30). Cinema 'reproduces' reality, but the representation of reality depicted is itself shaped by prevailing ideologies. Cinema therefore 'reproduce[s] the world as it is experienced when filtered through… ideology' (30). Comolli and Narboni thus suggest that the role of the filmmaker is to call attention to and challenge the ideology imbedded within what they term 'bourgeois realism' (31). One such method they identify is through formal resistance. While a given film may appear to lack overtly political subject matter, by challenging the very concept of depiction; that is to say, by destabilising delineative realism, said films break away from the dominant

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[155] *The Unfortunates,* famously known as the "book in a box", provided the reader with two chapters designated the first and last while the remaining chapters were left unbound for the reader to read in his or her desired order.

[156] Robbe-Grillet wrote the screenplay for *Last Year at Marienbad*.

ideologies that embodies them.

Dana Polan (1985a) argues, however, that one cannot not simply read political meaning into formal self-reflexivity. Polan challenges structuralist film theory by stating that all films, political or otherwise, exhibit some degree of formal self-reflexivity. Polan thus strives to distinguish a Brechtian political art from that which he describes as 'ahistorical formalism' (664). According to Polan, non-political films detach formal transgressions from social causes. He states that 'contemporary culture can accommodate formally subversive art; as long as such an art does not connect its formal subversion to an analysis of social situations' (668). Political art, alternatively, engages in conscious political criticism. Polan (1985b) states that '[i]n Brecht's aesthetic, formal techniques are always in the service of social criticism, human comportment in everyday life held up to examination in light of particular critical qualities of art' (82). Polan thus suggests that a film is not necessarily political by virtue of formal experimentation alone. Instead, he argues that a political cinema utilises formal distanciation as a means of direct social engagement, 'to pull social actions from their habitual framework' (Polan 1985b, 96).

Viewed in light of Polan's discourse, one may consider *After the Day Before* a work of political art because the film's formal strategies function in the direct service of political need. I argue that the film utilises formal subversion as a means of engaging with the subject of post-communist historical memory. Through the film's fractured linearity, Janisch addresses the fragmentation of memory in contemporary Hungary. The erosion of the established chains of cause and effect provide a fitting means of analysing the broken chains of historical causation in Hungary and the effect this schism has had on the conception and

understanding of history in the present. Janisch described *After the Day Before* as a study of the 'psychology of sin' (Cockrell 2004), asserting that:

> Here, the characters have to confront their own demons, in that striking and clear light, which shines on them after the first sin has been committed, in a world that has changed, under an alien looking sky. A man aimlessly walks/drifts in a labyrinth. It is the labyrinth of his own amnesia, of an unknown landscape and of the human soul (in Hungler 2003; translated by Diana Popa).

Such themes of recognition, acceptance and acknowledgement are particularly relevant to post-communist Hungarian society and provide a means of allegorically engaging with Hungary's failure to come to terms with its turbulent past, specifically, the nation's role in the Holocaust. Janisch stated at the film's premiere that 'I'm not interested in brutality, [but] a reaction to daily hatred' (in Cockrell 2005b, 168). I suggest that daily hatred in a post-communist context speaks to the resurrection of pre-communist nationalist discourse and the return of scapegoating mythologies and narratives of exclusion built around xenophobic notions of "us" versus "them". Thus, through the film's fragmented chronology and destabilised approach to cause and effect, Janisch examines the consequences of Hungary's forty-year separation from the daily hatred of the pre-communist era and the consequent reawakening of politics of hatred in contemporary post-communist society.

3.4.2. Fragmented Space, Fragmented Memory.

After the Day Before asserts its connection to themes of history and collective memory through allegory. The notion of a city-dweller travelling to the countryside in order to locate a farmhouse bequeathed to him by a distant relative is, in many respects, symbolic of Hungary's reconnection with the past following the post-communist transition. Through the

archetypal binary of city and country, in which the city is synonymous with the contemporary while the rural evokes a way of life associated with the past, the photographer's origins align him with the present day while his journey to the countryside suggest an reconnection with the past. The correlation between the countryside and the past is further emphasised through the photographer's search for his inheritance, in this case, the Gruber farm. The concept of inheritance insinuates lineage, a sense of succession, a link to the past. Indeed, the empty farmhouse is suggestive of a life once lived that is no more; an empty house is a silent and inanimate witness to a private, familial history. The photographer's reconnection with his own family history therefore serves as a microcosmic metaphor, a means of exploring Hungary's own reconnection with its historical lineage following transition. The photographer's connection to this past, however, is remote; the farmhouse belonged to a distant relative of whom he had never met. Such details acknowledge the disconnection between post-communist Hungary and national history, history rendered aloof by communist memory politics. Thus, the photographer's alienation from a particular part of his ancestry speaks to Hungary's own estrangement from national history.

I argue, however, that the rural not only serves as an allegorical link to the past, but as a site of memory itself. Catherine Fowler and Gail Helfield (2006) suggest that a nation's investment in its past can be gauged by how the rural is presented cinematically; that is to say, representations of the rural impart ideological messages through which a given nation's pride, shame, acceptance and/or rejection of the past is made visible. Accordingly, I argue that through *After the Day Before*'s representation of the rural, Janisch engages with the disconnected and fragmentary nature of Hungarian historical remembrance and the consequent effects of such mnemonic distortions on post-communist memory regimes.

Much of the action in *After the Day Before* takes place in a site known simply as the Settlement, a small, isolated location seemingly situated in the middle of nowhere. Such is the secluded nature of the Settlement that there is no road leading into it, as the photographer finds out when he arrives on the back of an old truck and has to cycle five kilometres beyond the hills to get there. The film presents the Settlement as a disjointed place that denies the spectator any real sense of cartographic cohesion. Individual locations within the Settlement appear remote and their geographic correlation remains unclear throughout the film.[157] The isolated nature of each location within the Settlement necessitates recurring expositional shots of the photographer cycling between them. However, the shots in which the photographer travels provide little to link the various locations. Through ellipsis, the audience is unable to map these locations and, as such, the Settlement feels fragmentary and deficient.[158]

The fractured nature of the Settlement is further emphasised by the film's many temporal disruptions. *After the Day Before* is split into four chapters of varying length entitled the sky (*az ég*), the dust (*a por*), the wind (*a szél*) and the road (*az út*). However, these chapters serve

[157] Between 1999 and 2002, Janisch searched for suitable locations for the film. Locations ranged from Káli-medence in the Balaton uplands in Zala County to the Bükk Mountains in Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, a county situated on the Slovakian border in northeastern Hungary (Janisch 2004).

[158] The film also alludes to the disjointed nature of the Settlement through objects. *After the Day Before* repeatedly presents images of a handheld maze owned by the girl as a metaphorical device used to allude to the film's labyrinthian setting. In addition to the puzzle, Janisch makes further use of objects as a means of forging connections between the film's disparate locations. Littered throughout the Settlement are small, white seashells, which, it later transpires, the girl uses to make a necklace, the item that ultimately implicates the photographer in her murder. The discarded seashells forge connections between the various, seemingly detached locations in that they provide a link to the now deceased girl. The shells function as markers, indicators of the girl's presence, connecting her to other characters and places before her death that, consequently, entangle these characters into the mystery of her murder.

little more than to further convolute the film's already manipulated chronology. The non-linear treatment of time is apparent through repeated sightings of the girl following her death. Yet, the film's disordered sequencing is initially revealed through subtler means; a wound on the photographer's hand. During the first chapter, the photographer enquires about lodgings for the night. He dismounts from his bicycle and picks up his bag; as he does so the camera focuses upon his hand in medium close-up, whereupon he removes a makeshift bandage and checks his palm; a seemingly innocuous act that only becomes noteworthy in light of subsequent scenes. The second chapter begins with the photographer lying unconscious on the ground having fallen from his bicycle. An elderly woman (Kati Lázár) witnesses the event and helps him to his feet. She notices the cut upon his hand and applies the temporary bandage we saw in the previous scene. The cut, however, looks old and has partially scabbed over. Later within the second chapter, we learn just how the photographer received the wound; he falls in a cornfield as he pursues an indistinguishable man chasing a young girl. However, the status of this scene is rendered somewhat ambiguous, as it is unclear whether it is a dream or merely part of the film's fragmented narration, as will be discussed later.

Consequently, the film's spatial and temporal fragmentation leaves the spectator with a perspective that is disconnected and partial. I argue that this disjointed perspective functions as a metaphorical means of alluding to post-communist Hungary's fractured memory regimes. Given the limitations placed upon public memory under communism and the subsequent imbalance of post-communist historiography, resurgence of therapeutic nationalist discourse and political instrumentation of history, Hungarian historical memory has become deeply fragmented and imbalanced. Consequently, the comprehension and application of national history in post-communist Hungary has been wrought with complications. This is particularly evident in the debates surrounding the memory of the pre-

communist years and Hungary's role in the Holocaust.[159] *After the Day Before* thus utilises the rural as a space in which the politics of post-communist memory are played out. Throughout the film, spatiotemporal disruptions and non-linear structuring complicate the relationship between narrative events, a method of narration that aptly articulates the disarrangements of Hungarian public memory and the ambiguous relationship with history that such disruptions produced.

3.4.3. Ambiguous Focalisation, Questionable Objectivity.

Janisch also utilises the flow of narrative information as a means of commentating on Hungarian memory politics. *After the Day Before* employs a restricted narrative. For the most part, Janisch confines the plot to the photographer's range of knowledge and, as such, the spectator's view of events is limited to that of the photographer's.[160] Restricted narration is a narrative mode that allows Janisch to blur the boundaries between objective and subjective representation. The film approaches narrative focalisation ambiguously, and throughout it is questionable whether focalisation is internal or external; that is to say, it is unclear whether the film presents narrative information from the subjective position of the photographer or merely his observable external actions. On first inspection, one may claim that *After the Day*

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[159] See Tismaneanu 1998, Lendvai 2012, Hanebrink 2013, Himka and Beata Michlic 2013 and Portuges 2013b for further details on how citizens typically comprehend the Holocaust in post-communist Hungary.

[160] There are, however, momentary instances in which the film presents narrative information from alterative perspectives. For example, near the end of the second chapter, the film briefly presents Romek's point of view as he attempts to grab the girl as she sits under a tree making her seashell necklace, a scene observed by the photographer. The scene that follows intercuts between shots of the girl wandering into the cornfield and Símon as he runs from Romek's house and searches of the girl at the tree, finding only her now broken maze puzzle and later a seashell in the cornfield. Yet, despite these instances, the film chiefly presents narrative information from the photographer's perspective.

Before utilises external focalisation to impart narrative information. Throughout the film, story information is confined to the photographer's external actions; the audience are, for the most part, denied access to his mental subjectivity, to use Bordwell and Thompson's term (2001, 73). External focalisation creates distance between the photographer and the spectator. His actions and impulses often feel alien as we lack insight into the emotional motivations behind them. The spectator instead must decipher the photographer's motives from his actions/reactions and from his interactions with others. However, given that *After the Day Before* utilises dialogue sparingly, the photographer's motivations can often appear unclear. For this reason, one may naturally assume that the film's focalisation is external.

We do share moments of the photographer's perceptual subjectivity, in which we share his optical and auditory standpoint. Yet, despite these occasional moments in which the film grants the spectator access to what the photographer sees and hears, typically through point of view shots, Janisch prevents direct access to his psyche.

However, during the first chapter, Janisch does grant the audience passing access to the photographer's mental subjectivity and, in doing so, begins to undermine the objectivity of the film's narration. As night approaches, the photographer finds accommodation with a quarrelsome mother and daughter (Mari Nagy and Anett Forgács). Following an encounter with the daughter, who wakes the photographer in the middle of the night requesting that he kill her mother, the image cuts to the photographer waking up aboard a train. From the carriage's window, the photographer sees an unidentifiable man pursuing a young girl. The photographer disembarks from the train in pursuit of the couple and, while in chase, he happens upon a discarded bicycle and an old sack. Hesitantly, he examines the sack to find that it contains a severed sheep's head, causing him to recoil in disgust. The photographer

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then steps on something; a seashell with a hole in it. He examines it closely, the camera framing his hand and face in close-up before cutting to a point of view shot that emphasises the hole in the shell. A crane shot then repositions the camera to a mid-shot of the photographer now inexplicably positioned by the side of a road, a truck stops and the photographer climbs aboard. The image then cuts to an extreme close-up of the stony ground, in which a tracking shot reveals the seashell now in pieces. We then cut to the photographer as he wakes back at the house the following morning.

Interposed between scenes in which the photographer is in bed and the following morning as he wakes, one may logically assume that the photographer's pursuit of the chase was a dream. This dream's status is somewhat ambiguous, however, as the sequence ends where the syuzhet of the film begins, with the photographer abroad the truck. Through the dream sequence, logically framed by scenes in which the photographer sleeps, the narrative provides the audience access to the photographer's mental subjectivity. However, as the narrative progresses, the fluctuations between internal and external focalisation lack the same transparency.

Indeed, from this point on focalisation becomes increasingly indistinct in a way that recalls Maya Deren and Alexander Hamid's celebrated avant-garde short *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). After enquiring about the Gruber Farm at a local shop, the photographer happens upon Símon (Sándor Czeczö), the young man he had discreetly observed with the now deceased girl and her irate father upon first arriving at the Settlement. The photographer and Símon briefly exchange a few words and accusing stares. The photographer then enters a darkened room lit only by an unshaded lamp, which he wields like a torch. He searches the dank room before finding the dismembered head of a sheep on the floor. At that moment, the

light bulb blows and the room is filled with darkness, the only source of light coming from the gaps in the curtain. The photographer approaches the window and pulls back the curtain, whereupon the image cuts to a close-up of his face. The image then tracks back to reveal that the photographer is now situated inside a train carriage. As in the aforementioned dream sequence, a non-diegetic industrial soundscape plays as the photographer once again sees the anonymous man chasing the young girl. Again, he pursues them and, as he reaches the cornfield, he falls, cutting his hand, the freshly open wound gushing with blood. A crane shot moves from a high-angled medium close-up of the photographer's face to an aerial long shot before cutting to an establishing shot of the barren wilderness as the photographer cycles down a dirt track.

Unlike the previous dream sequence, which Janisch brackets with shots of the photographer in bed, the status of the latter dream sequence is somewhat more ambiguous. Janisch foregoes the traditional modes of framing that would establish the sequence as a dream and, instead, positions the scene amongst the film's already fragmented narrative. Janisch utilises recurring tropes such as the chasing couple, the industrial soundtrack and the decapitated animal heads that allow the audience to forge connections to the previous dream sequence. Yet, the scene's oneiric status is rendered indefinite by the fact that the injury to the photographer's hand is real and visible throughout the film. Janisch thus destabilises the parameters of internal and external focalisation, manipulating the story information in such a way that the lines between objectivity and subjectivity become indistinguishable.

On the other hand, one may justifiably argue that *After the Day Before*'s narrative is internal. In light of the film's conclusion, in which we learn that the photographer raped and murdered the girl, one may claim that the film relays story information from the photographer's

psychological perspective. Consequently, the distortions, fragmentations, strange ellipses, dreams and hallucinations that make up the film provide a representation of the photographer's unconscious mind attempting to repress the traumatic memory of the girl's murder from his consciousness. The film's many narrative distortions thus serve as hysterical symptoms, deformed manifestations of repressed memories finding their way to consciousness. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud ([1893-1895] 1955) claimed that '[h]ysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences' (7) and so *After the Day Before*'s fragmented narrative form becomes a manifestation of repressed memories attempting to gain access to the photographer's conscious mind.

Viewed in the light of Freudian psychoanalysis, the dream sequences are particularly revealing. In these sequences the photographer relives the events leading up to the girl's murder, albeit from a perspective that is not his own. He sees what is later revealed to be himself pursuing the girl and repeatedly returns to the cornfield, the site in which he first encounters the girl and first gives chase. The reason for such vivid moments of recollection during the dream sequences lies in the fact that in waking life, the ego exploits various unconscious psychic defence mechanisms in order to fend off potentially harmful impetus. However, according to Freud, ([1900] 1953) '[a]s we fall asleep, 'involuntary ideas' emerge, owing to the relaxation of a certain deliberate (and no doubt also critical) activity which we allow to influence the course of our ideas while we are awake' (102). That is to say, the ego defences diminish during sleep, allowing unconscious thought to gain access to consciousness, albeit in the form of acceptable manifest dream content transformed by the dream censor. In this case, the form made acceptable to the photographer's psyche is to present the aforementioned events from an alternative perspective, a perspective that provides distance from the reality of his traumatic actions. Thus, the dream sequences not only provide

access to the photographer's subjectivity but they also grant the spectator access to his unconscious.

Congruent to the film's spatial and temporal distortions, I argue that the uncertain and changeable narrative focalisation used throughout *After the Day Before* provides a means of commentating on the subject of Hungarian memory politics. The blurring of the boundaries between objective and subjective focalisation facilitates questions regarding the objectivity of historical memory in Hungary following transition. By clouding the parameters of objective and subjective perspective, the film provides a platform through which to examine the subjective interpretation and application of history in post-communist Hungary. That is to say, the film examines the ways in which post-communist Hungarian citizens have redefined, revised and repurposed history in service of the therapeutic need.

A fitting example of the subjective treatment of history is visible in post-communist Hungary's comprehension of the Holocaust. Following transition, while renewed dialogue on the subject of Hungary's role in the Final Solution and questions of post-communist Jewish identity more broadly came to the fore – with cinema serving a significant transgenerational *lieux de memoire* (see Portuges 1995, 2013b) – this discourse was, in many respects, eclipsed by more vociferous discourse of a nationalist and anti-communist nature. The rekindling of old national resentments, such as the plight of the ethnic Hungarian in neighbouring countries, alongside fervid debates surrounding the atrocities of communism not only overshadowed dialogue on the uncomfortable issue of the Holocaust but also influenced the public's perception of it. History in post-communist Hungary became subject to 'comparative trivialization' (Shafir 2002); in which the horrors of the Holocaust were perceived to be subordinate to the suffering endured by the Hungarians both during the Nazi Occupation and

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under communism. Consequently, while events such as the 1920 Treaty of Trianon and the suppressed counter-revolution of October 1956 became firmly embedded in the post-communist collective memory, Hungary's collective comprehension of the crimes of the Holocaust and the persecution of the Hungarian Jewry remains ambivalent. Throughout the post-communist years, Hungarian schoolchildren continued to learn from inadequate textbooks that lacked sufficient detail on this dark chapter of national history, omitting applicable information on the anti-Semitic laws that predated the Nazi occupation and the full extent of the nation's role in the genocide of the death camps (Hanebrink 2013). Such is the extent of Hungary's prejudiced memory of the Holocaust that a survey conducted in 2009 by Hungarian sociologist Mária Vásárhelyi revealed that only four percent of participants aged between 18 and 30 knew what the word Holocaust meant (in Lendvai 2012, 62).

One of the upshots of this subjective construction of history has been a penchant for victimhood mythologies, narratives that make sense of the past by positioning the Hungarian at the mercy of history. Geographically located at the crossroads of the East and the West, Hungary's subjugation at the hands of the Tatars, Ottomans, Hapsburgs and the Soviets has resulted in a deeply embedded sense of victimhood and self-pity. Consequently, there exists a tendency for Hungarians to view themselves as casualties of external political forces beyond their control. This historically rooted national disposition has resulted in a tendency for Hungarians to whitewash difficult questions of national accountability and instead propagate narratives of victimhood.

Regarding the memory of the Holocaust, narratives of victimhood have long been established within the Hungarian collective memory. Following the Soviet "liberation" of 1945, official history attributed responsibility for the terror of the war chiefly at the door of the Germans

together with small, local fascists groups within Hungary whose members were subsequently punished in communist established people's courts. The official narrative alternatively positioned the common Hungarian as the victim of fascist tyranny and the specific victimisation of the Hungarian Jewry was massively deemphasised (Himka and Beata Michlic 2013). Narratives of victimhood survived the post-communist transition and have had significant bearing on the way in which Hungary has since reappraised the Holocaust.

3.4.4. Externalising Guilt.

Michael Shafir (2002) also highlights a penchant for deflective negotiationism in Eastern Europe; that is to say, discourse that seeks to produce distance from the realities of perpetration through the externalising of culpability. Indeed, in Hungary there exists a readiness to acknowledge the crimes carried out under Nazi authority. However, within this narrative, the Hungarian continues to be positioned as the victim, coerced into collaboration. Broadly speaking, Hungarians as less willing to confront and accept the nation's more active and enthusiastic involvement in the atrocities of the war. Such is the pervasiveness of deflective negotiationism in Hungarian historical memory that Vásárhelyi, in her 2009 survey, found that 58 percent of respondents believed that accountability for the barbarity of the Holocaust lay with the Germans while the Hungarians, where possible, had protected the nation's Jewish population from harm (Lendvai 2012, 64).[161]

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[161] Furthermore, it is telling that it took Hungary until June 2014 to first issue an official apology for the nation's role in the Holocaust. However, one may perceive the declaration, made by ambassador to the UN Csaba Körösi, as a political act as opposed to a sincere attempt to come to terms with the past. Many commentators have viewed the apology as a political response to the backlash caused by the erection of the German Occupation memorial erected in downtown Budapest earlier that year.

Janisch explores notions of deflective negotiationism and the externalisation of guilt in *After the Day Before.* The photographer's nebulous recollections and amnesias, as demonstrated, are suggestive of a subjective form of remembrance. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the photographer shields himself from the horrific murder of the young girl which, consequently, leads him to externalise his guilt, projecting condemnation onto others. Freud ([1895] 1966, [1896] 1962) viewed such externalisation as a form of psychological projection, an unconscious ego defence mechanism in which individuals project repressed impulses, thoughts and feelings onto others. Ergo, the photographer projects his unconscious fears of condemnation by blaming others, namely Símon. Despite only having Romek's word to go on, the photographer pursues and confronts Símon at the film's conclusion and it is only then that his own role in the murder returns to his consciousness.

After the Day Before also explores issues of blame and responsibility through the film's various characters. The majority of the Settlement's residents see themselves as victims, refusing to take responsibility for their situation and instead resort to blame and reproachfulness. Romek blames Símon for the murder of his daughter, even going as far as kidnapping him and tying him to a chair in his basement. When the photographer stays the night with a mother and her daughter, he wakes in the night to find the daughter stood at the foot of the bed. She asks the photographer to kill her mother, claiming that she is a monster who drives everyone away from her. The following morning the girl's mother tells the photographer the same story, that she is in fact the victim and it is the daughter who drives everyone away from her. Later, in his search for the Gruber farm, the photographer happens upon a married couple (János Derzsi and Márta Szabó), both of whom see themselves as victims of the other and, in turn, blame each other for the state of their lives; the husband blames the wife's infidelities while she, in response, blames his alcoholism. Thus, through

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the film's characterisation, Janisch presents a microcosmic snapshot of Hungary's deeply instilled sense of historical victimhood. The residents exhibit a sense of collective self-pity comparable to that propagated in Hungarian collective memory and consequently, like the post-communist citizen, resort to blame and reproachfulness.

Ultimately, while Attila Janisch's *After the Day Before* may initially appear to contain no explicitly discernible historical overtones, I argue that through the combination of close textual analysis and wider sociological engagement, it is possible to see how the film engages with post-communist memory politics. *After the Day Before*'s non-linear handling of time and space parallels the disordered and discontinuous nature of Hungarian public memory. Through the film's fragmented narrative, the established chains of cause and effect are eroded. Janisch utilises this mode of disordered narration to allude to Hungary's detachment from national history and the consequent distortions this has produced in post-communist society's comprehension of the past. Therefore, despite the film's lack of overtly historical subject matter, *After the Day Before* provides an alternative means of engaging with the past and its memorialisation in the present.

3.5. Conclusion.

As this chapter has demonstrated, despite lacking the traditional conventions of the historical film, *The Porcelain Doll, Hukkle* and *After the Day Before* all endeavour to add to the wider discourse on Hungarian historical remembrance, utilising the rural as a complex and multidimensional site through which to explore issues pertaining to history and collective memory in contemporary society. I have argued that within the three films, the rural setting becomes, as Fowler and Helfield (2006) suggest, an emotive and ideological space, one that

symbolically alludes to the past by way of metonym. Thus, by examining how the three films depict the rural, this chapter has sought to engage with the vexed question of post-communist historical memory and the ways in which filmmakers engage with contemporary Hungarian memory politics.

The Porcelain Doll presents the rural as an authentic, three-dimensional, lived-in space. The film's detailed portrayal of rural life and the emphasis placed upon the iconography and rituals of rural living bestow upon the film a real sense of verisimilitude; the iconography of the rural evoking the past by alluding to historical practices and lifestyles. Gárdos then undermines this constructed sense of reality by interjecting moments of fantasy as a means of challenging the film's established sense of authenticity and truth. *The Porcelain Doll*'s representation of the rural thus becomes a device through which Gárdos subverts hegemonic historical discourse in Hungary. By challenging the verisimilitude initially presented, the film seeks to question the truth of dominant historical narratives.

Like *The Porcelain Doll, Hukkle* also utilises the rural as a site through which to challenge historical remembrance in post-communist. Once again, the film strives to instil a specific image of the rural only to then destabilise it. However, diverging from *The Porcelain Doll, Hukkle* initially present the rural as an Arcadia. The film depicts the rural as a bucolic space akin to that celebrated in restorative nostalgia and Golden Age mythology. Through the leisurely pace of live, the beautiful surroundings and harmonious cohabitation of man and beast, Pálfi depicts the rural as an Eden. However, having established such an image, the film then proceeds to challenge it. Pálfi creates a visual metaphor whereby the audience are encouraged to look beyond surface details, challenging the film's idealised rendering of rural life. As argued, through the discourse of intercultural cinema, one may interpret *Hukkle*'s

deconstructive cinematic language as a means of challenging therapeutic forms of memory in post-communist Hungary and the restorative discourse that renders the past as a mythical Golden Age.

Finally, in *After the Day Before* I argued that through the film's fractured and disconnected representation of the rural, Janisch examines the distortions and amnesias within post-communist historical memory. Throughout the film, Janisch presents the rural as a discontinuous realm in which both the spatial and temporal dimensions have become obscure. The non-linear and fragmented nature of the film's rural setting speaks to Hungary's distorted relationship with its own history, a consequence of forty years of communist memory politics and the uneven way in which post-communist society has approached and applied history since transition.

The Porcelain Doll, Hukkle and A*fter the Day Before*, while having their own specific mnemonic preoccupations, all engage with issues of history and its contemporary memorialisation through implicit modes of cinematic representation that defy the conventions of the historical film genre. Indeed, *The Porcelain Doll* historicises Ervin Lázár's magical realist novellas by setting them in three distinct eras of recent Hungarian history, *Hukkle* bases its de-centred narrative on supressed historical events and *After the Day Before* invites allegorical interpretations to be drawn from its themes of inheritance and fragmented personal memory. Through such latent modes of historical engagement, the three films position themselves in opposition to the accepted language of historical and mnemonic representation and the dominant ideologies often attached to them. Through their abstract approaches to history and memory, the three films adopt a mode of representation apposite to the expression

of marginalised and/or counter discourses that seek to challenge prevailing historical narratives and national myths.

At the same time, the use of non-figurative language speaks to post-communist society's ambiguous relationship with national history. The films, through their non-representation formal language, articulate Hungary's near-forty year disconnection from national history and the twin desire to recall and forget that has been characteristic of post-communism. The lack of figural historical depiction in the three films also suggests a lack of transparency in post-communist memory politics. Through heavily mediated and convoluted cinematic forms, the three films articulate the distortions and falsifications of national history and the motivated forgetfulness and social amnesias in its memorialisation.

Ultimately, what unites the three films examined in this chapter is the manner in which they utilise the rural as a representational space through which to scrutinise contemporary Hungarian memory politics, challenging existing discourses, and encouraging re-examination and reappraisal. The three films thus transform the cinematic rural image into what Pierra Nora (1989) has termed a *lieux de memoire*, a site of memory. In much the same way, Catherine Portuges (1995, 2013b) argues that post-communist cinema more broadly serves a *lieux de memoire* on the subject of the Holocaust. Portuges argues that cinema preserves the memory of the Shoah, enabling testimony and providing space for reassessment, acknowledgement and acceptance on the long-suppressed and contentious issue of Holocaust remembrance. Akin to Portuges, I maintain that the films examined in this chapter utilise cinema, more specifically cinematic representations of the rural, as a site through which to unearth and vocalised repressed and alternative historical discourse. I thus argue that cinematic countryside functions as a site of counter narrative. While sites of memory quickly

arose in metropolitan Hungary following transition – Budapest in particular – these memory spaces were sites of approved and accepted collective memory commemorating an official, endorsed history; a sanctified history literally cast in stone in the form of statues and monuments. The rural, I argue, serves as an alternative *lieux de memoire*. Historically tied to notions of oral history and folklore, the rural serves as a site of the unofficial, a space free from official forms of memorialisation through which filmmakers challenge accepted historical discourse and establish new formations of post-communist memory.

Chapter Four:

The Consequences of Post-Communist Political Myths.

4.1. Introduction.

This final chapter seeks to engage with the socio-political upshots of political mythmaking in contemporary Hungary. Political myths, both internal and external, have radically shaped historical memory in post-communist Hungary, while also informing Hungary's national self-perception and the prevailing attitudes toward the West. Likewise, political myths have helped citizens make sense of the new social milieu, objectifying the experience of life under democracy and the market economy. In this chapter, it is my intention to examine the social and political ramifications of post-communist political myths and explore how they are addressed in cinema. The films under analysis seek to engage with the role that political myths play in shaping contemporary political and social discourse, as feelings of disaffection intensify and Hungarian politics becomes increasingly reactionary and extreme.

Political myths have had a persistent presence in post-communist life. This is perhaps unsurprising given that Hungary's negotiated revolution was orchestrated by opposition groups of both liberal and nationalist political leanings. The liberal opposition consisted of pro-Western, urbanist (*urbánus*) intellectuals who advocated Thatcherite policies of monetarism, privatisation and social democracy. The populist opposition, made up of conservative-minded intellectuals such as Sándor Csoóri, Zoltán Bíró and István Csurka, instead built their political rhetoric upon the ideological traditions of the folkish writers of the 1920s and 1930s, favouring nationalist discourse that harkened back to a utopian past built upon *népi* traditions. These populist intellectuals would go on to found the MDF in the autumn of 1987, positioning the party 'as the architect of the country's national renaissance' (Hockenos 1993, 106) and building their political ideology upon Christian values, cultural traditionalism and cautious reform.

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The MDF's national-conservative polity corresponded with the climate of banal nationalism that arose immediately following transition. These popular nationalist sentiments partly served as a reaction to the 'spurious internationalism' of communism (Tismaneanu 1998, 7). Internationalism served as a central component of Soviet foreign policy and used to suppress national patriotism within the satellite states. Nationalism was perceived as adverse to communist interests and fears that national partisanship could mobilise dissent against the regime led to a curbing of nationalist discourse or, where possible, its expropriation. Following transition, however, it was widely believed that 'to ignore the nation was to harken back to the communist system' (West 2002, 29). Indeed, patriotic sentiments were rife during the early post-communist years. In a European Values Study of 1990, 47.2 percent of participants proclaimed themselves to be 'very proud' when asked 'how proud are you to be a Hungarian citizen'; while a further 41.2 percent described themselves as 'quite proud' (2013, 695-696).

Yet, alongside banal forms of nationalism came more extreme varieties and as Jeffrey Murer (2015) states '[a]lmost immediately the symbolic politics of "national revival" gripped the Hungarian polity' (80). In June 1990, Prime Minister József Antall re-invigorated revanchist sentiments by claiming to be, in spirit, the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians, referring to the supposed five million ethnic Hungarians living outside of the borders established by the Treaty of Trianon. Trianon's return to the political agenda contributed to the re-veneration of controversial figures of the interwar period and resurrected fears of Hungarian irredentism in neighbouring countries.

Undoubtedly, the most vocal Hungarian nationalist during the early years of transition was

István Csurka. Csurka proclaimed that globalisation, EU ascension and Hungary's NATO

membership all posed threats to Hungarian national autonomy. Yet, perhaps most

controversially, he asserted that a Judeo-liberal-Bolshevik conspiracy was compromising

Hungarian sovereignty, maintaining that just as they had under communism, the Jews were

subjugating Hungary through the supranational dictation of liberal economic policies (see

Pataki 1992, Hockenos 1993, Barany 1994).[162] Csurka's increasingly vocal anti-Semitism

would lead to his dismissal from the MDF in 1993 where he would go on to form the openly

right-wing MIÉP.

MIÉP's populist politics resonated chiefly with those displaced by transition's comprehensive

transformation of daily life. Compounding post-communist normlessness was the fact that,

for many, the long-envisioned Imaginary West proved unattainable and as Krisztina

Fehérváry (2002) argues,

> the difficulty of the ensuing years has indeed been a 'reality check' of sorts, as
> citizens have adjusted to the notion that it will take years, perhaps decades, for
> their nations to 'catch up' to the West; in many places, they are resigned to the
> possibility that it will not occur within their lifetimes' (370).

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[162] Paul Hockenos (1993) argues that the Jew became somewhat of a symbolic enemy in post-communist Eastern Europe given their associative ties to communism, liberalism and global capitalism. In the case of Hungary, high profile communists such as Béla Kun, leader of the short-lived Communist Republic of 1919, Mátyás Rákosi, General Secretary during the hard-dictatorship and Péter Gábor, leader of the State Protection Authority, (*Államvédelmi Hatóság* ÁVH), were all of Jewish origins. Similarly, leading members of the liberal opposition of 1989 and founding members of the SzDSz Gáspár Miklós Tamás, János Kis and Miklós Haraszti were also of Jewish descent. Populist rhetoric also linked the Jew to international finance organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank as well as supranational political organisations such as the EU, NATO and the Congress of the USA (see Kriza 2004).

The economic challenges and social fragmentation of post-communism led citizens to gravitate towards the surrogate community of the nation. Yet, this image of the nation was shaped by a therapeutic need for social stability, producing a heavily romanticised image of nationhood that was socially gratifying. Economic hardship also cultivated anti-Western rhetoric. Indeed, while citizens initially perceived Western consumer culture to be an articulation of democratic freedom and individual expression, it has since been widely assumed that these democratic principles have since been bastardised by corporate interests. Global capitalism's imperialistic incursion of everyday life produced a growing sense of subjugation akin to that experienced under the old regime and the growing divide between the rich and the poor led many to question capitalism's democratic values. Affluence quickly became synonymous with corruption and for many it seemed that privatisation had only benefitted the former communist elite. These feelings were compounded by the fact that privatisation accelerated under the MSzP. Despite their election promises to raise living standards and establish a functioning welfare state (see Racz and Kukorelli 1995), shock therapy initiatives such as the 1995 Bokros Plan resulted in increased privatisation and drastic cuts to public spending.

During the 1998 parliamentary election campaign, leader of the opposition Viktor Orbán would accuse the MSzP of deceiving the Hungarian populace with its austerity measures. Orbán, who had transformed the political orientation of the Fidesz party from liberal to conservative following poor showings at the 1990 and 1994 elections, built his successful election campaign on populism, promoting Christian values, tradition, family and national culture. Indeed, where the Socialists had actively avoided politicising the thorny issue of Hungarians in neighbouring countries, Fidesz utilised the issue to full effect, reinvigorating nationalist rhetoric and bringing it into the political mainstream. Orbán claimed that he

wished to combat what he saw as a Hungarian "inferiority complex" by helping kin-state nationals 'feel good about being Hungarian and their unique cultural and linguistic status' (Waterbury 2010, 83). While in government, Fidesz granted large amounts of financial aid and other forms of support to ethnic Hungarians living abroad. In 2001, Orbán initiated the Status Law granting non-resident Hungarians identity cards that allowed them to work and study in Hungary. These reforms came at the expense of alienating resident citizens, many of whom did not share Orbán's enthusiasm for the diaspora issue.

The Fidesz government would fail to maintain office following the 2002 parliamentary elections and Péter Medgyessy replaced Orbán as Prime Minister in the return of the MSzP–SzDSz coalition, beginning what many have considered the political demise of the Hungarian left. Medgyessy began his tenure by implementing the first of his '100-day programmes', which included the abolishment of income tax for those on minimum wage, a 50 percent rise in the salaries of public sector employees, the introduction of an academic scholarship system, a thirteenth month for pensions and the construction of a new motorway system. While these measures temporarily boosted living conditions and naturally proved popular with the electorate, they did so at the cost of exacerbating Hungary's already massive foreign deficit. Medgyessy's shortsighted policies faced intense criticism from the opposition, who feared the Prime Minister would lead Hungary into insolvency. Following internal squabbling from within the coalition, Medgyessy resigned from office in September 2004.

Succeeding Medgyessy was Ferenc Gyurcsány who took the MSzP–SzDSz coalition into the 2006 elections. During the election campaign, Gyurcsány did not disclose the extent of Hungary's budget deficit, the largest within in the EU, and made no allusions to the need for strict austerity measures. The coalition secured a second term in office and immediately put

into operation a very stringent programme of spending cuts, drastically reducing the government's popularity. Scandal would ensue, however, when Magyar Rádió broadcast a secret recording of a private speech conducted by Gyurcsány to his cabinet in which the Prime Minister admitted to lying to the electorate about the state of the Hungarian economy. The now infamous Őszöd affair incited riots as angry demonstrators called for Gyurcsány's dismissal. Gyurcsány's speech was broadcast roughly a month before the semi-centennial of the October Revolution of 1956 and the opposition were quick to draw parallels between the two events, symbolically equating the actions of the MSzP with those of the MSzMP in 1956. In protest, right wing demonstrators set up camp in *Kossuth tér*, the site of the Hungarian parliament building and, significantly, the site where the ÁVO first fired at the protesting crowds in 1956 (Cash 2011). Gyurcsány would resign as party leader in March 2009.

Corresponding with the Socialist's ill-fated eight-year tenure was the rise of Jobbik. Founded in 2003, Jobbik, building upon the populist rhetoric established by István Csurka, sought to aggrandise the Hungarian nation and its glorious past, emphasising a need to protect Hungary from the colonising forces of international finance. In the 2006 election, Jobbik, allied with MIÉP, failed to make significant impact. However, following the implosion of the left, Jobbik's reactionary politics became increasingly appealing to the many citizens disillusioned with the political status-quo whose incompetence, corruption and deceit had led Hungary into recession during the financial crisis of 2008. Jobbik's political rhetoric targeted two groups in particuar, the Jew and the Roma. As Jeffrey Murer (2015) argues,

> Jews and Roma become two sides of the same coin. For the extreme right, and increasingly for more politically mainstream Hungarians, a shared fantasy of small-scale crimes by Roma is allied with conspiracy theories concerning large-scale financial crimes perpetrated by bankers and the European capital. In this paranoid fantasy, both must be violently opposed (90).

Political myths positioned Hungary's Jewish and Roma populations in antithesis to the ethnic Hungarian, and in antithesis to festishised national values. The Jew and the Roma were instead defined by their otherness and positioned as threats to Hungarian society.

How then do the films examined in this chapter engage with the consequences of post-communist political myths? The first film under analysis in this chapter, Viktor Oszkár Nagy's *Apaföld/Father's Acre* (2009), utilises a minimalist style to examine one potential consequence of post-communist political myths. The film centres upon a fraught relationship between a father and his son, focusing upon their inability to communicate, which ultimately leads to the son repeating the crimes of his father. I argue that through the film's emotionally detached style, Nagy creates a sense of Brechtian estrangement, encouraging the audience to view the father and son not as individuals but rather as vessels that communicate wider social meaning. The father and son thus serve as a means of exploring the repetition of history in contemporary Hungary. I argue that *Father's Acre* suggests that political mythmaking has resulted in an absence of dialogue on the subject of Hungary's nationalist past, which has consequently led to its resurgence in the present.

The second film explored in this chapter is Kornél Mundruzcó's *Delta* (2008). Like *Father's Acre*, *Delta* also employs cinematic minimalism to engage in social commentary. I argue that by utilising Bressonian reduction techniques, Mundruzcó engages with the build-up of intolerance produced by post-communist political myths. *Delta*'s slow cinema aesthetic and refusal of the melodramatic bestows upon the film a brooding sense of unease that builds to a climax at the film's conclusion in an act of sudden violence. I argue that the film's formal restraint provides a means through which Mundruzcó explores the consequences of post-

communist political mythologies. It is through the intensity derived from the film's minimalist style that *Delta* alludes to rising radicalism in post-communist Hungary.

The final film under analysis is Benedek Fliegauf's *Csak a szél/Just the Wind* (2012). The film, like Áron Mátyássy's *Lost Times*, utilises a direct approach in order to comment on contemporary social issues, employing a docu-fictional style in its recreation of the Tatárszentgyörgy Romani murders of 2008 and 2009. I argue that Fliegauf attempts to confront his audience with the hatred caused by political myths. The film centres on the last family killed in the attacks, presenting a fictionalised account of their final day. Doing so allows Fliegauf to personify these unfortunate victims, rendering them as actual human beings rather than de-humanised stereotypes.

While engaging with a number of different themes and issues, *Father's Acre, Delta* and *Just the Wind* share a number of formal characteristics. These include a concentrated emphasis on temporarily, a privileging of the seemingly banal and every day, and a fundamental reduction of narrative. Such common cinematic traits may lead one to categorise the films as slow cinema texts. Indeed, Matthew Flanagan, in his influential 2008 essay on the subject, described slow cinema as 'a unique type of reflective art where form and temporality are never less than emphatically present, and a diminution of pace serves to displace the dominant momentum of narrative causality'. The prevailing discourse on slow cinema has typically positioned slowness in antithesis to the accelerated pace and 'intensified continuity' of commercial cinema (see Bordwell 2002, Ciment 2003, Flanagan 2008, Bordwell 2011) and in opposition to commercial cinema's limited scope for interpretive pleasure (see Romney 2010, Dargis and Scott 2011). However, I argue that there is a need to move beyond this art cinema, mainstream dichotomy as it risks essentialising the discourse on slow,

contemplative cinema and neglects the multitude of cultural contexts under which such films are produced. Like de Luca and Jorge (2016), I argue that there exists a need to engage in localised and properly contextualised examinations of slowness in order to expand and enrich the discourse on slow cinema. Thus, this chapter examines how the three films utilise slow cinema techniques to make statements on contemporary Hungarian politics and explore the consequences of political myths in post-communist society.

4.2. Doomed to repeat: Myth, Memory and Repetition in *Father's Acre*.

Viktor Oszkár Nagy's debut feature *Apaföld/Father's Acre* (2009) examines one potential consequence of post-communist political mythmaking. Through the film's central premise, which focuses upon an intergenerational lack of dialogue between a father and his son, I argue that *Father's Acre* microcosmically engages with Hungary's failure to address the radicalism of the past. I contend that the pervasiveness of socially satisfying political myths, while serving as a tonic for the fragmentation and overall confusion of post-communist life, has come at the cost of reconciliatory dialogue that both acknowledges the barbarity of the past and endeavours to prevent its recurrence in the future.

Father's Acre centres upon an unnamed father's (János Derzsi) return home from prison with the hope of starting a new life with his son (Tamás Ravasz), tending a plot of land that he intends to transform into a vineyard. His son, now a young adult, resents his father's return and defies him at every opportunity. He scorns at his father's intentions to make an honest living but reluctantly agrees to work on the vineyard, more out of a lack of alternative opportunity than a commitment to family. Friction between the kin reaches boiling point

following the arrival of Agi (Andrea Nagy), the boy's aunt, now cohabiting with the father and with whom the son is sexually attracted.

As tension reaches a climax, the son declares his intentions to leave and "earn his own keep". In attempt to prove himself, the boy gets involved with one of his father's former criminal associate (Lukács Bicskey) and participates in a robbery. While on the job the son's discord with authority resurfaces and he comes into conflict with his criminal accomplices, notably the corrupt local police chief (István Znamenák), another of the father's former connections. The police chief confronts the father over the boy's role in the crime, and he, in turn, confronts his son. The boy rejects his father's discipline, refusing to be chastised by "an ex-con" and the father strikes the boy for his impudence. Moments later, however, the father collapses, but rather than rushing him to the hospital the son instead takes a cigarette from his fallen father's pocket and proceeds to smoke it. It is only when the son later sees his father pass away in his hospital bed that he stops acting cantankerously and begins to feel compassion for him.

Visually, *Father's Acre* adheres to the slow and/or minimalist aesthetics employed by many post-communist Hungarian filmmakers.[163] Akin to Michelangelo Antonioni, Nagy utilises the

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[163] Films such as *Gyerekgyilkosságok/Child Murders* (Ildikó Szabó, 1993), *Sátántangó/Satantango* (Béla Tarr, 1994), *Szendedély/Passion* (György Féher, 1998), *Másnap/After the Day Before* (Attila Janisch, 2004), *Dealer* (Benedek Fliegauf, 2004), *Madárszabadítí, felhö, szél/Bird Saviour, Clouds and Wind* (István Szaladják, 2006), *Ópium: Egy elmebeteg nö naplója/Opium: Diary of a Madwoman* (János Szász, 2007), *Delta* (Kornél Mundruzcó, 2008), *Pál Andrienn* (Ágnes Kocsis, 2010) and *Viharsarok/Land of Storms* (Ádam Császi, 2014) testify to the prevalence of slow and/or minimalist cinema in post-communist Hungary. This, in turn, speaks to the rising ascendency of slowness in world cinema more broadly, as the success of filmmakers such as Abbas Kiarostami, Cristian Mungiu, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Hsiao-hsien Hou, Lisandro Alonso, Jia Zhangke, Aleksandr Sokurov and many others suggests.

vacuous terrain and endless horizons of the Mátra mountains as metonymic landscapes that symbolically allude to the emotional void that exists between father and son (for further information on Antonioni's metonymic use of the landscape see Chatman 1985 and Kovács 2007). I argue, however, that Nagy's minimalist aesthetics exceed this metonymic functionality. Through my analysis of *Father's Acre,* I intend to demonstrate how the film's restrained formal constitution creates a sense of Brechtian estrangement, encouraging audiences to attribute broader social meaning into the father and son's relationship.

4.2.1. *Father's Acre*'s Production and Reception History.

Nagy studied at the Academy of Theatre and Film Art under the tuition of veteran director János Szász.[164] During his studies, Nagy worked as an assistant to Attila Janisch on his 2005 film *After the Day Before*, while also directing a number of short films, including *Öreg fa/Old Tree* (2005), co-directed with regular collaborator and classmate Tamás Dobos, and *A vizsga/The Test* (2006), both of which exhibit the slow, deliberate cinematography and minimalist narration later employed in *Father's Acre*.

Father's Acre served as Nagy's graduate film, shot on a budget of 120 million Forints in a

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[164] Szász has been one of few members of the Hungarian middle generation to achieve sustained success throughout the post-communist era. His adaptation of *Woyzeck* (1994) won the Young European Film of the Year at the 1994 European Film Awards, sharing the accolade with *Le fils du requin/The Son of the Shark* (Agnès Merlet, 1993). *Witman fiúk/The Witman Boys* (1997) won both the FIPRESCI Prize and the Silver St. George at the 20th Moscow International Film Festival and screened in the Un Certain Regard section of the Cannes Film Festival. *Opium: Diary of a Madwoman* received a nomination for a Gold Hugo at the Chicago International Film Festival and won both the Best Director Award and the Gene Moskowitz Award at the 38th Hungarian Film Week. *A nagy füzet/The Notebook* (2013) won both a Crystal Globe and the Label Europa Cinemas Award at the 48th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and received a special mention at both the 49th Chicago International Film Festival and the 2013 Haifa International Film Festival.

co-production between Eurofilm Studió, MMK and the National Cultural Fund (*Nemzeti Kulturális Alap*). The film received additional support from Panovision after cinematographer Tamás Doboz won a $60,000 camera package. Shooting took place over 24 days in the Mátra mountain region of northern Hungary, an area Nagy had grown up as a child.[165]

Premiering at the 40th Hungarian Film Week, *Father's Acre* won the Gene Moskowitz Prize awarded by foreign critics. The film also received a nomination for a Golden Alexander Award at the 2009 Thessaloniki International Film Festival and featured in competition at international festivals in Goa, Tallinn, Seattle, Valencia and Istanbul. Director of Photography, Tamás Dobos won the György Illés prize for best cinematography at the Golden Eye Cinematographer Festival (*Aranyszem Operatőr Fesztivál*), a festival organised by the Hungarian Society of Cinematographers, H.S.C (*Magyar Operatőrök Társasága*), as well as the Best Cinematography Award at the 2010 Hungarian Film Critic's Awards.

Despite these accolades, *Father's Acre* received mixed reviews in the national press. David Dercsényi of *Magyar Narancs* (2009), Judit Vajda of *Filmhu* (2009) and both Anikó Gorácz (2009) and Gusztáv Schubert (2009) of *Filmvilág* all drew parallels between *Father's Acre* and the films of the Hungarian New Wave of the 1960s and 1970s, in particularly the work of István Gaal. Gorácz drew comparisons to *Magasiskola/The Falcons* (István Gaal, 1970), arguing that Nagy's debut shared many of Gaal's thematic preoccupations, including intergenerational struggle and characters that test the limits of personal freedom.[166] Schubert

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[165] Nagy stated that the script has been inspired by his youth. Nagy was born in Gyöngyös in the northern county of Heves, and his father had owned a vineyard in the Mátraalja wine region. Nagy thus maintained that the film includes semi-biographical elements, claiming that he based the son's character around a boy he once knew (see Muray 2009).

[166] It is *The Falcons* that plays at the drive-in cinema in *Father's Acre*.

alternatively compared *Father's Acre* to Gaal's *Zöldár/Green Years* (1965), contending that while visual parallels may be drawn, *Father's Acre* lacked the revolutionary vigour present within the best of the Hungarian New Wave. Sándor Zsigmond Papp (2009), in an article for the Hungarian newspaper *Népszabadság,* similarly likened the film to those of the 1970s, describing *Father's Acre* as a coherent, well-worked and stubbornly consistent work, but one lacking the fresh approach and distinctive style of new generation filmmakers such as Hajdu, Mundruczó or Pálfi. Dóra Laborczi (2009) of *Kultúra.hu* stated that *Father's Acre* lacked narrative arc, suggesting that the characters fail to develop over the course of the film. She suggests that if Nagy were to introduce a greater sense of humanity into his future projects, he could become a unique colour on the palette of Hungarian cinema.

The international press was somewhat more complimentary. John Cunningham (2010) described *Father's Acre* as a powerful and intensely atmospheric film but pondered whether it was perhaps too derivative of the work of fellow compatriots Béla Tarr and Kornél Mundruzcó (176). *Variety's* Boyd van Hoeij (2009) similarly acknowledged *Father's Acre*'s indebtedness to Tarr and Mundruzcó, but by no means does he do so disparagingly. Instead, van Hoeij described *Father's Acre* as a film of rigorous control and beautiful composition. Dan Fainaru (2009) of *Screen International* praised Tamas Dobos' cinematography but questioned the minimalism of the film's narrative, while Fabien Lemercier (2009a) of *Cineuropa* stated that *Father's Acre* exhibited 'great visual skill', claiming Nagy to be an emerging talent amongst the new generation of Hungarian filmmakers. Theodore Schwinke (2010) of *Transitions Online (TOL)* mirrored such praise, positioning Nagy amongst the ranks of the 'international face of Hungarian cinema'. Schwinke applauded the film's 'painfully beautiful imagery', but suggested that *Father's Acre* provided evidence of the continuing gulf between Hungary's auteur filmmakers and the general Hungarian

cinemagoer.[167]

As was the case with *Lost Times*, a film released the same year as Nagy's debut and which similarly achieved success at the 40th Hungarian Film Week, *Father's Acre* flopped at the domestic box office, attracting only 5,294 viewers and making only 2.26 million Forints in ticket sales, a fraction of the film's budget (Löwensohn 2010). Nagy has yet to make another feature film. He has subsequently worked in television and documentary filmmaking, focusing predominantly on issues of immigration and refugeeism.[168] In 2015, Nagy made *Hivatal/Bureau,* a 52-minute television film based around day-to-day at an immigration office.[169]

Rather than viewing *Father's Acre*'s domestic box office performance in isolation, however, it is perhaps more fruitful to look at the broader state of Hungarian cinema at the time of the film's release. In 2009, the Hungarian film industry produced 26 feature films and two television films, comprising of experimental/auteur projects and popular films alike.[170]

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[167] The divergent national and international responses to *Father's Acre* can, in part, be attributed to the fact that the abovementioned international criticism was sourced from trade magazines and film journals focusing upon the international film business whereas the national sources come from both films journals and the popular press.

[168] These shorts included *3 esküvö/3 Weddings* (co-directed with Anna Kis and Klára Trencsényi, 2009), *Két világ közt/Caught Between Two Worlds* (2011) and *Felsöbb parancs/Superior Orders* (co-directed with András Petrik, 2013).

[169] *Bureau* went on to win the Best Screenplay Award at the FIPA (*Festival International de Programmes Audiovisuels*) in Biarritz, France.

[170] Examples of which include György Pálfi's improvised project *Nem vagyok a barátod/I'm Not Your Friend* (2009), a film that received a nomination for a Crystal Globe at the 2009 Karlovy Vary Film Festival but which won a local audience of only 3,452 attendees. Similarly, Péter Gárdos' *Tréfa/Prank* (2009) won Gárdos the best director award at the Hungarian Film Week and was nominated for a Gold Hugo and a Golden St. George at Chicago and Moscow respectively but still only attracted 6,231domestic spectators. Alternatively, the biggest Hungarian draws of 2009 were the musical comedy *Made in Hungaria* (Gergely Fonyó, 2009), which earned a respectable audience of 224,941, followed

Throughout the early to mid 2000s, cinema in Hungary had modernised and by 2009, these infrastructural developments were bearing fruit.[171] Production standards consistently matched those of imported cinema and the MMK was according greater recognition to domestic popular/genre cinema. Indeed, as Hungarian film scholar Balázs Varga (2013) states,

> [w]e cannot say that Hungarian cinema, which was once a paradise for auteur films, has been transformed into a "small world of popular films." But something has indeed changed over the past decade[]. The two determining traditions of Hungarian cinema (i.e. auteur films and popular films) are somehow in balance (187).

However, despite these ostensibly positive measures, overseas – particularly American – cinema continued to dominate the Hungarian box office. The market share of local productions, which peaked at just over 15 percent in 2006, continued a three-year decline and by 2009 stood at little over five percent (Varga 2012, 39). Furthermore, years of overproduction, unfulfilled promises of state funding and financial mismanagement culminated in the disbanding of the MMK in 2010 amid allegations of corruptions and fraudulent use of state funds. For the ensuing years, Hungarian film production effectively ground to a halt until *A nagy füzet/The Notebook* (János Szász, 2013), the first film funded by the newly appointed MNF, premiered at the 48th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

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by the romantic comedy *Poligamy* (Dénes Orosz, 2009), which drew 90,959 and the screwball comedy *Papírkutyák/Paper Dogs* (Bence Gyöngyössy, 2009), which attracted 78,221 viewers (Löwensohn 2010).

[171] See Varga 2012, for further details on the infrastructural developments made within the Hungarian film industry during the post-communist years.

4.2.2. Intergenerational Communication Failure.

How then does *Father's Acre* engage with the consequences of post-communist political mythmaking? I argue that through the central relationship between father and son, the film explores the notion of history repeating itself owing to a lack of dialogue. A central theme in *Father's Acre* is a lack of communication. Neither the father nor his son are able to communicate in an open and expressive way and dialogue is sparse, predominantly serving function as opposed to emotion. The father's past remains a taboo issue throughout, one that neither he nor his son feel able to discuss and come to terms with. The father makes no attempt to apologise for abandoning his son while in prison, nor does he attempt to engage with his past through self-examination. Similarly, the son does not confront his father over his resentments. Due to their inability to confront the demons of the past, their relationship is distant and unstable, and their interactions strained and awkward.

This is no more evident than when the father first reacquaints with his son. The father knocks on his son's closed bedroom door, which the boy acknowledges but proceeds to ignore. After a second, far louder knock, the son reluctantly faces his father. The two stare at one another momentarily before the father offers his hand, which, after a pause, the son shakes. After another silent interval, the son asks "what?" to which the father replies, "come and have supper". During this stilted exchange, the father and son stand either side of the doorway as the image intercuts between over the shoulder medium close-ups. Nagy emphasises the division between the kin through the mise-en-scène. During the medium close-ups of the father, Nagy lights the background and casts the father in shadow. In the corresponding reverse shot of the son, Nagy lights the son's face and the background remains in darkness. Through contrasting lighting, the discord between the relatives is emphasised visually.

The scene continues at the dining table as the image cuts to a frontal medium close-up of the father as he eats his supper. He states that he has something he wishes to show the boy but the son claims that he does not have time, declaring that he will be asleep. He informs his father that he requires at least nine hours of sleep, a seemingly arbitrary and provocative excuse that is followed by a protracted silence as the image intercuts between the two of them. The son then enquires what it is that the father wishes to show him but the father simply states that he must see for himself, to which the son sarcastically replies, "great". The pacing of the scene is significant; dialogue largely consists of short, curt questions and terse answers punctuated by lingering silences. The son expresses his resentments towards his father through petulance, while the father is reticent and impassive. Despite just getting released, neither refer to the father's imprisonment, the father failing to recognise it as the source of his son's hostility. Instead, he intends to start a new life without ever acknowledging his past transgressions.

Throughout the film, Nagy provides further evidence of the father and son's inability to express their emotions. In the opening scene, for example, we observe the son and friend Ervin (Bence Babcsán) searching for grasshoppers. Ervin innocently enquires whether today is the day that the boy's father is released from prison, a question that vexes the son. He turns towards Ervin and slowly rises to his feet, his face suddenly stern and humourless. The image cuts to Ervin, who now looks uncomfortable as he fidgets and repositions his feet. Cutting back to the son, now framed in close-up, the boy holds up a cricket that writhes and squirms in his hand. Suddenly he bites off its head, his eyes unflinchingly fixed upon Ervin's as the insect's legs protrude from his mouth. The image returns to Ervin again looking uneasy before cutting back to the son who opens his mouth, revealing the half-chewed grasshopper within. The son's reaction to Ervin's innocent question demonstrates the contempt he feels

towards his father. Yet, the response also reveals the boy's incapacity to rationalise these feelings of resentment and articulate them candidly.

The father is equally inarticulate. He wishes to instil honest values in his son to ensure the boy does not follow the same path he did, but he is ultimately unable communicates this. The father's failure to impart the knowledge of his experiences is particularly evident in the scene in which he teaches the boy to drive. On their way to the vineyard the father, without warning, pulls up by the side of the road and invites his son to take the wheel. The two swap seats and the son starts the engine, pulls away and immediately stalls. The boy looks at his father, who sits in silence, and then disembarks from the driver's seat. During the brief moments in which the son operates the vehicle, his father issues no instructions and simply lets the boy start the car and go. When he inevitably stalls, the father does not explain why this has happened, nor does he explain how the boy may avoid stalling in the future, he simply remains mute. This scene quintessentially highlights the father's inability to express himself. Just as his taciturn nature impedes him from teaching his son how to drive, it also prevents him from instilling values in his son. He is unable to pass on the wisdom of his experiences to ensure that his son avoids making the same mistakes that he made.

4.2.3. Visualising Communication Failure.

To accentuate the lack of dialogue between father and son, *Father's Acre* employs a minimalist detached style. In her study of the films of Robert Bresson, Susan Sontag ([1964] 1998) claims that cinematic minimalism is an art of emotional detachment and, as such, one I believe to be conducive to *Father's Acre*'s intergenerational communication breakdown. Sontag notes that minimalism impedes and delays moments of empathy, providing space for

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reflective engagement. She argues that '[t]he detachment and retarding of the emotions, through the consciousness of form makes them far stronger and more intense in the end' ([1964] 1998, 60). The process of detachment is achieved, as Hungarian film theorist Yvette Bíró (2006) argues, 'from the continuous process of denuding, peeling off the superfluous'. Indeed, throughout *Father's Acre,* Nagy eradicates the inessential in a Bressonian quest to heighten the significance of what remains.

Father's Acre builds upon a modest, understated premise. The film's intimate storyline, small cast of characters and limited locations all serve to eliminate redundancy; discarding gratuitous elements in an effort to elevate and amplify the intergenerational tension that constitutes the film's central focus. *Father's Acre*'s low-key plot and downplayed action intensifies moments of conflict by prolonging their development, elongating moments of tension. By placing emphasis upon mood and atmosphere and minimising overtly dramatic elements, minor details, that would otherwise be overlooked, are elevated in their magnitude, while the impact of emotional climaxes are rendered all the more powerful.

In reference to *Father's Acre*'s minimalist narrative, Nagy stated that '[t]here is no plot in the conventional sense of the term. It's not the dialogues which tell the story. There are, moreover, very few dialogues. The tale is perceived through sounds and images' (in Lemericer 2009). Indeed, the intensity of the father and son's strained relationship derives from silence. Silence becomes a key motif employed throughout the film. While bracketed by non-diegetic music that opens and concludes the film, *Father's Acre* employs no other extra-diegetic sound or music. The film offers no emotional prompts nor does a traditional score dictate the mood of the film. Instead, it is silence that dictates the mood of the film.

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Nagy accentuates silence through an inclination toward long takes and slow, roaming camera movements. By minimising cuts, Nagy refuses ellipsis within individual scenes and, in doing so, extends temporality beyond the necessity of the narrative, thus giving prominence to the establishment of mood. The long take and the protracted silences utilised throughout *Father's Acre* generate a sense of ever-growing tension. As Yvette Bíró (2008) observes in her study of cinematic rhythm, '[t]here is a natural correlation between the dignity of a slow pace and silence… profound stillness gives birth to a remarkable power of intensity' (122).

Performances also exhibit a minimalist style, further impeding emotional attachment. Both veteran, Derzsi and debutant, Ravasz give intentionally opaque, laconic performances in which they seldom convey emotion. Dialogue is delivered with minimal expression and overt gesticulation is absent. Nagy's meticulous direction ensures that every action, gesture and line of dialogue are highly controlled and deliberate. The purposeful restraint and stoicism of the performances encourages the spectator to view the cast as models, to use Robert Bresson's term. In his influential text, *Notes on Cinematography* (1977) Bresson distinguished two varieties of cinema, one built upon the foundations of theatre and the dramatic principles of natural, lifelike representation, the other built upon the philosophy of *cinematography*, a purely cinematic language that exploits the mechanics of the filmic form. Bresson states that '[n]othing rings more false in a film than that natural tone of the theater copying life and traced over studied sentiments' (4). Consequently, rather than attempting to emulate reality, Bresson sought to eliminate subjectivity from his performers, rendering his models as objects comparable to a prop or other element of mise-en-scène. By removing the thought process from his model's actions, these actions became autonomous from the artificiality of performance. In his *Notes*, Bresson claimed: 'No intellectual or cerebral mechanism. Simply a mechanism' (18). Congruently, performances in *Father's Acre* are stripped of their

theatricality and, as such, achieve a sense of neutrality akin to that advocated in Bresson's *Notes,* in which he states: 'What our eyes and ears require is not the realistic persona but the real person' (54).

To complement *Father's Acre*'s minimalist style, Nagy also refuses exposition. Such is the extent of this denial of extraneous details that the film does not even disclose the names of the father and the son. Similarly, the film withholds numerous explanatory background details, leaving many unanswered questions. What happened to the boy's mother? How has the boy survived during his father's absence? How long has the father been incarcerated? Nagy does not intend to address any of these questions and only reveals to such details when they naturally occur within the narrative. For example, while in the opening scene the viewer learns that the father has been in prison, it is not until near the end of the film, following the father's discussion with the police chief, that we learn that his crime was larceny.

Further emphasising the lack of exposition, the film offers no real sense of time or space. Nagy avoids explicitly specifying location, providing no real sense of place beyond the generic village/rural settings. Nagy further heightens this sense of dislocation through the repeated shots of featureless rural spaces. Equally, Nagy treats time with the same ambiguity. There is little to suggest that the film is set in the early years of post-communism but as Nagy clarifies (in Schwinke 2010), 'I didn't have any intentions to make a film about the changes themselves, but when I decided to tell a story that took place right after the changes it became necessary to touch another level'.

4.2.4. Minimalism as Estrangement.

Ultimately, the minimalist elements used throughout *Father's Acre's* serve to not only accentuate the fraught relationship between father and son by prolonging and intensifying moments of tension. I argue that the film's restrained constitution denies passive gratification on the part of the spectator by impeding moments of empathy. In this way, *Father's Acre*'s minimalist aesthetics evoke the distancing techniques employed by Bertolt Brecht. Brecht sought to challenge dominant modes of empathetic theatrical spectatorship, maintaining that such forms of engagement nurtured a passive response from the audience, detaching them from their own lives and the social world in which they lived. Through the process of *Verfremdung* (estrangement), Brecht endeavoured to create emotional distance between the audience and the action onstage by rendering that which had customarily been considered self-evident, such as traditional notions of character identification, as unusual and remarkable. By destabilising the audience's emotional identification with characters and events, spectators were no longer able to lose themselves in escapism and, as such, maintained self-cognisance and awareness of the social world. Consequently, theatre that had customarily be perceived as self-contained and universal became a social and historical experience. For Brecht ([1939] 2014), *Verfremdung* was 'a process of historicizing, of portraying incidents and persons as historical, that is, as ephemeral' (143). By denying cathartic escapism through distanciation, theatre thus became a social phenomenon.

Here, we must return to Dana Polan's discourse on Brechtian political cinema (1985a, 1985b). While Polan states that a film cannot be classified as political based solely on its formal constitution, I argue that *Father's Acre*'s formal systems are distinguishable from what Polan describes as 'ahistorical formalism' (1985a, 664) because, like in *After the Day*

Before, formal methods function in the direct service of political need. I argue that the film's formal minimalism not only estranges the audience, allowing them to remain conscious of the social world, but also rids characters of their individual personalities, transforming them into vessels through which one may extract wider social and political meaning. Minimalism thus allows the audience to read the lack of dialogue between the kin and the son's subsequent repetition of his father's past transgressions as political and social events. One may thus interpret the film's premise as a statement on Hungary's failure to address the extremism of the past, specifically the nation's active participation in the Shoah, and the consequent resurrection of radicalism in the post-communist present.

Viewed in this light, the film's temporal setting becomes highly revealing. By setting the film in the early 1990s, Nagy foregrounds a period of history in which the recent collapse of the Soviet regime had rendered Hungary free from communist memory restrictions and provided new opportunities for open public dialogue on the issues of past. In doing so, I argue that the father's homecoming provides a means of commentating on Hungary's reconnection with national history following transition. The son reunites with his father just as Hungary reunited with its lost history. Indeed, one may go as far as to suggest that the father's imprisonment is representative of the confinement of public memory under communism.

Correspondingly, the father and the son serve as symbolic surrogates representing both communist and post-communist memory politics. By stripping away their individual personalities to their essential qualities, Nagy's protagonists become conduits for the expression of wider social commentary. The father's reticence thus speaks to the legacy of the communist memory regimes. Given the severe restrictions placed upon the public sphere during the years of hard dictatorship, citizens adopted strategies of self-demobilisation (see

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Hankiss 1990). A self-enforced withdrawal from public life came to constitute many citizen's experience of life under communism and later became a central tenant of the communist legacy. Indeed, as Hungarian writer and political activist Miklós Haraszti (1987) asserted, '[t]he state need not enforce obedience when everyone learned to police himself' (96). This self-imposed taciturnity is discernible in the father's laconic disposition. He is indisposed to converse freely and openly, speaking only when necessary, concealing his true feelings behind a self-induced aloofness. Such is the extent of the father's reticence that the only true expression of his feelings comes via Agi, who tells the son that his father loves him and is proud of him, words that the father could never say himself.

In much the same way, the son provides a window into the intricacies of post-communist memory politics. The boy harbours a great deal of resentment towards the past; i.e. his father's arrest and imprisonment, and compensates for his inability to address these issues through acts of animosity, transforming his grievances into targeted hostility and acts of hate. In this way, the son's response is comparable to the politics of anger that have become increasingly prevalent in post-communist Hungary. Built upon genuine fears and frustrations brought about by the destabilising nature of post-communism and the resurrection of suppressed national grievances, extremist discourse has grown in prominence in contemporary Hungary, impeding efforts to come to terms with some of the more burdensome aspects of national history.

Father's Acre's temporal setting thus invites connections to be drawn between the father and son's failure to communicate and the lack of open dialogue during the post-communist years. The kin's inability to confront the demons of the father's past is therefore suggestive of post-communist Hungary's inability to address the unresolved issues of recent history. Given the

legacy of communist-inscribed organised forgetting (see Cohen 1999, 85-118), along with the propagation of remedial and satisfactory histories that came to prominence in response to the disaffection of transition, honest inspection of the more difficult aspects of national history has been lacking. On the subject of post-communist Hungary's reconnection with its communist and pre-communist past, historian Ferenc Laczó (2008) argues:

> Self-examination has remained the exception rather than the rule, and therefore I would argue that self-righteousness still prevails almost unchallenged, while superficial and seemingly enormous changes hide deeper continuities. The major trend in post-communist Hungary is to externalize blame and find others guilty (146).

However, representations of the past do not merely inform about the era depicted, they also provide a window into the period of their making. Said representations are inevitably implanted with present day ideologies and predispositions, inclinations shaped by the contemporary social milieu and its prevailing discourses. Released in 2009, *Father's Acre*'s representation of the past repeating itself owing to a lack of dialogue becomes particularly relevant. The son's repetition of his father's crimes is thus expressive of resurging Hungarian nationalism, right-wing radicalism and xenophobia.

While anti-Semitic, anti-Roma and anti-liberal discourse has been an underlying feature of the daily politics of post-communist life, resurfacing almost immediately after transition, by 2009 extremist, right wing discourse had moved into the political mainstream.[172] Following two decades of failed economic expectations, culminating in the financial crisis of 2008,

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[172] Made evident in Jobbik's performance at the 2010 parliamentary election in which they secured 47 seats and 17 percent of the vote.

disenchantment with global capitalism was rife.[173] Similarly, while democracy was still largely espoused, political disillusionment grew amid multiple corruption scandals, political mismanagement, broken promises and lies. Declining living standards thus energised populism, propagating political myths that fuelled xenophobic nationalism and bred intolerance and extremism.

Perhaps the most visible example of the past repeating itself is in the establishment of the Hungarian Guard. Founded by Jobbik party leader Gábor Vona in 2007, the Hungarian Guard was a direct action group founded to protect Hungarian culture, maintain social order and strengthen national self-defence. The Hungarian Guard have been likened to the Hungarian Arrow Cross (*Nyilaskeresztes Párt*), the fascist party that governed Hungary during the Nazi Occupation of 1944 and actively complied with the Third Reich, murdering thousands of citizens and sending thousands more to concentration camps. Condemned as neo-Nazis, the Hungarian Guard wear full military attire consisting of white shirts, black boots, trousers and vest, and forage cap. As Paul Lendvai (2012) states,

> [i]n both their cut and colours, and above all the reappearance of the red and white striped Árpád coat of arms on the brims of their caps and as arm badges, their uniform revived memories of the nightmare of the winter of horror 1944-45 when members of the Arrow Cross committed acts of indescribable cruelty in Budapest at the behest of the Third Reich (176).

These revived symbols of Hungary's nationalist past vividly underscore the extent to which past sensibilities are being rekindled in contemporary Hungary, as does the resurrection of familiar enemies and scapegoats. For Jobbik, and associated paramilitary groups such as the

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[173] A survey conducted by the *Pew Research Group* (2009) revealed that in 2009 only 46 percent of respondents still approved the transition to the market economy, a figure that had stood at 80 percent in 1991 (1).

Hungarian Guard, the Hungarian way of life is under threat from both internal and external forces. Internally these paramilitary units fight against what they describe as "gypsy crime" while externally they fight against the threat of a Zionist invasion through globalised capitalism (see Murer 2015). Indeed, as Vladimir Tismaneanu (1998) argues, Jewish 'association with capitalist practices and institutions [have] permitted the blending of anti-industrialism, anti-Westernism, and xenophobia into a resentful conglomerate' (96).

Consequently, the notion of history repeating itself because of an absence of dialogue becomes particularly relevant to the time of *Father's Acre*'s production and release. Indeed, writing a year later in 2010, the late Nobel Prize winner and Auschwitz survivor Imre Kertész argued that 'the old vices of the Hungarians, their hypocrisy and their tendency to repress bad memories, are flourishing just as they always have… The past is never dealt with. Everything is whitewashed' (in Lendvai 2012, 54).

Thus, by employing Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* techniques to the analysis of *Father's Acre*, the film's central relationship between father and son becomes endowed with wider social meaning that provides insight into the roots of Hungary's nationalist resurgence. The son's repetition of his father's crimes owing to a lack of dialogue speaks to a similar lack of dialogue in post-communism Hungary. Hungary has yet to come to terms with the extremism of the past and consequently there has been an absence of dialogue on some of the more traumatic aspects of Hungarian history. Instead, socially satisfying poltical myths have proliferated, myths that downplay Hungarian complicity in the horrors of the past and instead propagate a sense of national victimhood through comparative trivialisation and historical whitewashing. In the absense of reconcilitary dialogue, Hungary has failed to learn from the lessons of the past and history thus appears to be repeating itselfs.

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4.3. Constructing Post-Communism in an Atmosphere of Otherness: Exploring Rising Intolerance in *Delta*.

The second film examined in this chapter is a film that, owing to its comparable slow cinema aesthetics and minimal narrative, was widely cited as having influenced *Father's Acre*; the film in question being Kornél Mundruczó's *Delta* (2008). Set in an unknown time period, *Delta* centres upon the homecoming of the reticent Mihail (Félix Lajkó) who, after briefly re-acquainting with his mother (Lili Monori) and first encountering his inhospitable stepfather (Sándor Gáspár), is introduced to Fauna (Orsolya Tóth), the sister he has never met. Mihail discovers that there is no room for him at the family home and so, with the help of his sister, sets about constructing a house on the Danube Delta. Over time, the siblings grow closer, united by a mutual relatedness, and eventually they become intimate. However, when news of Fauna's intentions to live with Mihail reaches the village, the locals, including their own mother and stepfather, strongly disapprove. In an effort to ingratiate with the locals, Mihail invites the villagers to the house after a particularly large catch of fish. However, questions quickly surface regarding the siblings' relationship as a group of men begin harassing Fauna, becoming increasingly aggressive and eventually violent, stabbing Mihail as he comes to his sister's aid and dumping his body in the Delta.

Like *Father's Acre*, *Delta* is aesthetically minimalist, employing Bressonian reduction techniques to elicit a more reflective response from the audience. *Delta*'s co-screenwriter Yvette Bíró stated that Bresson, most notably his 1967 film *Mouchette*, had served as a major

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inspiration for the film (in Portuges 2010).[174] Akin to *Mouchette*, *Delta*'s emotional impact lies in the underlying tension that permeates the film throughout and it is through this tension that I argue Mundruczó comments on the consequences of political mythmaking in post-communist Hungary. Like *Father's Acre*, *Delta*'s reflective cinematic language serves to heighten the audience's awareness of form, creating a Brechtian sense of detachment by disrupting direct imaginative involvement with the narrative. This sense of estrangement fosters a more cerebral form of spectatorship in which the audience, rather than succumbing to escapism, become conscious critical observers of events no longer timeless and universal but socially and historically relevant. Accordingly, I intend to examine the construction of the house on the Delta and the siblings' incestuous relationship as symbolic events that speak a socially pertinent discourse germane to contemporary Hungarian society. I also seek to address the overriding sense of foreboding produced by *Delta*'s Bressonion aesthetic. I argue that through the film's sustained sense of menace, which culminates at the end of the film in an act of sudden violence, Mundruczó explores the intolerance and hatred that underlies post-communist society, an intolerance rooted in post-communist political myths.

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[174] On the subject of Bresson's influence Bíró claimed: 'I felt that Bresson would be indispensable to the process of absorbing the film. For the purity – it's so shining, it's more dramatic than anything else, more than huge confrontations or expressions of fury or turbulence. In their unadorned simplicity, actions and events are almost sacred. In *Mouchette* the whole narrative is like a flow… [a]nd the turbulence that lies just below the surface throughout creates a feeling of foreboding. I think that also in *Delta* the ambiance is constantly menacing, although not explicitly so. We feel the stepfather's hostility, his harshness, but little is shown directly' (in Portuges 2010, 101).

4.3.1. *Delta*'s Production and Reception History.

Mundruczó twice studied at the Academy of Drama and Film Art, first as an actor, graduating in 1998 and then as a film and television director in 2003.[175] During his studies, Mundruczó directed his debut feature *Nincsen nekem vágyam semmi/This I Wish and Nothing More* (2000), a film likened to Danny Boyle's *Trainspotting* (1996) for its grungy aesthetic and frenetic electronic soundtrack. The film focuses on a bisexual love triangle between two rent boys and a woman oblivious to their sexual exploits and went on to win the Best First Film Award at the 31st Hungarian Film Week.[176]

Mundruczó followed this success with the award winning short *Afta/Day after Day* (2001), a film akin to Harmony Korine's *Gummo* (1997) in its grubby imagery and preoccupation with aimless and disaffected youths.[177] *Day after Day* was the film that brought Mundruczó to the attention of esteemed Hungarian screenwriter and essayist Yvette Bíró, beginning a dialog between the two which would culminate in Bíró serving as a consultant on Mundruczó's next project, *Szép napok/Pleasant Days* (2002) and co-writer of his subsequent three feature

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[175] Aside from regularly performing in his own films, Mundruczó has also appeared in the Hungarian soap opera *Szomszédok/Neighbours* (1987-1999) in 1999 as Péter Sziklai, a recurring character who featured in nine episodes. Mundruczó also had roles in Miklós Jancsó's *Utolsó vacsora az Arabs Szürkénél/Last Supper at the Arabian Gray Horse* (2001), Ferenc Török's *Szezon/Eastern Sugar* (2004), Anna Faur's *Lányok/Girls* (2007) and Jancsó's *Oda az igazság/So Much for Justice!* (2010).

[176] The film served as the first collaboration between Mundruczó and producer Viktória Petrányi, who also co-wrote the script. Petrányi would go on to co-produce all of Mundruczó's subsequent films while also regularly serving as his co-writer. The pair would co-found the production company Proton Cinema in 2003.

[177] *Day after Day* won the Best Short Film Award at both the 32nd Hungarian Film Week and the 2002 Hungarian Film Critic's Awards. The film also won the Grand Prize at the 2001 Cottbus Film Festival of Young East European Cinema's Short Film Competition, the Silver Dragon at the 2001 Krakow Film Festival, the Arte Prize for a European Short Film and received the Special Mention of the Ecumenical Jury at the 2001 Oberhausen International Short Film Festival.

films.[178] *Pleasant Days* elaborated upon many of the thematic concerns of *Day after Day*, utilising the same principle cast (Tamás Polgár and Kata Wéber), grungy aesthetic and minimal performances.[179]

Mundruczó's next project marked a radical stylistic departure from his previous work. Co-written by Mundruczó, Bíró and Petrányi and produced by Petrányi and Béla Tarr, *Johanna* (2005) is a retelling of the story of Joan of Arc in the form of an opera.[180] *Johanna* takes place in a hospital in contemporary Budapest and follows drug addict Johanna (Orsolya Tóth) who, after narrowly avoiding death after an overdose, wakes with the powers of sexual healing and offers her body to the hospital's patients. Aesthetically, the film has a far more pronounced style than Mundruczó's previous work, utilising green tinted expressionist imagery that fittingly complements the artificiality of the operatic filmic world.[181]

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[178] Bíró's accolades include co-writing Miklós Jancsó's *Sirokko/Winter Wind* (1969), *Fényes szelek/The Confrontation* (1969), *Égi bárány/Agnus Dei* (1970), *Még kér a nép/Red Psalm* (1972) and *Szerelmem Elektra/Electra, My Love* (1974). Bíró also served as the artistic consultant on Félix Máriássy's *Rokonok/Relatives* (1954), Károly Makk's *Liliomfi* (1955) and Zoltán Fábri's *Húsz Óra/Twenty Hours* (1965). Bíró is the founder and co-editor of the longstanding Hungarian film journal *Filmkultura*. She has also written numerous books covering various aspects of cinema – those translated into English include *Profane Mythology: The Savage Mind of the Cinema* (1982), and *Turbulence and Flow in Film: The Rhythmic Design* (2008). Bíró has also taught at the University of Berkeley, the Sorbonne in Paris and the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.
[179] *Pleasant Days* went on to share the Gene Moskowitz Award with *Hukkle* at the 33rd Hungarian film week and won both the László B. Nagy Award at the 2004 Hungarian Film Critic's Awards and the Silver Leopard at the 2002 Locarno International Film Festival.
[180] *Johanna* built upon Mundruczó's 2003 short film *A 78-as Szent Johannája/Joan of Arc of the Night Bus*, which appeared in the ensemble project *Jött egy busz…/A Bus Came…* (2003), which also featured shorts by György Pálfi, Ferenc Török, Árpád Schilling and Viktor Bodó. Like *Johanna*, *Joan of Arc of the Night Bus* is an operatic rendering of the story of Joan of Arc and laid many of the foundations upon which the 2005 feature length would later be built.
[181] *Johanna* would go on to compete in the Un Certain Regard category of the 58th Cannes Film Festival.

In 2004 and 2005, Mundruczó would release two significant shorts that would serve as stylistic and thematic precursors for *Delta*. The first being *Kis apokrif no. 2/Little Apocrypha No. 2* (2004), the second of a two-part series that followed the experimental and ostensibly unconnected *Kis apokrif no. 1/Little Apocrypha* (2003). Like *Delta*, *Little Apocrypha No. 2* is set on the Romanian Danube Delta and exhibits a comparably minimalist style that captures the mystery and haunting beauty of the setting. *Little Apocrypha No. 2* differs from *Delta*, however, by emphasising the setting as specifically Romanian. The film features Romanian actors in speaking roles and Tóth, who appears in both films, speaks Romanian, albeit with a Hungarian accent (Dánél 2012, 111). *Delta*; alternatively, does not acknowledge the setting as Romanian. All the actors speak Hungarian and the only visible indication that the film is set in Romania is the Eastern Orthodox Church visible in the background of the scene in which the father rapes his stepdaughter.[182] Discussing *Delta*'s setting, Yvette Bíró was keen to downplay any correlation between the Romanian locale and the parochialism exhibited by the villagers. She claims that 'the film is Hungarian but the physical environment had its inspiring function with its natural beauty and peacefulness. It was the landscape that had its primordial force in the articulation of the story: maintaining the remoteness, without the overemphasized social or ethnic background' (in van Maanen 2010).[183]

The other short film that would serve as an antecedent to *Delta* appears in the collaborative project *Lost and Found* (2005), a German produced film featuring six up-and-coming

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[182] Indeed, the drunkard in the local kocsma, presumably a member of the film's local non-professional supporting cast, is overdubbed in Hungarian.
[183] For further information on the complexities of Hungarian representations of Romania, see Dánél 2012 and Cunningham 2014b.

directors from Central/Eastern Europe.[184] Mundruczó's film, entitled *Rövid ideig tartó csend/Shortlasting Silence*, focuses upon a son's return to his family home after the death of his mother where he reunites with the sister with whom he once had an incestuous relationship. In an interview with Oliver Baumgarten, Mundruczó emphasised the symbolic nature of the siblings' relationship. He stated that '[t]he double meanings in the film are quite interesting to me: something wrong happened in the past, in the history of Hungary, and we started to talk about this situation because of the death of the mother' (Arsenal: Institute for Film and Video Art Video 2005). Mundruczó would be reprise the symbolic use of incestuous siblings in *Delta*.

Delta's production was a difficult one, massively disrupted by the unexpected death of Lajos Bértok and the lengthy production insurance issues that ensued. The original script, co-written by Mundruczó and Bíró, was a loose adaptation of Shakespear's *Hamlet* and Euripides' *Electra* set in a science fiction universe.[185] The plot would see Mihail (Bértok) return home for his father's funeral where he is first acquainted with his estranged sister (Tóth). The siblings fall in love and, after later discovering that their mother and new lover had murdered their father, decide to avenge his death. The film began production in early 2006 but stopped following Bértok's death of a heart attack on July 10th that year. With only half of the film shot, the future of the production remained uncertain. However, filming resumed in 2007 with Filmpartners introduced as a new co-producer, a new and streamlined script written and Félix Lajkó, a professional violinist, cast as Mihail.[186]

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[184] Other directors included Stefan Arsenijevic, Nadejda Koseva, Mait Laas, Cristian Mungiu and Jasmila Zbanic.
[185] The original script was shot on the Danube Delta during the winter.
[186] Due to the re-shoot, *Delta*'s budget amounted to approximately €1.5 million (Schreiber 2008).

Delta premiered at the 39th Hungarian Film Week winning the Golden Reel, Best Original Music and the Gene Moskowitz Prize. Following this, *Delta* won the FIPRSCI Prize at Cannes and received a nomination for the Palme d'Or. The film would also go on to win the Don Quijote Prize at the Cottbus Film Festival, the Critics Jury's Award at the Oporto International Film Festival and the CICAE Award at the Sarajevo Film Festival, while featuring in competition at Chicago, Seville, Ghent, Wroclaw and Trieste.[187] The film received a general cinematic release in Hungary in September 2008 and would go on to attract a total audience of 21,458 viewers, earning just short of 14 million Forints in ticket sales (Löwensohn 2009, 233).[188]

Upon release, *Delta* received largely positive criticism from the international trade press. Dan Fainaru (2008) of *Screen International* claimed that *Delta* stood as Mundruczó's 'best rounded and most mature work to date'. He praised Mundruczó's precise direction and his rejection of what he calls 'audience titillation', suggesting that while the film's narrative may appear simplistic, its cinematic language is rich and complex. Fainaru does acknowledge that *Delta* would not necessarily be to everyone's taste, asserting that the film's slow pace and subdued narrative would likely put certain audiences off. Fabien Lemercier (2009b) of

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[187] The film was also screened at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, the London Film Festival, the Mar del Plata International Film Festival, the Toronto International Film Festival, the Göteborg International Film Festival, Palic European Film Festival, the Pusan International Film Festival, Copenhagen's CPH PIX, the 45th Atalya Golden Orange Film Festival and the Rotterdam International Film Festival, amongst others.

[188] In 2008, only two Hungarian films would achieve over 100,000 viewers. These being the romantic comedy *9 1/2 randi/9 1/2 dates* (Tamás Sas, 2008), which achieved 201,420 viewers and *Valami Amerika 2/A Kind of America 2* (Gábor Herendi, 2008), the sequel to the box office record-breaker, which reached 180,054 viewers by the end of the year following its release on December 18th (Löwensohn 2009, 229-239). The film would eventually receive a domestic audience of just short of 450,000 people by the end of its run in 2009 (Bujdosó 2017).

Cineuropa argued that with *Delta*, Mundruczó has established himself as the figurehead of the new generation of post-communist Hungarian filmmakers, describing the film as brutal and uncompromising, while praising Mundruczó's ability to captivate viewers despite the film's formal restraint. Eddie Cockrell (2008), writing for *Variety*, describes *Delta* 'as a beautifully atmospheric vessel that will seem infinitely deep to some and chafingly dry to others'. Cockrell praised both Tóth's performance and film's technical specifications, in particular Erdely's cinematography and Lajko's score, but claimed that the narrative merely becomes 'a scaffold on which Mundruczó hangs leisurely visual meditations on the wild flora and fauna surrounding and engulfing his protags'.

Domestically, however, reviewers did not receive *Delta* so positively. András Földes (2008), in a review entitled 'Béla Tarr's Style Has Taken New Victim', described what he perceived as an epidemic spreading through the young generation of Hungarian filmmakers.[189] Földes claimed that *Delta*'s protracted quietude not only recalls the work of Tarr but virtually replicates it. While praising Mundruczó's utilisation of the film's at once paradisiacal and dismal setting, Földes ultimately decried the lack of narrative that left him with a wealth of unanswered questions. Despite this, Földes stated that he would not be surprised if the film received significant recognition and awards, stating that festival juries will likely shun the critic who dares to downgrade a slow art movie that ponders on minor points and leads nowhere. Sándor Turcsányi (2008), writing for *Magyar Narancs*, claimed that while Mundruczó expresses his views through beautiful scenes and an exciting setting, the images he creates are ultimately artificial, comparable to Gáspár, Monori and Tóth's dyed hair. Like Földes, Tucsányi stated that he too would not be surprised if this film was successful at

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[189] 'Újabb áldozatot szedett a tarrbélásodás'

Cannes, claiming that Cannes likes painted, artificial depictions of the East, as seen in the success of Emir Kusturica. *Filmhu*'s Anikó Gorácz (2008) claimed that Mundruczó ultimately fails to bring anything new to an already familiar narrative with many literary and cinematic precedents. Gorácz argued that while the landscape plays an intricate part in *Delta*, what is most lacking is an emphasis on man's relationship with nature. She nevertheless praised both Tóth and Monori performances but claimed that Mihail's characterisation and Lajkó's performance were hollow. András Toroczkay (2008) of *Heti Válasz* alternatively argued that the atmosphere created by Mundruczó's hypnotic imagery to be excellent. However, Toroczkay does acknowledge that the film falls into the same familiar trap that has limited many Hungarian films; the dialogue. The film, according to Toroczkay, is guilty of a few clumsy lines, exacerbated by Lajkó's mumbling performance.

As with many of the films examined in this thesis, the criticism aimed at *Delta* provides insight into the wider prevailing attitudes towards film in Hungary. The disposition of local critics towards films such as *Delta* speaks to a wider sense of imbalance in Hungary's cinematic output. While the latter half of the 2000 saw the modernisation of Hungarian cinema and, with it, a greater balance between art and commercial cinema. What continued to be lacking was a proficient middlebrow cinema, cinema that is at once accessible and intellectual.[190] While there exist isolated examples of such films in the post-communist cinematic oeuvre, middlebrow cinema has been inconsistently produced and the films that

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[190] While films such as *Sunshine* (István Szabó, 2000), *Kontroll* (Nimród Antal, 2003), *Sorstalanság/Fateless* (Lajos Koltai, 2005), *Szabadság, szerelem/Children of Glory* (Krisztina Goda, 2006), *Kaméleon/Chameleon* (Krisztina Goda, 2008), *A nyomozó/The Investigator* (Attila Gigor, 2008), *Utolsó idök/Lost Times* (Áron Mátyássy, 2009) and *Köntörfalak/Question in Details* (Zsombor Dyga, 2010) may all be classed as examples of middlebrow cinema, post-communist Hungarian cinema has failed to establish a balanced and consistent middle ground between the arthouse and popular cinemas for which Hungary is synonymous.

have been released have endured mixed box office success. The apparent disdain towards Hungarian art cinema in the national press, I argue, speaks to a collective need for greater variety in Hungarian cinema, not just art-oriented productions that speak to a very niche audience and lowbrow popular cinema, but something between the two.[191]

4.3.2. The Emotional Power of Minimalism.

As argued in my earlier analysis of *Father's Acre*, cinematic minimalism can operate as a method of distanciation, precluding emotional engagement on the part of the audience and encouraging more contemplative spectatorship. Mundruczó congruously privileges restraint as a mode of discourse through which to induce such reflection, favouring the intimate and seemingly banal over the melodramatic, accentuating the visual power of duration and retarding emotional gratification through repetition. *Delta* focuses on the inexpressible conflicts that lie beneath the surface, adhering to the Bressonian concept of de-dramatisation in which the film insinuates the dramatic without sensationalising. In his *Notes of Cinematography* (1977), Bresson stated that '[t]he real is not dramatic. Drama will be born of a certain march of non-dramatic elements' (46). Congruous to Bresson's disciplined approach to cinema, *Delta* minimises the overtly dramatic in an effort to imbue what is present with a subtle and underlying emotional power, one that the film prolongs and intensifies through the retarding of dramatic eruption.

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[191] Since the establishment of the MNF, Hungary has produced middlebrow cinema in greater numbers and placed greater emphasis upon genre cinema. Examples of such films include *Víkend/Weekend* (Áron Mátyássy, 2015), *Liza, a rókatündér/Liza the Fox-Fairy* (Károly Ujj Mészáros, 2015), *Saul fia/Son of Saul* (László Nemes, 2015), *Hurok/Loop* (Isti Madarász, 2016), *A martfüi rém/Strangled* (Árpád Sopsits, 2016), *Kút/Well* (Attila Gigor, 2016) and *Kojot/Coyote* (Márk Kostyál, 2017).

To this end, *Delta*'s landscape plays a fundamental role. Mundruczó repeatedly returns to lingering shots of the Danube Delta, capturing the setting's dual sense of primordial beauty and wild, unforgiving menace. The camera's languid movement mirrors the gentle flow of water, encapsulating an Arcadian sense of tranquillity, which is further emphasised by the sun-drenched imagery, sounds of the wildlife and the film's slow pace.[192] Mundruczó symbolically renders the unspoiled landscape as a utopian place of new beginnings, offering the siblings the possibility of independence, hope and freedom removed from social judgement.

Yet, at the same time, the Delta has a menacing undertone. The repeated shots of the house on the water emphasise its isolation, symbolically inferring Mihail's status as an outsider in an insular community while also alluding to the social exclusion that Mihail's relationship with Fauna has produced. The repeated images of the Delta also impart a latent tension through the stillness of the water. Whereas flowing water has traditionally served as a symbol of life and fertility, stagnant water has tended to evoke the opposite, connoting death and disease through the propensity of wetlands to sustain bacterial life harmful to humans.[193] The

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[192] The utopian nature of the Delta is further emphasised through its juxtaposition with the village. Scenes that take place in the village are infrequent and largely limited to scenes at Mihail's mother's house or the local kocsma – with its stereotypical starring locals and aggressive drunkards. However, on the rare occasions when the film presents the village more broadly, it is portrayed as an inhospitable realm. Indeed, after disembarking from the boat at the beginning of the film, the image cuts to Mihail walking across a residential area. Framed in long shot, we see in the foreground cattle amble around an unkempt garden littered with discarded rubbish. The image tracks parallel to Mihail as he walks, eventually reaching a dilapidated building with chipped plaster, no door or glass in the windows and a cow inside. The positioning of farm animals in typically human dwellings invites the audience to draw parallels between the rural inhabitants and the animals, emphasising their uncivilised nature.

[193] There exist repeated references to the life-giving qualities of flowing water in the Bible. Examples include Genesis 2:10, which references the four rivers – Pishon Gihon, the Tigris, and the Euphrates – flowing from Eden. In Exodus 17:6, Moses strike the rock at Horeb and water subsequently flows from it. In John 7:38, Jesus states that '[w]hoever believes in me, as

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repeated emphasis on the stillness of the Delta thus serves as a means of foreshadowing the inevitable fate of siblings.

Furthermore, the textural quality of the water itself induces a deep sense of unease. Lucy Fife Donaldson (2014) argues that through their synaesthetic and affective qualities, textures convey the '[m]ateriality of mood' (45). Congruently, the surface tension of the Delta produces a sense of foreboding, the disquiet that permeates the film symbolised in the very tautness of the water's surface. Mundruczó repeatedly presents images of the Delta that draw the audience's attention to water's stillness. These images give the water's surface a strange sense of solidity, as if it were ice or glass. The water's ostensive integrity is deceptive, exhibiting an artificial sense of stability. One may go so far as to argue that the at once corporeal and permeable natural of the water renders it uncanny, inducing a sense of unease that encapsulates the underlying threat that comes from the disapproval of the villagers. The deceptive nature of the water is also emphasised through its stagnancy and opacity, the viscous quality of the water conceals its depth and what may lie beneath. The self-sustained atmosphere of the landscape thus becomes a device used to articulate the unspoken enmity held towards the siblings. While the film seldom depicts this hostility directly, Mundruczó insinuates animosity through the mood evoked by the landscape. The emphasis placed upon the Delta thus positions the landscape an integral part of the film's narration. It is though the landscape that the ambiance of the film is established and where the underlying conflicts and hidden emotions of the film are played out.

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the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"'. Furthermore, in Revelation, Jesus says '[t]o the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment' (21:6) and '[t]hen the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb' (22:1).

De-dramatisation is also achieved through repetition. Throughout the film are prolonged scenes in which the siblings work on the construction of the house. Such scenes are protracted and deliberate, progressing at an unhurried pace beyond the necessity of the narrative. Indeed, progression could easily have been alluded to through establishing shots taken at various stages of the house's development, but instead Mundruczó chooses to give prominence to the act of construction through repeated scenes of the siblings at work. Yvette Bíró (2008) argues that through repetition, films establish laws, cinematic codes through which they convey meaning (134). Through repeated scenes of construction, the audience are encouraged to observe the film's discreet details, the subtle representations of inner dynamics and underlying passions that the characters struggle to express. As Bíró states in her 2006 essay *The Fullness of Minimalism*, 'repetition dares to lift out physical details, tiny occurrences from their customary context'. Through repetition, Mundruczó obliges the audience to re-examine that which was thought to be familiar, they are given time to scrutinise the scene's more intimate details and subtle variations in which understated, hidden emotions reside. *Delta*'s characterisation is highly minimalist, dialogue is infrequent, as is expressive body language, and it is through more intimate signals that suppressed emotions are revealed. This is particularly evident in scenes of construction where dialogue between the siblings rarely extends beyond brief exchanges of a practical nature. However, it is through subtle glances, smiles and reactions that Mundruczó captures details not disclosed within the dialogue.

Delta's de-dramatisation is, however, no more evident than in the scene of Fauna's rape. Rape can be considered one of the most sensitive and highly charged subjects to be committed to film, yet despite this, or perhaps because of this, the representation of rape has been recurrent in cinema since the medium's inception (see Projansky 2001). In her study of

rape in art cinema, Dominique Russel (2010) describes rape is a particularly cinematic crime, claiming that '[m]urder, of course, is fascinating fodder for narrative because violence excites, and because a corpse commands a story; rape, on the other hand, has the combined forces of sex and violence' (2). Given the often-visceral nature of rape in film, along with its ability to shock, repulse and even perversely titillate, and given the complex sexual politics that surround the issue, rape is one of cinema's most emotive subjects. It is through such dramatic and highly affective subject matter that *Delta*'s de-dramatised style is most visible.

The scene follows Fauna's decision to leave home. Following her exit, the image cuts to a long shot of Fauna walking across a shipyard with her stepfather in pursuit. He repeatedly snatches at her shoulder, which she shrugs off defiantly. The camera tracks them as they continue to scuffle, maintaining its distance throughout. Suddenly, the stepfather attacks Fauna, pushing her against an old storage container and rapes her. The camera holds its remote position as we witness the rape in its entirety. Only after the assault is complete does the image cut to a closer shot of Fauna wiping semen from her thighs and collecting her discarded clothes. Through the physical distance of the camera, Mundruczó presents this highly emotive subject matter in a manner that is deliberately detached and emotionally distant. The film presents rape with the same muted dramatic emphasis as any other event or action. By de-emphasising the overtly dramatic, Mundruczó renders both the pedestrian and the dramatic with equal significance. That is, the reduction of emotionality in scenes of high drama places the banal and dramatic on equal footing. Doing so privileges the dramatic conflict that resides within more modest and understated moments and the emotional power concealed within the ambiance of the landscape.

4.3.3. Cinematic Detachment and Social Commentary.

Mundruczó's complex formal language thus functions as a means of endowing the film with a latent tension, an unspoken disquiet through which the villagers' disapproval of Mihail and Fauna's relationship is inferred without being explicitly stated. Yet, at the same time, I argue that like *Father's Acre*, *Delta*'s intricate cinematic language also encourages the audience to interpret wider social meaning into the events depicted. In her essay 'Spiritual Style in the Films of Robert Bresson' ([1964] 1998), Susan Sontag argues that the foregrounding of cinematic form invites more detached, cognitive engagement. Sontag states that

> [t]he effect of the spectator's being aware of the form is to elongate or to retard the emotions. For, to the extent that we are conscious of form in a work of art, we become somewhat detached; our emotions do not respond in the same way as they do in real life. Awareness of form does two things simultaneously: it gives a sensuous pleasure independent of the "content," and it invites the use of intelligence (59).

By detaching the audience and denying escapism, one may consider the centring of form a method of Brechtian estrangement (*Verfremdung*). For Brecht ([1936] 2014), the *Verfremdung* effect 'was principally designed to historicize the incidents portrayed' (156). By emotionally detaching the audience from the events on stage, Brecht compelled theatregoers to remain mindful of themselves and the social realm in which they lived. Self-cognisance would render the events depicted as both historically and socially relevant. Through the detachment induced by formal emphasis, cinema achieves the same effect. I argue that *Delta*'s minimalist aesthetics function to distance the audience from the narrative so that they remain self-aware and conscious of the social world. Doing so allows for more critical and socially sensitive spectatorship in which the audience is encouraged to extrapolate wider symbolic meaning relevant to the contemporary social milieu.

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What then does *Delta* impart about contemporary post-communist society? I argue that Mihail's homecoming and the construction of the house on the Delta symbolically address issues pertaining to the post-communist transition, the former suggestive of Hungary's reconnection with nation history after the suppression of public memory under communism, while the latter is symbolic of Hungary's post-communist independence.

As I argued in my analysis of *After the Day Before*, familial reconnection can serve as a means of addressing national and historical reconnection. A family, through notions of ancestry, community and shared history offers parallels to the nation, which too has a shared historical lineage and, as Benedict Anderson ([1983] 2006) has argued, serves as an 'imagined community' uniting disparate people through a shared heritage and desire for collective identity.[194] Mihail's return to the family home thus provides a means of examining Hungary's reconnection with history following the collapse of communism.

The film's representation of family, however, is far removed from the idealistic nuclear family. Mihail has been estranged for a long time and while the length of his absence is never disclosed – nor the reasons for it – duration is insinuated by the fact that Mihail and Fauna are first acquainted as adults. Furthermore, Mihail and Fauna's father is dead and their mother

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[194] The trope of the family as symbol has a long lineage in Hungarian cinema as seen in films such as *Apa/Father* (István Szabó, 1966), *Megáll az idő/Time stands Still* (Péter Gothár, 1981), *Napló Gyermekeimnek/Diary for my Children* (Márta Mészáros, 1984) and *Hol volt, hol nem volt/A Hungarian Fairytale* (Gyula Gazdag, 1986). Mundruczó would also use the family as a means of symbolically addressing wider issues in both *Shortlasting Silence* and *Szelíd teremtés: A Frankenstein-terv/Tender Son: The Frankenstein Project* (2010).

now resides with another man.[195] The stepfather is a patriarchal and hostile figure who does not attempt to ingratiate with his stepchildren. He is averse to Mihail's unexpected arrival and rebukes him for beginning construction on the house without the relevant permits. His relationship with Fauna is equally antagonistic. Their interactions exhibit a deep-seated animosity that culminates in Fauna's rape, an act that violently transgresses any sense of kinship.

If, as argued, the family serves as a metaphor for the nation then I argue that *Delta*'s representation of the fragmented family speaks to the fractured and disjointed nature of Hungary's relationship with national history. Whereas a stable family has traditionally been considered the foundation of a strong and healthy society, the broken family serves as a metaphorical means of conveying Hungary's turbulent history with its many disruptions, separations and revisions and the consequent distorted forms of historical remembrance that have arose as a result. Mihail's return to the family home therefore not only alludes to Hungary's reconnection with national history but to Hungary's specifically ruptured and discontinuous history.

The film's most unequivocal representation of the disrupted family is undoubtedly Mihail and Fauna's incestuous relationship. Incest between the siblings is a product of their fragmented upbringing and disconnection during childhood. The siblings first meet as adults having had no shared experiences as children where traditional sibling bonds are typically established.

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[195] The film never reveals how or when Mihail's father died nor whether Mihail was aware of his father's passing prior to his return. One may assume that he was already aware of this fact given that his father is only mentioned in passing when Mihail asks about his abandoned shack. However, it is worth noting that in the original script, Mihail returned to attend his father's funeral only to later discover that his mother and new lover had murdered him.

Finnish sociologist Edward Westermarck (1891) argues that those living in proximity from an early age typically develop an innate sexual aversion to one another. Westermarck's incest theory maintains that inter-sibling sexual urges are neutralised by what he describes as 'an instinct which under normal circumstances makes sexual love between the nearest kin a psychical impossibility' (319). Siblings typically develop this instinct during the early years of childhood when living in domestic proximity. However, when siblings are estranged they fail to develop this aversion and it is common for kin who first meet in adulthood to develop an overwhelming sexually attraction to one another.[196] As with the film's representation of the fragmented family, incest provides a means of engaging with Hungary's connection with national history following transition. Just as Mihail's taboo and socially objectionable relationship with Fauna is born out of a disconnected past, I argue that post-communist Hungary's equally provocative engagement with national history, one built upon populism, aggressive nationalism and political myths, is the result of a similar historical discontinuation.

Having established incest as a symbolic means of examining Hungary's disjointed reconnection with national history, the construction of the house on the Delta thus serves to situate this historical reconnection within a specifically post-communist setting. Yvette Bíró, in an interview with Nikki Baughan (2009), described the building of the house as 'a true, comprehensive symbol of the dream of independence', a statement that immediately evokes the dreams of independence harboured under communism and promises of self-determination brought about by transition. However, rather than being built on land, the house is built upon the water. The symbol of the house on the water; that is, a house built upon unstable foundations, I argue, alludes to the unstable historical foundations upon which post-

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[196] This phenomenon has been termed Genetic Sexual Attraction.

communist Hungary has been built. That is to say, rather than building upon solid foundations of historical re-examination, recognition and acceptance, post-communist Hungary's reconnection with national history has instead been prone to political myths and restorative nationalism.

Brechtian estrangement not only provides a means of extrapolating socially pertinent symbolic meaning from the film's representation of incest, family and construction. *Verfremdung* also invites the audience to interpret wider social meaning into the latent tension that pervades the film as a whole. If we understand the siblings' incestuous coupling to be suggestive of post-communist Hungary's disjointed reconnection with national history, then the hostility that their relationship produces serves as a symbolic manifestation of the enmity produced by Hungary's post-transitional engagement with national history. Just as Mihail and Fauna's relationship produces an aggressively adverse reaction from the villagers, I argue that Hungary's disjointed reconnection with national history has congruently produced a form of conservative, exclusionary nationalism, a tribal nationalism in which difference – whether sexual, ethnic or religious– is met with dissension and hatred. Mundruczó invites his audience to view the intolerance exhibited in the film as a social phenomenon, asserting that '[s]ome people think they've got the right to persecute those who don't bow to convention… I'm more inclined to accept Rousseau's idea that man is naturally good in a primitive state and is then corrupted by society' (in Lemercier 2009b). With this statement in mind, the prejudice exhibited by the villagers; that which is inferred through the ambiance of the landscape and through the tension produced by the suppression of the melodramatic, can be understood as a social upshot, a consequence of Hungary's disjointed reconnection with national history following transition.

Historian Rebecca Ann Haynes (1995) suggests that given Hungary's disconnected relationship with national history, 'communal identity lacks a firm underpinning in the mythology of nationhood. As a consequence of its weak structural content, Hungarian national identity is constantly open for redefinition' (87). In lieu of a stable and coherent sense of nationhood, therapeutic political myths have arisen to provide the uprooted and socially fragmented Hungarian with an agreeable sense of post-communist national identity. Such reactionary and restorative myths have fuelled pathological forms of nationalism, nationalism characterised by ethnic self-aggrandisement and exclusionary politics. As Vladimir Tismaneanu (1998) argues, nationalism sets the parameters of belonging – habitually based on ethno-religious identity – positioning difference and alterity as "Other". Such forms of tribal nationalism instil a narcissistic sense of nationhood in which those who do not belong are execrated. Hungary's Jewish and Roma populations provide fitting examples of the victims of post-communist execration having been regularly positioned as "Other" and "un-Hungarian" by nationalists such as István Csurka and Gábor Vona.[197] Indeed, on this subject of Delta's representation of "Otheness", Yvette Bíró states that

> the solution that they [the siblings] are not only excommunicated but punished to death became an unfortunately undeniable truth today: "Otherness" and having different habits, ways of living, is rarely accepted, and intolerance and hatred can often be regrettably violent. With this sorrowful recognition we got closer to our everyday experience (in van Maanen 2010).

Through the process of estrangement, the underlying sense of threat and hostility that pervades throughout *Delta* becomes a statement about contemporary Hungarian society. The film's underlying sense of bigotry and intolerance becomes symbolic of the prejudice born out of Hungary's disconnection with national history and the resultant political myths that

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[197] Indeed, Csurka suggested that Hungarian citizenship was ethnically defined, claiming that to be Hungarian one could not be both Hungarian and Jewish (Tismaneanu 1998, 84).

have risen out of this historical vacuum. Thus, by utilising Brechtian estrangement techniques, *Delta* engages with rise of intolerance brought about by political myths serving as surrogate history. Consequently, the violence that concludes the film serves as a forewarning, one that emphasises the speed in which hostility and intolerance can escalate into sudden, ugly violence.

4.4. Humanising the Hungarian Scapegoat: Representing Roma Persecution in *Just the Wind*.

The final film explored in this chapter is Benedek Fliegauf's 2012 film *Csak a szél/Just the Wind*. The film draws inspiration from the wave of Romani murders committed in Tatárszentgyörgy between 2008 and 2009, presenting a fictional account of the final day of a Romani family before their execution at the hands of an unknown group of vigilantes. The family consists of Mari (Katalin Toldi), her children Anna (Gyöngyi Lendvai) and Rio (Lajos Sárkány) and their Grandfather (György Toldi). In lieu of gainful employment, Mari earns her benefits through Hungary's controversial public-works programme while also doing some additional part-time cleaning work at the local school. Her husband (Gergely Kaszás) lives and works in Canada and hopes to move the rest of the family over with him as soon as possible. Anna goes to school but Rio does not; instead, he is building a secret refuge for his family in response to the recent attacks on neighbouring Romani households. Over the course of the film, we follow Mari, Anna and Rio from morning until night, observing their attempt to live their daily lives in a climate of constant fear.

Visually, the film strives for verisimilitude, embracing the philosophies of Direct Cinema, a documentary movement that sought to capture events with a sense of immediacy hitherto not

possible. Innovations in mobile camera technology and synchronised sound recording granted filmmakers new means of capturing reality in unobtrusive ways and it is this sense of intimacy and spontaneity that *Just the Wind* strives to emulate. Indeed, director of photography Zoltán Lovasi closely observes character reactions with lingering close-up imagery that recalls the cinematography of Albert Maysles, Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker in pioneering films such as *Jazz Dance* (Roger Tilton, 1954), *Primary* (Robert Drew, 1960), *Salesman* (Albert Maysles and David Maysles, 1966) and *Don't Look Back* (D.A. Pennebaker, 1967).

Fliegauf described *Just the Wind* as social cinema (Wigley 2016). While the narrative is fictional, the film draws upon actual historical events and invites the audience to contemplate actually existing social realities. The film's status as docu-fiction provides a means of personalising an ethnic group that contemporary Hungarian society has demonised and reduced to stereotypes. The Hungarian Roma have been one of the biggest victims of the post-communist transition. Economic hardship has ghettoised large segments of Hungary's Roma population and political myths have increasingly positioned them as societal "Others". Terms such as "gypsy crime" have become common parlance, placing culpability for the crimes of a minority at the feet of an entire ethnic group. Racial stereotypes have increasingly homogenised the Hungarian Roma, reducing them to the position of dehumanised scapegoats. *Just the Wind* attempts to challenge such conceptions, presenting the Roma as human beings trying to survive in impoverished conditions. The film strives to combat ethnic stereotypes by presenting a Roma perspective, one that illuminates the plight of this marginalised minority while providing insight into the fears under which many Roma live every day.

Just the Wind was not the only film to focus upon the Tatárszentgyörgy murders. The documentary film *Ítélet Magyarországon/Judgment in Hungary* (Eszter Hajdú, 2013) also engaged with the issue, centring upon the 167-day trial of the four men accused and eventually convicted of the killings. The film successfully highlights the institutional racism at the heart of Hungarian law and order. Not only does the film reveal the negligence of those tasked with carrying out the investigation but also the discriminatory attitude of the judicial system during the trial. Indeed, on the subject of institutionalised racism in Hungary, Hajdú (2014) states '[t]he authorities, police, and judges act on the premise that Roma people don't deserve the same kind of respect as other citizens'. *Judgment in Hungary* achieved a relatively wide amount of exposure, screening in 25 countries and at 27 International Film festivals.[198]

Another film to deal with the Tatárszentgyörgy murders was the short experimental film *Bőrük volt a bűnük/Their Skin was Their Only Sin* (András B. Vágvölgyi, 2013). The film features four prominent Hungarian actors reciting testimony, some created with artistic license, while bathed in violent projected imagery.[199] The use of popular actors in documentary/experimental cinema is not unprecedented in Hungary. Perhaps the most

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[198] *Judgment in Hungary*'s accolades include the Grand Jury Award at the 2014 London-Open City Film Festival, the Central European Initiative Award at the 2014 Trieste International Film Festival, the Best Documentary Award at GoEast-Wiesbaden, the Best Film Award in the Human Rights Category at the 2014 DokuFest, Kosovo, the Best Film Award at the 2014 One World Prague Festival, and the Special Jury Prize, the Human Rights Award and the Audience Award at the 2014 Sarajevo Film Festival.

[199] Performing in *Their Skin was Their Only Sin* were Dorka Gryllus, Andrea Fullajtár, János Kulka and Zsolt Nagy. Gryllus' previous credits included *Nyóckér!/The District* (Áron Gauder, 2005) and *Víkend/Weekend* (Áron Mátyássy, 2015). Fullajtár had featured in *Az utolsó blues/The Last Blues* (Péter Gárdos, 2002), *The District* and *Lányok/Girls* (Anna Faur, 2007). Kulka performed in *Kameleon/Chameleon* (Krisztina Goda, 2008), *A vizsga/The Exam* (Péter Bergendy, 2011) and *A berni követ/The Ambassador to Bern* (Atilla Szász, 2014) and Nagy featured in *Kontroll* (Antal Nimród, 2003), *The Exam,* and *Szabadesés/Free Fall* (György Pálfi, 2014).

noteworthy example being the documentary film *Szíven szúrt ország/A Country Stabbed in the Heart* (Tamás Babos, János Vecsemyés, Mano Csillag, György Kivés, 2009). The film focuses on the life and death of Romanian handball player Marian Cozma, who was stabbed in a nightclub in Veszprém after an altercation with a group of Romani men. Along with testimony from family and friends, the film features recreations featuring some of Hungary biggest contemporary movie stars, including Sándor Csányi, Csaba Pindroch and Szonja Oroszlán. Given the increasing status of celebrities as arbiters of taste, morality and public opinion, the casting of some of the country's leading film stars can be seen as a means of legitimising the underlying anti-Roma sentiments that the film exhibits.

4.4.1. *Just the Wind*'s Production and Reception History.

Benedek Fliegauf is somewhat of an anomaly for a Hungarian filmmaker, as he did not attend film school. Instead, he studied as a stage designer and began his career as a television assistant before going on to work as assistant director on films such as Árpád Sopsits' *Torzók/Abandoned* (2001). Fliegauf made his directorial debut in 1999, and began his filmmaking career making documentaries and short films.[200] His feature length debut was

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[200] Fliegauf debuted with the documentary film *Határvonal/Border Line* (1999) before his first fictional short *Beszélö fejek/Talking Heads* (2001), a film consisting of six vignettes built upon themes of urban life, each shot with a single static camera. *Talking Heads* won the Best Experimental Film at the 32nd Hungarian Film Week (Löwensohn 2002, 310). In 2001 Fliegauf released the documentary film *Van élet a halál elõtt?/Is There Life Before Death?*, which focused on András Feldmár, the controversial Hungarian-born psychotherapists who advocated the use of hallucinogenic drugs in therapy. In that same year, Fliegauf also released the short *Hypnos/Hypnosis* (2001), a film that focuses upon a group of adults who use hypnotherapy to journey back to their childhoods. While under hypnosis, a woman (Masa Mészáros) uncovers a traumatic repressed memory from her past. *Hypnosis* won the Special Prize of the Jury at the 2002 Cottbus Film Festival and the Youth Oscar Award at the 2003 Dresden International Short Film Festival and featured in competition at the Roma Medfil

Rengeteg/Forest (2003), a film that centres upon urban life in contemporary Budapest. *Forest* was heavily influenced by the Dogme '95 movement, employing non-professional actors, improvised performances, natural lighting and digital, handheld cinematography. [201] Fliegauf's second feature was *Dealer* (2004), a film that marked a radical stylistic departure from its predecessor. *Dealer* depicts the final day in the life of a drug dealer, employing slow and minimalist aesthetics and permanently obscuring the faces of the dealer's clients and acquaintances.[202] Fliegauf's third film was the experimental *Tejút: Ambient Film/Milky Way: Ambient Film* (2007), a film consisting of nine unconnected vignettes, described by Fliegauf as haiku's (in Stiglegger 2008), each made up of a single static long shot.[203] Fliegauf's fourth feature length was the science fiction film *Womb* (2010), his first English language film co-produced in Germany, Hungary and France. The film focuses on a woman who bears and

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Festival, Ludwigsburg European Short Film Biennale and the Antalya Golden Orange International Film Festival.

[201] *Forest* won the Sándor Simó Prize for Best First Film, Best Producer Award (for András Muhi) and the Gene Moskowitz Prize at the 34rd Hungarian Film Week, the Wolfgang Staudte Prize at the 2003 Berlin International Film Festival and the Special Prize of the Jury at the Lagów International Film Festival.

[202] At the 35th Hungarian Film Week *Dealer* won the Best Director and Best Screenplay Awards and Tamás Zányi won the award for Best Sound (the Golden Microphone). The film also won the László B. Nagy Award at the 2005 Hungarian Critic's Awards, the Berliner Zeitung's Reader's Prize to the Best Film of the Forum at the 2004 Berlin International Film Festival while also winning the FIPRESCI Prize, the Best Director Award, the ACCA Jury Prize for Best Film and a special Mention for the quality and coherence of its images and music at the 2004 Mar del Plata International Film Festival in Argentina. *Dealer* also won the Best Director Award at the 2004 Wiesbaden GoEast Film Festival, the International Film Critics' Jury's Award at the 2005 Palic International Film Festival and the Golden Athena at the Athens International Film Festival amongst others.

[203] *Milky Way* won the Best Cinematography Award (for Gergely Pohárnok), the Best Sound Award (for Tamás Beke) and the Special Prize of the Jury at the 39th Hungarian Film Week. The film also won the Golden Leopard at the 2007 Locarno International Film Festival, the Special Prize of the Bloggers' Jury at the 2007 Moscow 2morrow Film Festival, the Feature Film Prize at the Barcelona L'Alternative Film Festival and a special mention at the 2008 Mexico City Contemporary Film Festival (FICCO).

raises the clone of her deceased lover and featured big name stars Matt Smith (star of BBC's *Doctor Who*) and Eva Green (Bond Girl in *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006)).[204]

What unites Fliegauf's seemingly disparate films; shorts, documentaries and feature lengths alike, is an engagement with issues of alienation and escape. His films often incorporate elements of fantasy and surrealism as well as alternative forms of consciousness – whether through drugs and/or therapy – as a means of exploring how and why people seek experiences beyond reality. Fliegauf claimed that existing social structures have meant that 'we have somehow lost our link with the essence of the universe' (Csillogas – Benedek Fliegauf Interview 2014). For Fliegauf, drugs, therapies and even suicide are attempts to escape what he sees as a greedy and egocentric society and return to a more essential state (see Stiglegger 2008).

Fliegauf was living in Germany when he read about the events in Tatárszentgyörgy. These events touched him deeply and following a spate of nightmares in which he experienced the light of the gunshots in the dark and the sound of screaming, he decided to focus his next project to the issue of Romani persecution (Caruso 2012). Over the course of the next two years Fliegauf, in the role of both production designer and casting director, ingratiated with a number of Roma communities, visiting Romani settlements and schools, slowly assembling an amateur cast and developing a script based upon authentic situations and real experiences. After news broke of Fliegauf's intentions to make a film documenting the Roma experience, the director became the target of online abuse. As Fliegauf recalls:

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[204] *Womb* won the Junior Jury Award – "Environment Is Quality of Life" Prize at the 2010 Locarno International Film Festival and received a nomination for a Golden Leopard.

After announcing in an interview that I will make this film, there were thousands of cruel comments circulating in the internet like "oh my God! This fucking liberal Jew from the richest area in Budapest is going in the fields to judge the Gypsies and then back to his bourgeois place" (in Pfeifer 2013).[205]

The MMK had initially promised to fund *Just the Wind* but withdrew its support just weeks

before shooting was due to commence.[206] In lieu of a significant portion of the production

budget, the production team, having already obtained German and French co-producers,

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[205] Jeffrey Murer (2014) argues that derogatory terms such as "liberal Jews" highlight a phantasmical equivalence used within right wing discourse. He suggests that such discourse presents a fantasy of the "Other", one made on behalf on the far right, for the far right with little regards for the facts and actualities. As such, Murer states that once it is established that it is the Jewry that constitutes "the Other", political opponents become Jews, regardless of their religious affiliations. Consequently, Fliegauf, who is a self-proclaimed liberal, (see Bence Fliegauf on Just The Wind 2012) is declared a Jew by the anti-liberal right wing.
[206] The withdrawal of funding was the result of the government's decision to disband the MMK, an act perceived by many Hungarian filmmakers as attempt by the authoritarian Orbán government to silence liberal artists (see Hertlik 2011, Bos 2012 and Tarr 2012 for further information). Due to an 80 percent cut to state funding, the number of feature films produced in Hungary radically reduced (Schwinke 2011). Alongside *Just the Wind*, films released in 2012 included *Aglaya* (Krisztina Deák, 2012), a co-production between Hungary, Romania and Poland, *Az ajtó/The Door* (István Szabó, 2012), a Hungarian, German co-production, *Tüskevár/Thorn Castle* (György Balogh, 2012), a cinematic adaptation of the popular 1967 coming-of-age television series of the same name, the romantic comedy *Nejem, nõm, csajom/Our Women* (Péter Szajka, 2012) and *Drága besúgott barátaim/Dear Betrayed Friend* (Sára Cserhalmi, 2012), a film centred upon the relationship between friends, one of whom had been a communist informer. Also released in 2012 were two films that directly responded to contemporary filmmaking conditions in Hungary. This first is *Final Cut: Hölgyeim es Uraim/Final Cut: Ladies and Gentlemen* (György Pálfi, 2012), a recycled cinematic collage made, without permission, from 450 emblematic examples of world cinema. Copyright issues meant that despite screenings at the 65th Cannes Film Festival for the Cannes Classics programme, the film could not be released commercially. The second being the anthology piece *Magyarország 2011/Hungary 2011* (Benedek Fliegauf, Péter Forgács, Miklós Jancsó, András Jeles, Ágnes Kocsis, Márta Mészáros, György Pálfi, András Salamon, Simon Szabó and Ferenc Török, 2012). According to producer Béla Tarr, *Hungary 2011* was 'produced on virtual cents', the filmmakers involved 'accepted to work without receiving any kind of payment' and utilised 'the most inexpensive technique possible' (Tarr in Berlinale Shorts 2012). While, indeed, Hungary endured a period of uncertainty between 2011 and 2013, the ensuing years have witnessed a recovery under the MNF and continued support for Hungarian filmmakers. Indeed, Fliegauf's subsequent film *Liliom ösvény/Lily Lane* (2016) received financial support from the MNF, including 336 million Forint in production support and 14 million Forint in development/pre-production support (Barraclough 2014).

procured the remainder of the budget from private enterprises.[207] Despite the MMK's withdrawal of funds, *Just the Wind* did receive some government support; the Ministry of National Resources and the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration contributed 13 million Forints and 5 million Forints respectively to the film's 150 million Forint budget (György 2012, Mainka 2012).

Just the Wind premiered at the 62nd Berlinale, winning the Silver Bear, the Peace Film Award and the Amnesty International Film Prize.[208] During the press conference, Fliegauf stated he was surprised that certain audiences feared that *Just the Wind* presented a bad image of Hungary. Fliegauf, on the contrary, suggested that the film presented Hungary in positive light, as a country where it is possible to make socially sensitive films and engage in societal criticism (Fliegauf 2014). Indeed, in a later interview Fliegauf stated:

> I don't know why anyone would feel threatened by my film. It's not a generalisation about Hungary but about the mechanisms of racism all over the world. I'm very proud of the Hungarian culture funding system and I'm very proud to have my film here in the competition [Berlinale] (in György 2012).

However, Fliegauf's democratic claims were somewhat undermined by the fact that, unbeknownst to the filmmaker, The Hungarian Ministry of Justice and Public Administration, having granted funds for the film, had handed out a pamphlet at the Berlinale press conference. The pamphlet repeatedly emphasised the fact that the film was fictional, while

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[207] These included lottery company Szerencsejáték, Magyar Villamos Művek (MVM), an electricity distributor, the Paks nuclear power station and car dealership Porsche Hungaria (Mainka 2012).

[208] *Just the Wind* did not appear at the 2012 Hungarian Film Week, an event described by John Cunningham (2014a) as an ''alternative' Hungarian Film Week' (129) given the absence of government funding. The event, organised by President of the Hungarian Filmmakers' Association Béla Tarr, took place on a shoestring budget, relying on volunteer workers and donated paraphernalia and facilities (see Pigniczky 2012).

elaborating upon the Administration's strategy for building Hungarian/Roma relations. More problematic, however, were the references to similar crimes committed in other European counties, widely perceived as a shallow attempt to deflect attention away from the events in Hungary (see Wildermann 2012a, 2012b). Such was the extent of the Hungarian government's attempts to divert responsibility that the pamphlet even went so far as to emphasise the fact that the original crimes had taken place under the tenure of the preceding socialist government.[209]

Furthermore, following the film's screening at Berlinale, Orbán-associated newspaper *Magyar Nemzet* published a number of derogatory articles about the film. One such article, entitled "They demand top prize for Hungarian drama" (Grund 2012) highlighted *Just the Wind*'s critical reception in the German press following the film's premiere.[210] The article repeatedly emphasised the political orientation of the sources cited, the implication being that the praise garnered upon the film was the result of the leftist leanings of the German press, which consequently rendered their judgement moot. Another article, entitled "The Roma film was rejected by the critics" (Kárpáti 2012) equated rejection to the fact that *Just the Wind* had won the Silver Bear and not the Golden Bear, the festival's top prize.[211] Following this, the article proceeded to highlight some of the less favourable criticism from the international trade press.[212]

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[209] For further information on the pamphlet and Fliegauf's reaction at the Berlinale press conference, see Balogh 2012, György 2012 and Fliegauf 2014.

[210] "Fődíjat követelnek a magyar drámának".

[211] "A romafilm nem kellett a kritikusoknak".

[212] After Berlinale *Just the Wind* found further success on the international film festival circuit, winning the Film Award of the Council of Europe (FACE) at the 31st Istanbul Film Festival, the Jury Prize at the Paris Cinéma Festival, the Grand Prix at the 2012 2morrow Film Festival in Moscow, the Best Film at the Lima Al Este de Lima, a Central European film festival in Peru and Fliegauf shared the Best Director at the 2012 Prishtina International

With regards to *Just the Wind*'s international reception, the film received praise for its attempts to engage with such a sensitive social issue but received criticism for its alienating slow pace and narrative minimalism. Alissa Simon (2012), writing for *Variety*, described *Just the Wind* as a brave film given its candid representation of racism in the contemporary climate of rising Hungarian nationalism. Simon applauded the film's attempts to put a face to the victims of racially motivated violence and praised Fliegauf for avoiding clichés in their representation. She also commended the way in which Fliegauf created an unrelenting sense of tension through the film's clinical visuals, claustrophobic cinematography and effective sound design. Dan Fainaru (2012) of *Screen* praised the way in which Fliegauf refused to either idolise or demonise his protagonists but described the film as a test of endurance for most audiences. This he put down to Fliegauf's propensity for protracted travelling shots, which, while being effective in establishing mood, risked alienating the audience. Justin Minitzer (2012) of *The Hollywood Reporter* congruously described the film as an 'intense but demanding slice of social realism', one that is aesthetically absorbing but narratively minimal. Minitzer argued that despite authentic performances from the film's amateur cast and the film's appropriately intense and menacing atmosphere, *Just the Wind*'s bare-boned story meandered; only gaining momentum toward the end.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned examples in right-wing press, *Just the Wind* received a largely positive response in Hungary. Writing for *Magyar Narancs*, Erzsébet Bori (2012) claimed that while presenting the everyday life of what she describes as far away, foreign and

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Film Festival. The film was a finalist for the 2012 European Parliament LUX Prize and featured at international film festivals in London, Toronto, Karlovy Vary, Palic, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, New Zealand, Sydney, Vienna, São Paulo, Sarajevo, Busan, Tallinn and Melbourne as well as the 2013 International Romani Film Festival in Rome.

exotic people – by which she refers to the Hungarian Roma – she argued that the film is about the Hungarian people more broadly and the social negligence that allowed such persecution to become a reality. According to Bori, *Just the Wind* is about a failing social system, one that has produced endemic poverty and deprivation and left citizens fighting for survival. These conditions have ultimately produced the segregation, hostility and violence that *Just the Wind* depicts. While Bori is indeed right to address the wider roots of social segregation, her review downplays the specific targeting of the Roma and the history of anti-Romani discourse in Hungary that extends well beyond the events in Tatárszentgyörgy and indeed beyond the post-communist era more broadly.[213] While Bori states that presenting the Romani as an average Hungarian family is a noble gesture, she ultimately questions the role of the artist in the current political climate, given the threat of the authoritarian Orbán government.

Bálint Kovács (2012) of *Kultúra* alternatively states that the first step towards social change is understanding and argues that *Just the Wind* is the perfect tool for initiating such understanding. Kovács describes *Just the Wind* as the most significant feature film produced in Hungary over the last few years, praising Fliegauf's objective, warts and all portrayal of both the Roma and non-Roma, in which he objectively highlights their good and bad characteristics with equal weight. Miklós Fáy (2012), writing for *Népszabadság*, while expressing his anxiety over the international success of another Hungarian film that presents Hungary unfavourably, acknowledges the honesty of Fliegauf's intentions. Fáy argues that, unlike newspapers and television journalism, cinema is able to emulate the fears and anxieties

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[213] Bori states that the poor and deprived, the lazy drunks and gypsies, the unemployed and spongers, the criminals and homeless are grouped together into a faceless mob of zombies, who shamelessly demand social benefits, who break up the fabric of society and take state subsidies away from people who more deserve them. Each and every "parasite" of the world - in some cases including every inactive person, pensioner and young rockers - are combined in the name "gypsy".

experienced by Roma through the tension sustained throughout the film and *Just the Wind* utilises this affective quality to profitable ends. However, Fáy ultimately argues that those people who should see the film almost certainly would not do so.[214]

4.4.2. The Blurred Lines of Docu-fiction.

Just the Wind begins with a title card that expressly states that while the film draws upon the events in Tatárszentgyörgy, the film itself is not a documentary nor is it based on publicly released information about actual events. Yet, despite emphasising the fictional nature of the narrative, the film utilises a documentary mode of representation that serves to complicate this opening declaration. One may classify *Just the Wind* as a work of docu-fiction; that is to say, a fictional film based upon reality. Documentary filmmaker and editor of the book *Why Docudrama?* (1999), Alan Rosenthal argues that such forms of reality-based stories can be significantly more impactful than the average documentary and can function as key influences on public opinion despite their, at times, questionable claims to reality.[215] British docudrama producer Leslie Woodhead (1999) similarly argues that docu-fiction provides an effective means of engaging with mass audiences on subject matter of cultural, social and/or historical relevance. According to Woodhead, the docu-fictional form allows filmmakers 'to articulate some important and difficult themes and ideas with a vividness and clarity that couldn't be achieved by any other means' (103).

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[214] *Just the Wind* would ultimately go on to attract a local audience of 9,780 viewers. However, given the film's international success the film achieved a European audience of 44,849 (Lumiere (c)).

[215] To illustrate this point, one may compare the exposure *Just the Wind* received in comparison to the documentary film *Judgment in Hungary*.

Through the film's hybrid and dialectical approach, Fliegauf draws upon the emotional power of orchestrated narrative cinema while simultaneously exploiting documentary cinema's direct engagement with the social world. Bill Nichols (2001) claims that documentaries make social realities visible, they provide new and alternative ways of interpreting and understanding the social world and are made with the intention of impacting upon society, instilling certain beliefs or ways of thinking. *Just the Wind* shares this desire for social change. The film endeavours to increase social awareness on the subject of Romani persecution, creating empathy for those living in poverty while simultaneously attempting to challenge existing stereotypes (both positive and negative). Yet, at the same time, *Just the Wind* draws upon narrative cinema practices in attempt to engage with the audience on an emotional, empathetic level. By drawing upon the affective qualities of narrative cinema, Fliegauf invites the audience to experience the fears felt by Romani families as they attempt to live their daily lives in a climate of near-constant hostility.

Just the Wind utilises what Bill Nichols (1991) describes as an observational mode of representation; a documentary practice in which filmmakers strive to present an unobtrusive slice of real life. Observational filmmaking aspires to invisibility by utilises an indirect form of address in the depiction of typicality, everyday life untarnished. Nichols states that unlike expository or interactive modes of documentary filmmaking, which are often centred upon problems and possible solutions, the observational approach instead centres upon 'the exhaustive depiction of the everyday' (39). This endeavour to depict contemporary social experiences has led many filmmakers to utilise observational modes of representation for ethnographic ends. As Nichols states:

> The observational mode of representation has enjoyed considerable use as an ethnographic tool, allowing filmmakers to observe the activities of others

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without resorting to the techniques of exposition that turn the sounds and images of others into accomplices in someone else's argument…. Observational filmmaking… stress[es] an empathetic, non-judgmental, participatory mode of observation that accentuates the authoritative position of traditional exposition. Observational cinema affords the viewer the opportunity to look in on and overhear something of the lived experience of others, to gain some sense of distinct rhythms of everyday life, to see the colors, shapes, and spatial relationships between among people and their possessions… (41/42).

Just the Wind utilises an observational mode of representation in order to exploit this ethnographic association. Nichols describes observational filmmaking as 'a particular vivid form of "present-tense" representation' (40) and Fliegauf utilises this mode of address as a means of legitimising his fictional representation, grounding it in real life. The film's observational style situates its subject matter in the here and now. While *Just the Wind* indeed presents a fictional account of the events that took place in Tatárszentgyörgy, the film nevertheless speaks to actual social realities and thus shares documentary's impetus to engage with the realities of contemporary life and instil new ways of thinking about topical social subject matter. The film's observational approach, therefore, bestows upon the film a sense of authenticity and factuality that encourages the audience to relate the issues raised within the film to the historical world in which they live. *Just the Wind*'s observational style draws upon documentary's 'discourse of sobriety' (Nichols 1991, 3), a mode of representation that places instruction and/or education over entertainment, and whose relationship with the social world is direct and immediate.

Just the Wind achieves this ethnographic status by emphasising typicality. Regarding observational documentary practices, Nichols states:

The sense of exhaustive (and telling) observation frequently comes not only from the ability of the filmmaker to record particularly revealing moments but also from the ability to include moments representative of lived time itself

rather than what we might call "story time" (time propelled by the cause/effect logic of classical narrative where an economy of carefully justified and well-motivated actions prevail). "Dead" or "empty" time unfolds where nothing of narrative significance occurs but where the rhythms of everyday life settle in and establish themselves (40).

Fliegauf makes a concerted effort to foreground lived time. From the morning in which his protagonists wake until the tragic events that conclude the film, Fliegauf accentuates the ordinary and routine. The day begins with Mari waking her children for school before leaving to go to work. We follow her during a typical working day, collecting litter as part of the public-works programme and later cleaning at the local school. We likewise follow Anna's daily routine, we see her get dressed and head out for school, she catches the school bus, attends classes, calls her father from the school's computer on her lunch break, brings a neighbour their prescription and takes their daughter to the lake where she washes her hair and makes her a daisy chain crown. These events are very typical and identifiable. Equally, while Rio does not attend school, we, for the most part, observe him partaking in ordinary childhood activities. Between scavenging items for his secret bunker, Rio plays a video game with friends, has a pillow fight and later plays with his friends in the lake.

Fliegauf also emphasises dead time through repeated scenes in which the three family members travel from one location to another. We see, for example, both Mari and Anna sat on buses travelling to and from work and school. Likewise, we see Rio walking along dirt paths kicking a tire along with him; this deliberate emphasis on empty time serves to situate the film in the real world as opposed to story world driven by cause and effect.

The film's observational style presents the family as ordinary people with conventional routines and habits. Fliegauf maintained that he wished to avoid the stereotypical images of

his Romani protagonists, stating: 'I tried not to portray Romanies drumming on jugs, playing violins, or dancing' (Fliegauf 2012). Indeed, the typical Romani tropes are conspicuous in their absence. At no point do we see gypsies singing and dancing; there are no passionate nomads, no belly dancers, no lovable drunkards, no fiery-tempered temptresses, nor mystical elderly women. Similarly, the film actively avoids typical Romani iconography. There are no horses, campfires, headscarves, excessive jewellery nor colourful gowns and dresses. Fliegauf refuses to exoticise his protagonists and instead presents them in a more realistic and socially authentic manner.[216]

The emphasis placed on both lived and dead time not only serves to legitimise the film as an ethnographic snapshot of Romani life, *Just the Wind* also utilises the mundane and everyday to suggest that racism and Romani persecution are ingrained within Hungarian daily life. Everyday racism is not a singular act in itself, but the accumulation of more implicit discriminatory occurrences over time. While *Just the Wind* undoubtedly explores the more extreme varieties of racism through the murders that conclude the film, Fliegauf also seeks to explore the more veiled and underlying forms of racism that pervade everyday life, the day-

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[216] Cinematic representations of the Roma have regularly raised questions of authenticity and as Dina Iordanova (2003b) argues, '[f]ilmmakers have routinely exploited the visual sumptuousness of Romani non-conventional lifestyles' (9). Kusturica's magical realist representations of Romani life and his baroque and eclectic aesthetics have tended to exoticise Romani life, while films such as *Gadjo dilo/Crazy Stranger* (Tony Gatlif, 1997) romanticise the Romani as a dysfunctional but liberated community free from the limits of social norms. It is telling then that *Just the Wind* more closely resembles documentary films such as *Örvény/Vortex* (John Oates and Csaba Szekeres, 2011) than the more playful and exotic rendering of Roma as seen in the films of Kusturica or Gatlif. Yet, at the same time, Iordanova highlights a penchant for documentary representations of the Roma, in attempting to address the more fantastical depictions of Romani life in narrative cinema, have tended to display a 'patronising attitude to their vulnerable Romani subjects' (9).

to-day violations of Roma dignity and humanity that are perceived as innocuous and unproblematic by other parties.[217]

An example of such everyday discrimination can be seen when Anna waits for the school bus. Despite standing at the designated bus stop, the bus bypasses Anna and comes to a halt further down the road, forcing Anna to chase after it as the driver incessantly honks his horn to hurry her. Shortly thereafter Anna arrives at school. She is early to class and so sits at her desk and practices her English, while taking the opportunity to charge her phone. Off-screen, we hear the diegetic sound of a door slamming and the custodian enters. He greets Anna, who responds accordingly, her eyes fixed to the ground throughout their exchange. The custodian informs Anna of a recent burglary at the school in which the perpetrators stole a computer monitor and several mouse pads. Anna simply responds by saying "really?" and the custodian reiterates himself, all the while looming over Anna accusingly. Anna repeats her earlier response and the pair stand in silence, the custodian stood menacingly close. He then tells Anna to fix her shirt and leaves.

Both the above examples provide evidence of everyday racism. The bus driver refuses to pull up for Anna because she is Romani and instead makes her run after the bus. In much the same way, the custodian questions Anna about the theft of the computer equipment simply

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[217] This form of everyday racism has had a long history in Hungary. David Crowe (1991), for example, explores Romani discrimination under communism. Crowe states that despite gypsy music playing an important role in local celebrations and despite Romani origins being considered an integral part of local history, Romani communities were habitually forced to live on the peripheries of villages and towns. They were also victims of discriminatory hiring policies and often obliged to work remedial jobs unwanted by the townsfolk. Furthermore, Hungarian slang with anti-Roma overtones were a common part of the local vernacular with phrases such as *cigéanyútra ment* meaning 'it has gone to Gypsy Alley' (121) being everyday parlance.

because of her ethnicity. According to Philomena Essed's definition of everyday racism in the *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism* (2008), such discrimination often operates when rules are applied differently to people of ethnicity. Indeed, in the case of the bus driver, one may assume that the white people on the bus did not receive the same treatment. Likewise, while the custodian never directly accusing Anna of the theft; he infers guilt through his tone and looming presence. Once again, one may pose the question, would the custodian be so reproachful to a white student?

Anna is not the only victim of such implicit, everyday racism; Mari and Rio also experience it in various manifestations. When Rio searches the home of the recently murdered Lakatos family, two police officers unexpectedly enter, forcing Rio to hide. From the sanctuary of a cupboard, Rio overhears their conversation. Discussing the recent murders, the more senior of the two officers states, "finally someone did something" before going on to discuss the "message" of the attacks. According to the officer, killing what he describes as "hardworking gypsies" rather than "parasites" "just confuses the message". He seems perfectly content with the idea of executing some of the more burdensome aspects of Roma society and even goes so far as to say "I know exactly which family they should hit. I could have shown them the houses. But no one asked me". Here we see an example of the kinds of institutional prejudice common in post-communist Hungary.[218]

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[218] János Zolnay (2012) argues that post-communist racial tension was exacerbated by the dynamics of local politics and their institutional and legal infrastructures. Zolnay explores how local municipal councils produced segregation through their ability to define the catchment area of schools, resulting in gypsy-only and white-only schools, the latter of which received better educational goods and services. István Szikinger (2000) discusses the Hungarian police's relationship with the Roma and the history of post-communist police misconduct. While acknowledging the social conditions under which many Roma live as a contributing factor to the decline of police-Roma relations, Szikinger also places blame at the feet of the Hungarian political and police authorities and the institutions that fail to safeguard

By employing an observational style, Fliegauf attempts to present an ethnographic snapshot of Romani life and the daily persecution both directly and indirectly experienced. However, the film strives to avoid generalisation. From the elderly women who politely greet Anna as she boards the bus to the leader of the public works programme who gives Mari a bag of clothes, the film endeavours to present a three-dimensional depiction of rural live in Hungary, complicating the white/Roma binary. Likewise, the film's representation of Roma is equally complex and multifaceted. Fliegauf avoids sanctifying the Roma; Rio, for example does not attend school nor does he have any moral objection towards raiding his now deceased neighbour's home for supplies. Equally, Anna witnesses an attack and potential rape when two boys barge into the girls changing room, but does nothing; keeping her eyes fixed to the ground as she leaves the changing room. The film further complicates the representation of the Roma through ancillary characters. We see, for example, a drug-addicted couple living in filth and an aggressive group of men loitering outside the local kocsma. A member of this group, a large and vulgar man harasses Mari as she walks home from work, suggesting that she fellate him, blocking her path and grabbing her arms. A passer-by looks over and the group immediately accost him for his interference. Once the on-looker reacts to this provocation, the group immediately turn defensive saying that the passer-by wants to fight them "because they are Gypsies". Thus, the film strives to present a non-judgemental representation of rural Hungary, one that seeks not to glorify the Roma but instead present a complex, three-dimensional slice of life.

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the Roma from persecution. He argues that local authorities rarely remove discriminatory officers from positions of power, recruitment policies are vague and imbalanced, and the Prosecution Service and the Courts fail to adequately combat police misconduct.

4.4.3. The Affective Power of the Cinema.

Just the Wind does not only rely on documentary tropes in its presentation of social cinema, Fleigauf also seeks to engage with his audience on an emotional level, creating empathy for his Romani protagonists by drawing upon the affective potential of cinema. Film scholar, Tarja Laine (2011) suggests that cinematic spectatorship is a corporal experience made up of both affective appraisals and emotional experiences. That is to say, 'the pre-reflective bodily mechanism that underlies all emotion and that gives pre-semantic meaning to information that originates from our bodily system' and 'the semantic account of the affective appraisal that can be narrated and remembered' (1-2). Laine uses the umbrella term cinematic emotions to denote these mutually inclusive phenomenological states, describing such emotions as the 'strategic and operational processes *within* the film, which can inform us about the "salient techniques"… that evoke bodily affectivity and give semantic meaning to the cinematic experience' (author's italics) (4). Laine distinguishes cinematic emotions from those induced by character identification and traditional forms of empathetic engagement, advocating what she describes as an 'aesthetic engagement… that always precedes but never guarantees identification, allegiance, sympathy, or empathy' (5). Eugenie Brinkema (2014) congruously argues that the affectivity of cinema lies in form and proposes that cinematic affect be treated 'as structures that work through formal means, as consisting in their formal dimensions (as line, light, color, rhythm, and so on) of passionate structures' (37). Thus, through *Just the Wind*'s formal configuration, the film directly engages with its audience on an emotional level, instilling a sense of claustrophobia and apprehension that mirrors that experienced by *Just the Wind*'s Romani protagonists.

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The film instils tension through its narrative structure. *Just the Wind* begin with a statement that offers the audience some contextualisation, imparting where and when the murders took place and giving details on the nature of the attacks, even going so far as to mentioning the number of gunshots fired and, significantly, the number of families that died as a result. However, this statement does not necessarily situate the film's fabula at any specific point in the timeline of events; we do not know whether the film begins after the sixth murder or somewhere in between. This temporal ambiguity produces an immediate sense of unease given the ambiguity surrounding the family's safety. It is only in a later scene in which the two police officers search the Lakatos' home that the audience get a firm sense of temporality. During their conversation, one of the officer says, "It's inconceivable: snuffing out four families" he is corrected by his more senior partner who says "five". This information firmly places the narrative within the timeline of events, we know another family is yet to be murdered and this knowledge produces a deep sense of foreboding.

Furthermore, by utilising a single day narrative, beginning when the family first wake, the film conjures a sense of inevitability as day rolls into night, generating increasing tension over the course of the day. The single-day narrative places the spectator on an irreversible course towards what seems like a fated catastrophe of which the protagonists are unaware. The journey from day to night thus becomes symbolic of the journey towards their inescapable death and as the day advances, the tension rises.

Just the Wind's cinematography also contributes to the film's unsettling ambience. The camera, for the most part, remains proximate to either Mari, Anna or Rio, predominantly framing them in close-up or medium close-up, from a position usually behind them. Such framing results in the characters dominating the frame, positioning background details to the

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very edges of the frame. The photography has a shallow depth of field, often resulting in these background details being out of focus and indistinct. Compounding the ambiguity of these background details is the fact that the camera is in almost constant motion, wobbling and rocking with Lovasi's handheld cinematography. These techniques culminate to create an oppressive and claustrophobic atmosphere. The audience's view is restricted; details in the periphery are vague and mysterious, and passing villagers, presented as blurred figures, all become potential threats.

The film also creates a sense of jeopardy through the repeated travelling shot. Fliegauf (2012) stated that he was interested to find out what happens when a Romani person is alone and utilises scenes of dead or empty time as a means of emphasising his protagonists' vulnerability. In such scenes, the camera remains close to the characters, yet, to varying degrees, elements of the background remain visible. These travelling shots typically emphasise the wild nature of the surrounding woodlands that confine and, at times, engulf the characters. The film's dense and unkempt rural mise-en-scène adds to the sense of disquiet established by the cinematography. These scenes make us question who might be lurking in the undergrowth and beyond the trees.

Vulnerability is further emphasised through performance. Mari and, most notably, Anna exhibit a near-constant anxiety. They both persistently look to the ground as they walk, not inviting attention and seldom making eye contact with people. Anna's closed body language is particularly visible when she is alone waiting for the school bus. She shifts her feet nervously and rubs her arms, suggesting that she feels exposed and unprotected. She folds her arms across her torso and tucks her chin into her chest in a manner that insinuates feelings of vulnerability and defencelessness, her body physically contracting in an attempt to make

herself smaller and less conspicuous. Such body language evokes a sense of unease within the audience, we are able to discern that the characters feel threatened, whether from the daily persecution of everyday racism or from the more immediate threat of the recent murders, and as such we empathetically engage with them.

The culmination of these affective formal techniques is to induce a sense of tension that mirrors that experienced by the film's Romani protagonists, allowing the audience to not only observe the daily discrimination they endure – as enabled by the film's observational style – but also affectively experience the anxiety that this everyday discrimination produces. *Just the Wind* ultimately strives to do more than merely document the persecution endured by the Hungarian Roma, the film endeavours to provide a phenomenological experience that will bestow upon the spectator an experiential wisdom that offers a potential means of identification and understanding. The audience are confronted, albeit artificially, with the fear and anxiety that many Hungarian Roma face on a daily basis and it is through this experiential connectivity that *Just the Wind* seeks to incite empathy and, in turn, dialogue and proaction.

4.5. Conclusion.

Over the course of this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how the rural functions as a site of social and political scrutiny, a cinematic space through which Hungarian filmmakers may expose and analyse the upshots of political mythmaking in post-communist Hungary. The three films analysed in the chapter seek to confront audiences with the multifarious ways in which political myths have shaped contemporary discourse, whether directly, as in *Just the Wind*, or through the use of more complex symbolic language, as is the case in *Father's Acre*

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and *Delta*. What unites these three films is an endeavour to address the rise of nationalist discourse in contemporary Hungary and highlight the role played by political mythology in facilitating and nurturing such discourse.

Father's Acre utilises the rural as means of visually echoing the lack of dialogue between the father and his son. Nagy employs a highly minimalist style to accentuate the kin's communication breakdown, exploiting the vast, barren landscapes and vacuous open spaces of the rural landscape – which are further accentuated by the film's 2.35:1 aspect ratio, slow, roaming cinematography and sparse narrative – to symbolically allude to the emotional void between father and son, and their failure to engage with the issues of the past. Minimalism, as I have argued, also operates as a method of Brechtian estrangement, inviting audiences to interpret wider social meaning into the events presented. *Father's Acre* representation of a boy repeating his father's crimes owing to an absence of dialogue can therefore be read as a statement on resurfacing nationalism in contemporary Hungary, a nationalism built upon a similar lack of open discourse and a favouring of more mythopoeic and socially gratifying historical narratives.

Delta, the second film examined in this chapter, is similarly minimalistic in style but, unlike *Father's Acre*, utilises minimalism as a means of drawing upon the emotional power of the film's rural landscape. As argued, Mundruzcó presents a complex allegory of Hungary's post-communist reconnection with national history through a story of incestuous siblings building a new home for themselves on the Danube Delta. The film intently foregrounds its, at once, paradisiacal and haunting rural setting, alluding to both the utopian hopes of transition and the bigotry and hostility produced by Hungary's disjointed reconnection with its past, a reconnection built heavily upon resurrected historical myths and fallacies.

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Where the two previous films address the consequence of post-communist political myths through intricate symbolic language, *Just the Wind* instead engages directly with the social upshots of post-communist political mythmaking; presenting a fictional account of actual murders that took place in Hungary three years earlier. Fliegauf utilises the rural ethnographically, employing an observational style in order to highlight the poverty of Romani society and comment upon the everyday racism experienced therein. Yet, at the same time, the rural also functions as an affective space in which Fliegauf strives to elicit empathy for his protagonists. In order to achieve these twin goals, Fliegauf utilises a minimalist approach that encapsulates the lived reality of the film's protagonists by de-centring narrative progression and instead emphasising dead time. These same moments of quietude simultaneously imbue the film with a sense of escalating unease, mirroring the fear and anxiety experienced by his Romani protagonists as they attempt to live their daily lives.

Challenging essentialist notions of slow cinema, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that, when viewed with applicable socio-political contextualisation, slow cinema aesthetics can become imbued with specifically localised meaning. Through the de-centring of narrative in favour of more reflective and affective modes of cinematic storytelling, *Father's Acre, Delta* and *Just the Wind* engage with the of consequences of political myths in post-communist Hungarian society. Utilising minimalist modes of narration and by emphasising prolonged temporality, the three films connect with issues relevant to the contemporary milieu. Whether focusing on the consequences of myth's immobilising of honest historical dialogue, exploring the role that mythopoeic forms of history play in engendering xenophobia and intolerance or examining the societal segregation and scapegoats produced by political myths, the three films seek to hold the mirror up to Hungarian society and encourage introspection, discussion

and change.

Yet, while the three films may all employ slow cinema aesthetics, they utilise them in different and, some may argue, conflicting ways. *Father's Acre* and *Delta* utilise "slow" techniques as a means of creating a sense of Brechtian estrangement, thus encouraging audiences to read political intent into their respective narratives. *Just the Wind*, alternatively takes a more observational approach to its subject matter, one that situates the film in the discourse of cinematic realism. A discrepancy thus emerges between these modernist and realist approaches. Modernist discourse has historically asserted that realism serves as a platform for the dissemination of dominant ideologies. Modernist theorists such as Jean-Louis Comolli and Paul Narboni ([1969] 1971), Peter Wollen (1972) and Colin MacCabe (1974) argue that realist cinema presents an illusionistic image of reality, one imbued with the values and beliefs of the bourgeoisie. The political modernists proclaimed that counter ideologies could be articulated through formal subversion, asserting that by exposing and dismantling the deceptive and mythopoeic realities presented in classical realist cinema, such films could challenge the bourgeois ideologies that underlie them.

However, it would be an oversimplification to describe *Just the Wind* as a classical realist text. The film's radical continuity and expressive minimalism position the film as what Ivone Marguiles (2003) describes as a work of oppositional realism. Challenging the illusion-reality dichotomy that has characterised modernist discourse, Marguiles, building upon Frederic Jameson's terminology, expands the discourse of cinematic realism beyond questions of verisimilitude and the simple equation of realism with dominant ideologies. Instead, she argues that films can exhibit at once 'the self-reflectivity of modernist art and the epistemological retrieval of a marginal reality' (11). Oppositional realism, Marguiles argues,

broadens the discourse on cinematic realism whereby 'the equation of realism and the politics of identity is soon disqualified by a much richer and more complex practice' (12). *Just the Wind*, while adopting what one may consider an epistemological approach to its subject matter, also, as I have argued, engages in formalist aesthetic practices more commonly associated with modernism. Through representation that at once appropriates hegemonic language, while presenting it with perverse, self-referential excess, *Just the Wind*, like *Delta* and *Father's Acre*, positions itself as a counter narrative through which it addresses minority issues. Thus, as my analysis has demonstrated, *Father's Acre, Delta* and *Just the Wind*, while utilising what may initially be considered contradictory styles, can be said to share a common desire to engage with the social and political upshots of post-communist political mythmaking.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion.

Over the course of this thesis, I have sought to demonstrate how the rural functions as a site of mythoclastic counter narrative in post-communist Hungarian cinema. This thesis has dealt with a variety of cinematic texts, underlining the diverse ways in which filmmakers have utilised the rural as not only a site of opposition but also as a fundamental tool of social critique. By considering their specific engagement with their assorted rural settings, I have illustrated how these films engage with post-communist life and challenge the political myths that have come to prominence within contemporary Hungarian society.

At the beginning of this thesis, I segmented my research question into several key areas of intent. First, I sought to update the Western scholarship on Hungarian cinema and provide an academic platform for the post-communist generation of Hungarian filmmakers who, at the time of writing, have received little scholarly attention in the West. Indeed, despite the burgeoning international reputations of new generation filmmakers such as Pálfi, Hajdu, Mundruczó and Fliegauf, Hungary remains a small national cinema on the fringes of Western academia. Given this fact, this thesis has sought to spotlight a national cinema that, for many in the West, does not exceed beyond the work of Béla Tarr.

However, my motivations lay beyond simply updating the scholarship. More precisely, I sought to challenge the ways in which international audiences consume Hungarian films and how they subsequently assess and understand them. Brian Burns (1996) described Hungary as 'a small country not evidently in the mainstream of Western culture' (202), a claim that remains valid. While the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised the end of the political divide between East and West, a cultural divide has continued to exist. Western economic and political influence has produced to a unidirectional flow of cultural influence and,

consequently, Western audiences largely remain ignorant of Eastern European culture and the context under which Eastern European cultural products are made.

Exacerbating this lack of cultural knowledge are contemporary practices in global art cinema. The institutions of art cinema characteristically champion universality. From the film festival to the international critic, an assumption exists that cinema possesses a cross-cultural translatability, which, as Galt and Schoonover (2010) maintain, has often served as a corporate marketing technique through which art house cinema has defined itself. Such is the pervasiveness of universality in art cinema institutions that the filmmakers themselves are compelled to promote universal readings lest they alienate potential audiences. Festival film screenings often receive little to no contextualisation and, as a result, audiences resort to familiar ways of inferring meaning, those built upon the established discourse of art and/or auteur cinema (see Nichols 1994). Western audiences chiefly encounter Hungarian films through art cinema institutions such as the international film festival and the international trade press, and consequently view these films through the lens of universalism. While this is not, in and of itself, a detrimental practice and can provide useful insight, what remains lacking from this model is specific cultural knowledge that can enrich an audience's and/or critics' understanding of the film in question.

This thesis has sought to address this need for contextual analysis, utilising a small national cinema framework to position the films under analysis within a specific national, cultural and/or social context. As my analysis has demonstrated, however, such a framework does not position the nation in isolation but instead provides a means of examining national manifestations of, and responses to, global issues. I have explored the ways in which filmmakers engage with Hungary's political and economic integration with the West, and the

political myths that have accompanied these changes. Likewise, I observed how the conditions of post-communism have impacted upon Hungary's relationship with national history, exploring how filmmakers have countered therapeutic and mythopoeic forms of historical memory that have risen out of the disruptive and social fragmentary nature of Hungary's Western transition. I have also scrutinised the ways in which filmmakers explore the social and political upshots of post-communist political myths and the role myths play in articulating Hungary's disaffection with global politics. In doing so, I have sought to demonstrate a continued legacy of social and political engagement in post-communist Hungarian cinema.

Congruously, I have not viewed Hungarian cinema in a vacuum. The films examined in this study exhibit an array of styles and narrative techniques that are neither original, in that pre-dating examples can be found throughout world cinema, nor expressly Hungarian. Yet, while the cinematic techniques employed may not necessarily originate in Hungary and are not, in and of themselves, Hungarian, the manner and intent of their applications renders them as such. Indeed, as Teshome H. Gabriel (1982) states, '[s]tyle is only meaningful *in the context of its use* – in how it acts on culture and helps illuminate the ideology within it' (author's italics) (41). Accordingly, my analysis has drawn upon a variety of international film scholarship and theory. From magical realism to Brechtian estrangement, Third and post-colonial discourse, European modernism, affect and phenomenology, I have sought to complement and advance the study of Hungarian cinema by employing a wealth of world cinema ideas and principles.

My second goal was to advance the rural as a site of political and social intrigue in contemporary Hungarian cinema studies. The rural has remained relatively untouched in the

academic discourse of Hungarian cinema, especially during the post-communist years. Yet, despite this fact, filmmakers have repeatedly utilised the rural as a space through which to wrestle with the multifarious issues of contemporary society. This thesis has explored how the rural operates as a site of counter narrative in which filmmakers provide commentary on the post-communist experience and expose and confront the political myths of post-communist society. It is my hope that this thesis has demonstrated how the rural serves as a multidimensional site of national and transnational debate, a space in which issues of home and homeland, history and remembrance, tradition and modernity are played out.

As this study has shown, the Hungarian rurality serves as a ploysemous space through which filmmakers dissect and analyse contemporary society. As demonstrated, Rudolf and Kapitány, Hajdu and Mátyássy all utilised the rural as a means of foregrounding some of the less well-documented aspects of Hungary's return to the West, providing an alternative perspective of transition from that of Western transitologists, which has largely judged the success of Hungary's transition in terms of private market integration. Instead, the three films examined in the chapter "Challenging the Myths of the West" complicate the narrative of Hungary's Western integration, utilising the rural as a tool of critique. I argued that *Glass Tiger* utilises the rural to comment upon the intermediatory state of post-communist society. This sense of cultural in-betweenness is not only evident in the film's in-between setting but also in the Glass Tiger café itself, with its American exterior and communist working practices. *Tamara*, alternatively, transforms the rural setting into an allegorical fairy tale world used to explore the changing nature of inter-personal relationships in post-communist society. The film's idiosyncratic rural setting forms a complex allegory of communism, which Hajdu proceeds to unsettle and disrupt with the introduction of the hip and contemporary Tamara, a symbol figure of attitudinal changes that accompanied the capitalist

transition. Finally, *Lost Times* utilises the rural setting to explore issues of post-communist post-coloniality. By focusing on the hardships, lack of opportunity and lawlessness of rural life, Mátyássy highlights the uneven nature of transition and transition's specific effects on rural life.

I have also demonstrated how the rural serves as a site of scrutiny through which filmmakers analyse and critique contemporary Hungarian memory politics. Through their respective representations of the rural, I have demonstrated how Gárdos, Pálfi and Janisch comment upon historical memorialisation in contemporary Hungary, highlighting a need to challenge dominant historical perceptions, therapeutic forms of historical memory and historical amnesias and self-deceptions. In the chapter "Challenging the Myths of Memory", I argued that *The Porcelain Doll* draws upon the rural's association with folklore as a means of advocating counter-narratives that subvert dominant modes of historical remembrance. Gárdos historicises the three Ervin Lázár folktales as a means of reframing history through the subversive language of magical realism. In my analysis of *Hukkle*, I argued that by initially presenting an Arcadian image of the rural only to subsequently deconstruct this utopian vision, Pálfi allegorically encouraging his audience to look beyond the rose-tinted myths of history in order to see the more troublesome realities that lie beneath. In my examination of *After the Day Before,* I argued that the film's fragmented rural setting, non-linear narrative and ambiguous focalisation all serve as symbolic devices through which Janisch addresses the dynamics of memory in post-communist Hungary and the subsequent distortions and amnesias that have emerged as a result.

Finally, I demonstrated how the rural serves as a site through which filmmakers explore the impact of political myths on contemporary social discourse. The three films examined in the

chapter "The Consequences of Post-Communist Political Myths" explore the potential catalysts of rising Hungarian nationalism while highlighting the effects of political mythmaking on those marginalised by society. My analysis of *Father's Acre* demonstrated how the rural functions as a minimalist device through which the film estranges its audiences, encouraging them to read wider social meaning into the lack of dialogue between father and son. *Delta* congruously strives to distance its audience through minimalism, constructing an allegorical exploration of the bigotry produced by Hungary's disjointed reconnection with the national history. Mundruczó draws upon the implicit threat of the rural landscape as a means of alluding to the increasing intolerance of post-communist society. Finally, I argued that *Just the Wind* presents the rural ethnographically, as a lived environment through which the film recreates actual social happenings. Yet, concurrently, the film exploits the affective power of cinema, compelling the audience to experience the fear and apprehension endured by the film's Romani protagonists, a fear produced by political myths advocating intolerance and hatred.

It is my hope that this thesis has established the rural as a multi-dimensional site of interest and significance, a site through which to better understand how post-communist Hungarian filmmakers make sense of their contemporary social milieu. The rural, being an all-encompassing term that incorporates a wide variety of non-urban locations, offers an enlightening framework through which to understand post-communist society and the issues of post-communist life. As stated, the rural has hitherto been overlooked in the discourse on Hungarian cinema but, as I have argued throughout this thesis, cinematic representation of the rural provides fruitful subject matter. The diverse ways in which filmmakers have approached the rural testifies to the complexity of rural representation in post-communist cinema and its significance as a tool of social critique.

Finally, I sought to develop the discourse linking cinema and sociology. While this work is by no means the first to explore cinema's sociological capabilities, either within the context of Hungarian cinema or cinema more broadly, what my analysis has demonstrated is that cinema's sociological function exceeds film's ability to reflect the social world. Through a combination of close textual analysis and social contextualisation, it is possible to discern how filmmakers implant intricate social commentary into ostensibly unconnected subject matter with the aim of inciting dialogue on issues of topical national concern. As this study has shown, post-communist Hungarian filmmakers continue to engage with contemporary society but do so through encoded cinematic language. This complex mode of representation at once expresses the entropic nature of the post-modern world lacking in fixed meaning, articulates the post-communist generation's ambiguous relationship with Hungary's past and present, and serves as a way of satisfying global art cinema's need for universal legibility.

While debates regarding tradition and modernisation in Hungarian cinema have been present since the early years of transition, the infrastructural changes of 2011 and establishment of the MNF reinvigorated such discourse, leaving many to ponder whether the legacy of social engagement would continue in the climate of Orbán authoritarianism and under a government appointed film body. Currently, the signs appear promising. Despite a rise in the number of genre films funded by the MNF, socially conscious cinema appears to have endured. This is evident MNF-funded films such as *A nagy füzet/The Notebook* (János Szász, 2013), *Fehér isten/White God* (Kornél Mundruzcó, 2014), *Veszettek/Home Guard* (Krisztina Goda, 2015), *Saul fia/Son of Saul* (László Nemes, 2015), *Liliom ösvény/Lily Lane* (Bence Fliegauf, 2016) and *Jupiter holdja/Jupiter's Moon* (Kornél Mundruzcó, 2017), films that continue to engage with Hungary's past and present. Thus, while the legacy of art-oriented, socially conscious

cinema initially appeared to be in jeopardy, it seems, and indeed, it is hoped, that the traditions of local engagement will prevail and continue to define Hungarian cinema for generations to come.

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Aglaya (Krisztina Deák, Hai Hui Entertainment, Inforg Stúdió, Opus Film, 2012)

Agyagba öntött forma/Forms Moulded in Clay (Áron Mátyássy, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, 2001)

Ajánda ez a nap/A Priceless Day (Péter Gothár, Budapest Filmstúdió, Mafilm, 1979)

Az ajtó/The Door (István Szabó, Film Art, Intuit Pictures, 2012)

Apaföld/Father's Acre (Viktor Oszkár Nagy, Eurofilm Stúdió, 2009)

Argo (Attila Árpa, Legend Films International, 2004)

Az áldozat/The Victim (György Dobray, Mafilm, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1979)

Állítsátok meg Terézanyut!/Stop Mom Theresa! (Péter Bergendy, Unió Film, 2004)

Árnyék a havon/Shadow on the Snow (Atilla Janisch, Budapest Filmstúdió, 1991)

Bánk Bán (Csaba Káel, Ezüsthajó, 2001)

Bástyasétány hetvannégy/Singing on the Treadmill (Gyula Gazdag, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Mafilm, 1974)

A berni követ/The Ambassador to Bern (Atilla Szász, Film Positive Productions, 2014)

Beszélö fejek/Talking Heads (Benedek Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, 2001)

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Coming Out (Dénes Orosz, Megafilm, 2013)

Csak a szél/Just the Wind (Bence Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, M&M Film, The Post Republic, Paprika Film, 2012)

Csak szex és más semmi/Just Sex and Nothing Else (Krisztina Goda, Megafilm, 2005)

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Cséplő Gyuri/Gyuri (Pál Schiffer, Balázs Béla Stúdió, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1978)

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Csocsó, avagy Éljen május elseje!/May Day Mayhem (Róbert Koltai, Cinema Film, 2001)

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Dalolva szép az élet/Singing Makes Life Beautiful (Márton Keleti, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1950)

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Delta (Kornél Mundruczó, Proton Cinema, Essential Filmproduktion, Filmpartners, ZDF/Arte, 2008)

Dögkeselyű/The Vulture (Ferenc András, Dialóg Filmstúdió, 1982)

Drága besúgott barátaim/Dear Betrayed Friend (Sára Cserhalmi, KMH Film, I'm Film, 2012)

Egy bolond százat csinál/One Fool Makes Many (Bence Gyöngyössy, Európa 2000, 2006)

Egy erkölcsös éjszaka/A Very Moral Night (Karoly Makk, Dialóg Filmstúdió, Hungarofilm, 1977)

Egymásra nézve/Another Way (Károly Makk, Dialóg Filmstúdió, Meridian Film, 1982)

Egy szoknya, egy nadrág/One Skirt and a Pair of Trousers (Bence Gyöngyössy, Európa 2000, TV2, 2006)

Elégia/Elegy (Zoltán Huszárik, Balázs Béla Stúdió, 1965)

Az első fecskék/The First Swallows (Frigyes Bán, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1952)

Emberek a havason/People of the Mountains (István Szőts, Hunnia Filmgyár, 1942)

Embriók/Embryos (Pál Zolnay, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Társulás Filmstúdió, 1985)

Ernelláék Farkaséknál/It's Not the Time of My Life (Szabolcs Hajdu, Filmworks, FocusFox Stúdió, 2016)

Európa Expressz/Europa Express (Csaba Horváth, NBG Entertainment, 1999)

Égi bárány/Agnus Dei (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1970)

Életjel/Fourteen Lives Saved (Zoltán Fábri, Hunnia Filmgyár, 1954)

Ének a búzamezökröl/Song of the Cornfields (István Szőts, Magyar Központi Híradó Filmosztály, 1947)

Az én XX sszázadom/My Twentieth Century (Ildikó Enyedi, Budapest Filmstúdió Vállalat, Freihändler Filmproduktion, 1989)

Fehér isten/White God (Kornél Mundruzcó, Proton Cinema, Pola Pandora Filmproduktion, The Chimney Pot, Filmpartners, 2014)

Fehér tenyér/White Palms (Szabolcs Hajdu, Filmpartners, Katapult Film, 2006)

Fej vagy írás?/Heads or Tails? (Andor Legyel, TV2, Analog Artists, 2005)

Fekete vonat/Black Train (Pál Schiffer, Balázs Béla Stúdió, 1970)

Felsöbb parancs/Superior Orders (Viktor Oszkár Nagy and András Petrik, Campfilm, 2013)

Felszabadult föld/Liberated Land (Frigyes Bán, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1950)

Fényes szelek/The Confrontation (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1969)

Final Cut: Hölgyeim es Uraim/Final Cut: Ladies and Gentlemen (György Pálfi, HvD Productions, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, T.T. Filmműhely Kft, 2012)

Fotográfia/Photography (Pál Zolnay, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1972)

Friss levegő/Fresh Air (Ágnes Kocsis, KMH Film, 2006)

Gyerekgyilkosságok/Child Murders (Ildikó Szabó, Hétföi Műhely, 1993)

Haggyállógva Vászka/Letgohang Vaska: A Tale from the Labour Camp (Péter Gothár, Magic Média, 1996)

Hasutasok/Railroad Junkies (András Szőke, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 2006)

Határvonal/Border Line (Benedek Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, 1999)

Hivatal/Bureau (Viktor Oszkár Nagy, Campfilm, 2015)

A Hídember/The Bridgeman (Géza Bereményi, FilmArt, Magyar Televízió, 2002)

Holt vidék/Dead Landscape (István Gaal, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió IV, 1971)

Hol volt, hol nem volt/Hungarian Fairy Tale (Gyula Gazdag, Mafilm, Objektív Filmstúdió, 1987)

Hortobágy/Life on the Hortobagy (Georg Höllering, Höllering Film, Hunnia Filmgyár, 1936)

Hosszú alkony/Long Twilight (Attila Janisch, Budapest Filmstúdió, Eurofilm Stúdió, Magyar Televízió Fiatal Müvészek Stúdiója, 1997)

Hotel Magnezit (Béla Tarr, Balázs Béla Stúdió, 1978)

Hukkle (György Pálfi, Mokép, 2002)

Hurok/Loop (Isti Madarász, Café Film, 2016)

Húsz óra/Twenty Hours (Zoltán Fábri, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1965)

Hypnos/Hypnosis (Benedek Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, 2001)

Idegen föld/Foreign Land (István Kovács, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, Filmfabriq, Sysplex, 2014)

I Love Budapest (Ágnes Incze, Filmplus, Duna Televízió, 2001)

Így jöttem/My Way Home (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió IV, 1965)

Ítélet Magyarországon/Judgment in Hungary (Eszter Hajdú, Miradouro Media, Perfect Shot Films, 2013)

Johanna (Kornél Mundruczó, Proton Cinema, 2005)

Jött egy busz…/A Bus Came… (Árpád Schilling, Ferenc Török, György Pálfi, Viktor Bodó, Kornél Mundruczó, Nextreme Film, Magma Társaság, 2003)

Jupiter holdja/Jupiter's Moon (Kornél Mundruzcó, Proton Cinema, 2017)

K... Film a prostituáltakról - Rákósi tér/K... A Film about Prostitutes - Rákósi Square (György Dobray, Helikon Film, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1988)

Kalandorok/Adventurers (Béla Paczolay, Filmpartners, Unió Film, Filmpartners, 2008)

Kameleon/Chameleon (Krisztina Goda, Megafilm, 2008)

Katalin Varga (Peter Strickland, Libra Film, Ross Sanders Production International, 2009)

Kárhozat/Damnation (Béla Tarr, Magyar Hirdető, Magyar Filmintézet, Magyar Televízió, Mokép, 1988)

Két világ közt/Caught Between Two Worlds (Viktor Oszkár Nagy, Campfilm, 2011)

Kilenc hónap/Nine Months (Márta Mészáros, Hungarofilm, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1976)

Kis apokrif no. 1/Little Apocrypha (Kornél Mundruzcó, Proton Cinema, Inforg Stúdió, M.A.K, 2003)

Kis apokrif no. 2/Little Apocrypha No. 2 (Kornél Mundruzcó, Proton Cinema, Mokép, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, 2004)

A kis Valentinó/Little Valentino (András Jeles, Hunnia Filmgyár, Mafilm, 1979)

Kojot/Coyote (Márk Kostyál, Megafilm, 2017)

Kontroll (Antal Nimród, Café Film, Bonfire, 2003)

Körhinta/Merry-Go-Round (Zoltán Fábri, Mafilm, Mokép, 1955)

Kút/Well (Attila Gigor, KMH Film, 2016)

Kútfejek/Pumpheads (Iván Kapitány, Filmservice, 2006)

Lányok/Girls (Anna Faur, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 2007)

Liliomfi (Károly Makk, Mafilm, 1955)

Liliom ösvény/Lily Lane (Bence Fliegauf, Fraktál Film, 2016)

Liza, a rókatündér/Liza, the Fox-Fairy (Károly Ujj Mészáros, FilmTeam, FocusFox Stúdió, Origo Film Group, Filmkameratene AS, 2015)

Lúdas Matyi/Mattie the Goose Boy (Kálmán Nadasdy, Mafilm, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1950)

Macerás ügyek/Sticky Matters (Szabolcs Hajdu, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 2001)

Macskafogó 2: A sátán macskája/Cat City 2: Satan's Cat (Béla Ternovsky, Szerep Produkciós Iroda, 2007)

Madárszabadíti, felhö, szél/Bird Saviour, Clouds and Wind (István Szaladják, FilmTeam, Inforg Stúdió, 2006)

Made in Hungaria (Gergely Fonyó, Next Station Productions, 2009)

Magasiskola/The Falcons (István Gaal, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1970)

Magyarok/Hungarians (Zoltán Fábri, Capital, Clircio, Dialóg Filmstúdió, Mafilm, 1978)

Magyarország 2011/Hungary 2011 (Benedek Fliegauf, Péter Forgács, Miklós Jancsó, András Jeles, Ágnes Kocsis, Márta Mészáros, György Pálfi, András Salamon, Simon Szabó and Ferenc Török, T.T. Filmműhely Kft, 2012)

Magyar rapszódia/Hungarian Rhapsody (Miklós Jancsó, Dialóg és Objektív Stúdió, 1979)

Magyar vándor/Hungarian Vagabond (Gábor Herendi, Skyfilm, 2004)

A martfüi rém/Strangled (Árpád Sopsits, FocusFox Stúdió, 2016)

A másik part/The Other Side (Attila Janisch, Színház és Filmmüvészeti főiskola, 1984)

Másnap/After the Day Before (Attila Janisch, Eurofilm Stúdió, 2004)

Mázli/Fluke (Tamás Keményffy, Extreme Film, Script House, Studio Mitte, Sunday Films, 2008)

Megáll as idő/Time Stands Still (Péter Gothár, Budapest Filmstúdió, 1981)

Még kér a nép/Red Psalm (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1972)

A miniszter félrelép/Out of Order (Róbert Koltai and András Kern, InterCom, 1997)

Moszkva tér/Moscow Square (Ferenc Török, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Színház és Filmmüvészeti főiskola, 2001)

A nagy füzet/The Notebook (János Szász, Intuit Pictures, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Amour Fou Filmproduktion, Dolce Vita Films, 2013)

Napló Gyermekeimnek/Diary for my Children (Márta Mészáros, Budapest Filmstúdió, Mafilm, 1984)

Napló szerelmeimnek/Diary for my Loves (Márta Mészáros, Budapest Filmstúdió, Mafilm, Zespol Filmowy, 1987)

Nejem, nõm, csajom/Our Women (Péter Szajka, Filmpartners, M&M Film, 2012)

Nekem lámpást adott kezembe az Úr, Pesten/Lord's Lantern in Budapest (Miklós Jancsó, 3J+1, Kreativ Média Műhely, 1999)

Nem vagyok a barátod/I'm Not Your Friend (György Pálfi, Eurofilm Stúdió, Filmax, Katapult Film, 2009)

Nincsen nekem vágyam semmi/This I Wish and Nothing More (Kornél Mundruczó, Com-Art Film, Laurinfilm, Pioneer Productions Duna Műhely, 2000)

A nyomozó/The Investigator (Attila Gigor, Anagram, Fastnet Films, Inforg Stúdió, KMH Film, 2008)

Nyóckér!/The District (Áron Gauder, Lichthof Productions, 2005)

Oda az igazság/So Much for Justice (Miklós Jancsó, Mythberg Films, Epo-Film Produktionsgesellschaft, Ozumi Films, 2010)

Off Hollywood (Szabolcs Hajdu, Laguna Film, 2007)

Olyan mint otthon/Just Like at Home (Márta Mészáros, Dialóg Filmstúdió, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1978)

Ó*pium: Egy elmebeteg nö naplója/Opium: Diary of a Madwoman* (János Szász, EuroArts Entertainment, H2O Motion Pictures, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 2007)

Öreg fa/Old Tree (Viktor Oszkár Nagy and Tamás Dobos, Simó Sándor Alapítvány, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, 2005)

Örökbefogadás/Adoption (Márta Mészáros, Hungarofilm, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1975)

Örvény/Vortex (John Oates and Csaba Szekeres, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Open University, 2011)

Öszi almanach/Almanac of Fall (Béla Tarr, Társulás Filmstúdió, Magyar Filmgyártó Vallalat, 1984)

Panelkapcsolat/The Prefab People (Béla Tarr, Balázs Béla Stúdió, Mafilm, Magyar Televízió Fiatal Müvészek Stúdiója, Társulás Filmstúdió, 1982)

Papírkutyák/Paper Dogs (Bence Gyöngyössy, Europa 2000, Macropus Film, TV2, 2009)

Papírrepülök/Paper Planes (Simon Szabó, Cameofilm, 2009)

Pál Andrienn (Ágnes Kocsis, KMH Film, 2010)

A piacere: tetszés szerint/As You Like It (Zoltán Huszárik, Balázs Béla Stúdió, 1976)

Poligamy (Dénes Orosz, Skyfilm, 2009)

A porcelánbaba/The Porcelain Doll (Péter Gárdos, Tivoli Film Produkcio, Duna Televízió, 2005)

Rengeteg/Forest (Inforg Stúdió, M&M Film, 2003)

Rohatt dolog/Damned Thing (Áron Mátyássy, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, 2002)

Rokonok/Relatives (Félix Máriássy, Magyar Filmgyártó Állami Vállalat, 1954)

Sacra coruna/Sacred Crown (Gábor Koltay, Korona Film, Magyar Televízió, Nemzeti Kulturális Örökség Minisztériuma, 2001)

Saul fia/Son of Saul (László Nemes, Laokoon Filmgroup, 2015)

Sátántangó/Satantango (Béla Tarr, Mozgókép Innovációs Társulás és Alapítány, Von Vietinghoff Filmproduktion, Vega Film, Magyar Televízió, Télévision Suisse-Romande, 1994)

Simon magus/Simon, the Magician (Ildikó Enyedi, Alhena Films, Artcam International Budapest Filmstúdió, Eurofilm Stúdió, Három Nyúl Stúdió, Magyar Televízió, 1999)

Simon Menyhért születése/The Birth of Simon Menyhért (Zoltán Várkonyi, Mafilm, Magyar Filmgyártó Állami Vállalat, 1954)

Sirokko/Winter Wind (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, Marquise, 1969)

A skorpió megeszi az ikreket reggelire/Scorpio Eats Gemini for Breakfast (Péter Gárdos, Globe Film, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1992)

Sodrásban/Current (István Gaal, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1964)

Sorstalanság/Fateless (Lajos Koltai, Magyar Televizió, Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk Magyar Mozgókép Közalapítvány, Magic Media, EuroArts Entertainment, Renegade Films, 2005)

Sose halunk meg/We Never Die (Róbert Koltai, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Magic Media, 1993)

S.O.S. szerelem!/S.O.S Love (Tamás Sas, Next Station Productions, World Film Entertainment, 2007)

Sunshine (István Szabó, Alliance Atlantis Communications, Channel Four Films, Dor Film Produktionsgesellschaft, Eurimges, ISL Films, Intercom, Kinowelt Filmproduktion, The Movie Network, Serendipity Point Films, Starhaus Filmproduktion, TV2, Téléfilm Canada, 1999)

Szabad lélegzet/Riddance (Márta Mészáros, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1973)

Szabadesés/Free Fall (György Pálfi, KMH Film, Popfilm, Sciapode, Filmax, 2014)

Szabadság szerelem/Children of Glory (Krisztina Goda, C2, Cinergi, Flashback Productions, 2006)

Szabóné/Anna Szabó (Félix Máriássy, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1949)

Szamárköhögés/Whooping Cough (Péter Gárdos, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Mafilm, 1987)

Szegénylegények/The Round-Up (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió IV, 1966)

Szelíd teremtés: A Frankenstein-terv/Tender Son: The Frankenstein Project (Kornél Mundruczó, Proton Cinema, Filmpartners, Essential Filmproduktion, KGP, Laokoon Filmgroup, 2010)

Szendedély/Passion (György Féher, Budapest Filmstúdió, Magyar Televizió, 1998)

Szerelmem, Elektra/Electra, My Love (Miklós Jancsó, Mafilm, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1974)

Szerencsés Dániel/Daniel Take the Train (Pál Sándor, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1983)

Szezon/Eastern Sugar (Ferenc Török, Új Budapest Filmstúdió, 2004)

Szép napok/Pleasant Days (Kornél Mundruczó, Laurinfilm, 2002)

Sziget a szárazföldön/The Lady from Constantinople (Judit Elek, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió IV, 1969)

Szinbád/Sinbad (Zoltán Huszárik, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1971)

Szíven szúrt ország/A Country Stabbed in the Heart (Tamás Babos, János Vecsemyés, Mano Csillag, György Kivés, Megafilm, 2009)

Sztálin menyasszonya/Stalin's Bride (Péter Bacsó, Focusfilm, Factory Production, Mafilm, 1991)

Talpalatnyi föld/The Soil Under Your Feet (Frigyes Bán, Hungarian Filmproduction, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1948)

Tamara (Szabolcs Hajdu, Objectiv Filmstúdió, RTL Klub Televízió, 2004)

A tanú/The Witness (Péter Bacsó, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió I, 1969)

Taxidermia (György Pálfi, Amour Fou Filmproduktion, Eurofilm Stúdió, Katapult Film, La Cinéfacture, Memento Films, 2006)

A távollét hercege/The Prince of Absence (Tamás Tolmár, Dialóg Filmstúdió, 1991)

Tejút: Ambient Film/Milky Way: Ambient Film (Benedek Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, M&M Film, Duna Műhely, Intuit Pictures, 2007)

Teketória/Flare and Flicker (Gyula Maár, Hunnia Filmstúdió, 1976)

Teljes gőzzel!/Full Steam Ahead (Félix Máriássy, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1951)

A temetetlen halott/The Unburied Man (Márta Mészáros, Ars Media, Cameofilm, Telewizja Polska, 2004)

A torinói ló/The Turin Horse (Béla Tarr, T.T. Filmműhely Kft, Vega Film, Zero Fiction Film, Movie Partners in Motion, 2011)

Torzók/Abandoned (Árpád Sopsits, Budapest Filmstúdió, Duna Televízió, 2001)

Tréfa/Prank (Péter Gárdos, Magyar Mozgókép Alapítvány, Magyar Televízió, Tivoli Film Produkcio, 2009)

Tutajosok/Memories of a River (Judit Elek, Budapest Játékfilmstúdió, Feeling Productions, La Sept, Mokep, 1990)

Tüskevár/Thorn Castle (György Balogh, FocusFox Stúdió Fény Film, 2012)

Uramisten/The Philadelphia Attraction (Péter Gárdos, Hunnia Filmstúdió, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió III, 1984)

Az utolsó blues/The Last Blues (Péter Gárdos, Telewizja Polska, 2002)

Utolsó idők/Lost Times (Áron Mátyássy, Erste Bank, Magyar Televízió, Unió Film, 2009)

Utolsó vacsora az Arabs Szürkénél/Last Supper at the Arabian Gray Horse (Miklós Jancsó, Neuropa Film, 2001)

Üvegtigris/Glass Tiger (Iván Kapitány and Péter Rudolf, Filmpartners, 2001)

Üvegtigris 2/Glass Tiger 2 (Péter Rudolf, Filmpartners, 2006)

Üvegtigris 3/Glass Tiger 3 (Péter Rudolf, Filmpartners, 2010)

Valami Amerika/A Kind of America (Gábor Herendi, Budapest Film, Skyfilm, 2002)

Valami Amerika 2/A Kind of America 2 (Gábor Herendi, Made in Film-Land, Skyfilm, 2008)

Valahol Európában/Somewhere in Europe (Géza Radványi, MAFIRT, 1947)

Van élet a halál elõtt?/Is There Life Before Death? (Benedek Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, 2001)

Van valami furcsa és megmagyarázhatatlan/For Some Inexplicable Reason (Gábor Reisz, Proton Cinema, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, 2014)

Veszettek/Home Guard (Krisztina Goda, Megafilm, 2015)

Vészerződés/Blood Brothers (György Dobray, Dialóg Filmstúdió, 1982)

Vihar/The Storm (Zoltán Fábri, Hungarian Filmproduction, Mafilm, Magyar Filmgyártó Nemzeti Vállalat, 1952)

Viharsarok/Land of Storms (Ádam Császi, Proton Cinema, I'm Film, Café Film, Unafilm, 2014)

Világszám! Dodo és Naftalin/Colossal Sensation (Róbert Koltai, Filmsziget, 2004)

Visszaesők/Forbidden Relations (Zsolt Kézdi-Kovács, Objektív Filmstúdió, 1982)

A vizsga/The Test (Viktor Oszkár Nagy, Színház és Filmmüvészeti Egyetem, Nemzeti Kultúrális Alap, 2006)

A vizsga/The Exam (Péter Bergendy, Unió Film, Magyar Televízió, 2011)

Víkend/Weekend (Áron Mátyássy, Budapest Film Produkció, KMH Film, 2015)

Werckmeister harmóniák/Werckmeister Harmonies (Béla Tarr, Goëss Film, Von Vietinghoff Filmproduktion, 13 Productions, 2000)

Witman fiúk/The Witman Boys (János Szász, 47ème Parallèle, Budapest Filmstúdió, MTM Kommunikáció, Mafilm, Magyar Televízió, Studio Filmowe Zebra, 1997)

Womb (Benedek Fliegauf, Inforg Stúdió, M&M Film, Razor Film Production, ASAP Films, Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, ARTE Deutschland, 2010)

Woyzeck (János Szász, Magic Média, 1994)

Zöldár/Green Years (István Gaal, Mafilm Játékfilmstúdió IV, 1965)

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Beugró/Stand-In (Daniél Erdélyi, Iván Kapitány, Film Services Ktf, 2007-2012)

Éretlenek/Immature (Péter Gárdos, István Kolos and Miklós Szurdi, Magyar Televízió, Royal Video Stúdió, 1995-1996)

Patika/Pharmacy (Róbert Koltai, Magic Media, 1994)

Süni és barátai/Hedgehog and Friends (András Osvát, Balázs Naksa, Mátyás Szakály, Aladin Filmstúdió, Magyar Televízió Müvelödési Föszerkesztöség, 1995)

Szomszédok/Neighbours (Ádám Horváth, János Bujtás, István Bujtor, Mihály Vadas, Magyar Televízió Müvelödési Föszerkesztöség, 1987-1999)

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L'albero degli zoccoli/The Tree of the Wooden Clogs (Ermanno Olmi, RAI Radiotelevisione Italiana, Itali-Noleggio Cinematografico, 1978)

L'année dernière à Marienbad/Last Year at Marienbad (Alain Resnais, Cocinor, Terra Film, Cormoran Films, Precitel, Como Films, Argos Films, Les Films Tamara, Cinétel, Silver Films, Cineriz, 1961)

Arizona Dream (Emir Kusturica, Constellation, Union Générale Cinématographique, Hachette Premiere, 1993)

L'atalante (Jean Vigo, Gaumont, 1934)

Basic Instinct (Paul Verhoeven, Carolco Pictures, Le Studio Canal+, 1992)

La bête humaine/The Human Beast (Jean Renoir, Paris Film, 1938)

Der blaue Engel/The Blue Angel (Joseph von Sternberg, Universum Film AG, UFA, 1930)

Blow-Up (Michelangelo Antonioni, MGM, Bridge Films, 1966)

Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari/The Cabinet of Dr Caligari (Robert Wiene, Decla-Bioscop AG, 1920)

Casino Royale (Martin Campbell, Eon Productions, Stillking Films, Babelsberg Film, 2006)

Chelovek s kino-apparatom/Man with a Movie Camera (Dziga Vertov, VUFKU, 1929)

Crna mačka, beli mačor/Black Cat, White Cat (Emir Kusturica, CiBy 2000, Pandora Filmproduktion, Komuna, France 2 Cinéma, 1998)

Delicatessen (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, Union Générale Cinématographique, Hachette Premiere, Constellation, Victories Productions, 1991)

Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol/Black God, White Devil (Glauber Rocha, Copacabana Filmes, Luiz Augusto Mendes Produções Cinematográficas, 1964)

Die Hard: With a Vengeance (John McTiernan, Cinergi Pictures, Twentieth Century Fox, 1995)

Dom za vešanje/Time of the Gypsies (Emir Kusturica, Forum Sarajevo, Ljubavny Film, Lowndes Productions Limited, PLB Film, Smart Egg Pictures, Television of Sarajevo, 1988)

Don't Look Back (D.A. Pennebaker, Leacock-Pennebaker, 1967)

Easy Rider (Dennis Hopper, Raybert Productions, Pando Company, 1969)

Evita (Alan Parker, Hollywood Pictures, Cinergi Pictures, Dirty Hands Productions, 1996)

Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain/Amélie (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen, France 3 Cinéma, Sofica Sofinergie 5, Canal+, MMC Independent, Tapioca Films, Union Générale Cinématographique, Victories Productions, 2001)

Le fils du requin/The Son of the Shark (Agnès Merlet, Compagnie des Images, Gaumont, France 3 Cinéma, Première Heure, Saga Film, RTL-TVi, In Visible Films, 1993)

First Blood (Ted Kotcheff, Anabasis N.V., Elcajo Productions, 1982)

Flashdance (Adrian Lyne, Paramount Pictures, Polyram Pictures, Don Simpson/Jerry Bruckheimer Films, 1983)

Gadjo dilo/Crazy Stranger (Tony Gatlif, Princes Films, Canal+, Centre National de la Cinématographie, 1997)

Gummo (Harmony Korine, Fine Line Features, Independent Pictures, 1997)

La hora de los hornos/The Hour of the Furnaces (Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, Grupo Cine Liberacion, Solanas Productions, 1968)

L'immortelle/The Immortal One (Alain Robbe-Grillet, Cocinor, Como Films, Les Films Tamara, Dino de Laurentiis Cinematografica, Hamle, 1963)

Jacob's Ladder (Adrian Lyne, Carolco Pictures, 1990)

Jakob the Liar (Peter Kassovitz, Columbia Pictures, Blue Wolf Productions, Kasso Inc., Global Entertainment Productions GmbH & Co. Film KG, 1999)

Jazz Dance (Roger Tilton, Visual Transcriptions Inc, 1954)

Lost and Found (Nadejda Koseva, Christian Mungiu, Jasmila Žbanić, Kornél Mundruczó, Stefan Arsenijevic, Mait Laas, Icon Film, Art Fest, Art and Popcorn, Deblokada, Mobra Films, Nukufilm, Proton Cinema, 2005)

M (Fritz Lang, Nero-Film AG, 1931)

Meshes of the Afternoon (Maya Deren and Alexander Hamid, 1943)

Microcosmos: Le peuple de l'herbe/Microcosmos: The Grass People (Claude Nuridsany and Marie Pérennau, Galatée Films, France 2 Cinéma, Canal+, Bac Films, Delta Images, Les Productions JMH, Urania Film, Télévision Suisse Romande, 1996)

Mouchette (Robert Bresson, Argos Film, Parc Film, 1967)

Narayama bushikō/The Ballad of Narayama (Shôhei Imamura, Toei Company, 1983)

O Dragão da Maldade contra o Santo Guerreiro/Antonio das Mortes (Glauber Rocha, Mapa Filmes, Claude Antoine Films, 1969)

Podzemlje/Underground (Emir Kusturica, CiBy 2000, 1995)

Primary (Robert Drew, Drew Associates, Time-Life Broadcast, 1960)

Le Quai des brumes/Port of Shadows (Marcel Carné, Ciné-Alliance, 1938)

Le Quattro Volte/The Four Times (Michelangelo Frammartino, Vivo Film, Essential Filmproduktion, Invisible Film and Ventura Film, 2010)

La Règle du jeu/The Rules of the Game (Jean Renoir, Nouvelles Éditions de Films, 1939)

Salesman (Albert Maysles and David Maysles, Maysles Films, 1966)

Showgirls (Paul Verhoeven, Carolco Pictures, Chargeurs, United Artists, Vegas Productions, 1995)

Sunrise (F.W. Murnau, Fox Film Corporation, 1927)

Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines (Jonathan Mostow, C-2 Picturesm Intermedia Films, IMF, Mostow/Lieberman Productions, Columbia Pictures, Warner Bros, 2003)

Total Recall (Paul Verhoeven, Carolco Pictures, 1990)

Trainspotting (Danny Boyle, Channel Four Films, Figment Films, The Noel Gay Motion Picture Company, 1996)

Trans-Europ-Express (Alain Robbe-Grillet, Como Films, 1967)

Vidas Secas/Barren Lives (Nelson Pereira dos Santos, Luiz Carlos Barreto Produções Cinematográficas, Sino Filmes, 1963)

Život je čudo/Life Is a Miracle (Emir Kusturica, Les Films Alain Sarde, Rasta Films, Studio Canal, 2004)