

ABSTRACTS

Janka Barkóczi: News in Past Tense: Memory Politics in Hungarian World News

The talking newsreel *Hungarian World News* (*Magyar Világhíradó*) produced by the Hungarian Film Bureau between 1931 and 1944 is one of the most important visual resources for the Horthy era. The news compilations, shown in theatres independently or as a mandatory screening before other shows, are not only reflections on current affairs, but also frequently used to thematise events in the historical past. News about national celebrations, anniversaries and commemorative events repeatedly reiterate which historical moments form the undisputable milestones of the nation's collective memory. Utilising the means of efficient and professional mass communication the show also integrates these events into the practice of social communication. What were the events and historical periods most frequently featured in these moving images? Did the focus of memory undergo any changes across the production seasons? What can content analysis tell us about their strategies of interpreting the past?

Barkóczi examines the corpus of moving image from the angle of the theory of ritual culture. Her premise is that, besides broadcasting information about current events, an equally important function of the *World News* was to communicate a value system, presented as stable and permanent, in order to forge a community out of the viewers. This function gains momentum in historic moments, which create a significant social demand for the strengthening or (re-)positioning of symbols. The medium of moving image is particularly predisposed for ritual perceptions and is thus able produce instant and informed responses.

János Berta: Reality at All Costs: Filmmakers' Epistemology and Attitudes in 1970s Hungarian Documentaries

At the turn of the 1960s, Hungarian documentaries underwent a significant paradigm shift, which had important implications for social historiography as well: documentary filmmakers turned towards documentaries with the purpose of the cognizance of (social) reality. The cinematic representation of individuals' life events and social phenomena was complemented with an explicit desire to apply sociological methodology to filmmaking. Due to this new approach, documentaries found their way into public discourse and, through presenting social problems, often assumed a critical stance towards the current political system.

According to the basic tenets of the sociological film programme, documentary filmmaking is an indispensable tool for truly understanding society.

Berta examines three case studies to find out how the methodology of sociological filmmaking considers certain phenomena documentary-worthy, how certain pieces of information became documentaries, and what these stories tell us about the period. First he examines Gyula Gazdag, who strives for social cognizance by investigating and tracking pieces of news with camera in hand and creates model documentaries by unpacking single incidents into social criticism. Pál Schiffer's gypsy-trilogy is examined to trace how the shock that his topic creates is transformed into awareness raising and cinematic analysis. Finally, he explores *There are changes* (*Vannak változások*) by the Gulyás brothers' who investigate political changes in the wake of a scandalous literary sociology, and attempt to reconstruct the social situation of a village out of local reminiscences and analytical discourse ten years after the events.

Tamás Bezsenyi – András Lénárt: “It Should be a Pleasure to be a Cop Here!”. Representation of Crime in Fiction Movies of the Kádár Era

The Hungarian films of the Kádár era depicted a world, where street robbery or theft were completely out of question, but if they happened, there was an international conspiracy involving high politics in the background. In the films of the Kádár era, sin and crime were almost by definition political acts, or were turned into one in the plot. Criminality as social dysfunction thus gained, according to our hypothesis, tendentious economic or political meaning in the movies. The ideological enemy construction can be traced through an analysis of the characters of the film, such as the elusive former fascist, the imperialist agent or the dubious defector, who all received important roles.

In our research, which is primarily based on thrillers, spy movies and war dramas, we collected the archetypes of criminals, whose characteristics changed from decade to decade. By the end of the era, the ideological division transformed into actions combatting international crime, and ordinary crimes gained importance on their own; parallelly, their political character changed completely. The system-critical comedies (like *Kojak in Budapest*) pointed out that there was no real domestic enemy, only dysfunctions of the socialist society. In the films of the Kádár era the use of political crime became a snake biting its own tail, where the viewer could laugh at the narrative's total lack of credibility, through the anti-state inspired interpretation.

Orsolya Böszörményi-Nagy: Film: Between Production and Reception: Interpretations of ‘Love’ by Károly Makk

Going beyond viewing film as a mere illustration for a historical period, the study reframes it as a historical source and interprets it as a cultural phenomenon and a socially conditioned cluster of events, which is not only born out of social practices but also has a societal impact at the same time. As opposed to the traditional aesthetic angle of film history, which interprets films as part of individual artistic vision, the present study emphasises the collective, pragmatic and technologically defined nature of the artistic process, which is also subject to various other incidental influences. Böszörményi-Nagy revisits Károly Makk 1970 film ‘Love’ to examine whether the plot takes place before or after the 1956 Revolution. This question has serious moral and political implications for the makers of the film, the censors who allowed its creation and screening, and the audience. The study argues that the ontology of a film is inherently tied to its meaning for the audience and the history thereof. This implies sidestepping the approach that views film production as background information for the aesthetic analysis of a piece of cinematic art. Instead films are observed as historical sources, an approach which necessitates the analysis of the complex, often arbitrary and fortuitous, process whereby the (virtual) film expressing directorial vision becomes an actual film in the theatres. This analysis places the film in the context of the power structures of the society at the time, which determine both the creative process and the perceptions of the end product.

Patrik Tamás Mravik: “Socialist Heroes Have Multiplied in our Films”: The Film-Making Process in Early 1960s Hungary through the Lens of the Debates of the Scriptwriters’ Council

The study examines the influence of cultural policy and ideological directives on the everyday practice of filmmaking in Hungary in the 1960s. The period between 1956 and 1962 was a transition phase in the history of Hungarian film. As part of the consolidation process after the 1956 Revolution, the establishment mollified some of the pressure on people shaping the cultural sphere. At the same time the cultural policy makers of the Kádár era retained their power to interfere with film production. One of the government-controlled bodies that discussed and evaluated the scripts of prospective films was the Scriptwriters’ Council (Dramaturgiai Tanács, DT). Mravik’s study analyses the minutes of DT debates to examine the individuals and their methods to manipulate proposed scripts to make them compatible with official cultural policy directives, and compares the arguments voiced at these debates with the final product, the film itself. As Mravik points out, scriptwriters and directors had greater room

to manoeuvre than in the 1950s: they were allowed to propose their ideas and cinematographic methods, which they could then pitch for the DT. Notably, whether the conflicting ideological directives or the scriptwriter's arguments prevailed in the debate was often determined which film studio was chosen as the venue for the meeting, the participants in the discussion, and serendipity—undoubtedly a major factor in the transitional, chaotic and unmanageable world of Hungarian film industry at the time.

András Murai: Recycled Footage: 1956 Footage in the Public Discourse of the Early Kádár Era

The study examines where and in what form 1956 footage was used and presented to the public in the first decade of the Kádár era. First, Murai focuses on the individuals who captured the events of the 1956 Revolution on film, tracing the history of the footage after the revolution. A significant amount of footage was taken abroad, the rest was forcefully confiscated and placed under the government's control. As dictated by the memory politics of the Kádár era, footage shot during the revolution was first used in political propaganda films. In 1957, the ideological tenets of the regime were formulated, in which the creation of the 'counter-revolution' interpretation played a central role. One of the key elements of the ensuing propaganda campaign was visual memory, especially reframing and re-interpreting footage shot in October and November 1956, the subject of Murai's enquiry. After the years of retaliation, from the beginning of the 1960s onwards, some of the footage is repurposed in feature films following the 'agreement' brokered between the establishment and the filmmakers. The role of these moving images in this context was to recreate the visually authentic setting of the era, at the same time they also contributed to a more nuanced representation of the revolution. 1956 footage was first featured in a motion picture in the 1963 film *Dialogue (Párbeszéd)* directed by János Herskó. The study devotes a detailed analysis to this film, especially the view of history it represents, the function of inserting archival footage into the film, and its reception in contemporary media.

Péter Óri – Levente Pakot: Household Structure in 19th Century Hungary. First Results from the Hungarian MOSAIC Sample

In the framework of the international MOSAIC project the authors have taken a sample for the historic Kingdom of Hungary consisting of more than 30,000 persons and 6,000 households. Sampling was based on territorial differences and

denominational distribution in order to assure (to the extent possible) economic and cultural multiplicity.

In the course of this analysis the authors tried to reveal the determinants of household structure. They pointed out that a large majority (around 70 per cent) of households was of simple structure, that is to say consisted of one single nuclear family. At the same time, the percentage of multiple-family households (about 14 per cent) was also considerable besides that of extended-family households (ten per cent). The higher frequency of more complex household forms could be linked to the sex and age of the household heads. Female heads' and older heads' higher chances of living together with married relatives was proved both by descriptive statistics and multivariate analysis. This result shows that household structure was a dynamic phenomenon which changed considerably over time. Socio-occupational status appears to be a decisive factor. First of all, landowner status was linked to a much higher frequency of more complex household forms, which can be explained by the higher labour force demand of farming compared to other professions. Multivariate analysis confirmed the marked regional variety concerning household structure, but altered the weight of one or another region somewhat, thereby revealing the role of composition effect. Denominational differences remained in the course of the multivariate analysis, but the odds ratios showed weak effects.

Considering the results with respect to the Hajnal model further conclusions can be drawn. First and foremost, strong spatial differences do not follow a West–East axis. Second, the decisive role of occupation and social position, the possible role of farming and land use, and subsequent and varied labour force demands of households (besides ethno-cultural features) can be all considered new evidence. This confirms the necessity of searching for alternative approaches to better understand the mechanisms and influencing factors of household formation.

Róbert Takács: *Western Film and its Audience from the Death of Stalin to Helsinki (1953–1975)*

From 1954 onwards, Hungarian audiences could see western-made films relatively often in the film theatres. By the early 1970s the original figure of thirty films per year doubled. From the beginning of the destalinization process onwards, centralised film import, controlled by the Film Import Committee of the Ministry of Culture, implemented an increasingly open policy. The ideological filter was not abandoned and 'progressive' western films exercising social criticism remained the preference, at the same time cultural policy was increasingly permissive about the right to entertainment and more and more films were shown purely for their entertainment value. From the 1960s onwards, the international film crisis spilled over from beyond the borders and it became clear that

Hungarian programming policy needed films made in the West to complement Hungarian 'superproductions' in their bid fill the emptying theatres with audience. The imported films predominantly came from countries with long-standing filmmaking traditions: Italy, France, Great Britain, the US and West Germany. Notably, film import was often much delayed: western films reached Hungarian audiences with a two-three-year lag. Contemporary cultural policy did not shirk from screening seminal but problematic works of art, quite the contrary; they strove to make the oeuvre of famous directors available, although these were mostly shown in an alternative network frequented by smaller audiences. The process of film import was transparent for the audience, and they often bombarded the decision-makers with their requests. While they mostly demanded more western film stars and commercial films in the cinemas, left-wing criticism was also formulated about the lack of quality and social message brought about by the more permissive policies. There were even a couple of instances when certain films had to be removed from the programme by public demand.