

Negotiating the Nation in Newer German Cinema

Sune Bechmann Pedersen

Films constitute a site for representation and contestation of national identity. The analysis of films thus offers an insight in the images that partake in the formation of historical consciousness in contemporary societies. In this paper I scrutinize the themes, narratives, and cinematographic details which shed light on the discursive struggles that have taken place in post-unification Germany. At the end of the 1990s, a „newer“ German cinema critically engaged with issues of identity and belonging in the unified Germany.

When the opportunity to unify the divided Germany appeared, it was swiftly seized. Just eleven hectic months after the Wall had crumbled the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) annexed the five states that constituted the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The unification brought a formal end to the Second World War and the perennial „German question“ was solved as Germany accepted its post-war borders and pledged itself to deep European integration. Hence 1990 was a time quivering with the anticipation of promising futures. Soon, however, the enthusiasm evaporated, replaced by disappointment. West German elites denigrated everything East German, from material culture to welfare institutions, which provoked resentment towards the unification in the Eastern parts of the now united country. The initial optimism changed to scepticism as differences were accentuated rather than effaced and the familiar East/West axis of social orientation, the infamous wall in the head, returned as the focal point in post-unification Germany.

This paper identifies three ways in which national identity has been queried in the cinema of post-unification Germany: defiance, reconciliation and dissolution. The most successful representative of the first category is *Sonnenallee* which pits East Germans against West Germans in strictly binary relations. Representative of the second category, *Good Bye Lenin!* pursues a reconciliatory agenda between East and West. Finally, *Schultze Gets the Blues* exemplifies the third category of post-national films which dissolve the question of East and West and further destabilize these focal points from below by foregrounding regional identities.

The paper concludes that the sweeping success of the reconciliatory approach to national identity testifies the transformation in contemporary discourse about East and West. In the most recent films that thematise life in post-unification Germany it plays a minor role

whether a character grew up in the GDR or the FRG. Furthermore, film makers express a GDR fatigue and note that films about the GDR are unlikely to find funding in contemporary Germany. In 2011, East and West may actually have grown together cinematically.

Youth, communism and the cinema – construction of the past in selected German,
Polish and Czech films produced after 1989

Marta Brzezińska

„Is it possible to discern a common basis to diverse films, such as the nostalgic visions of *Good bye Lenin!* by Wolfgang Becker (2003), *Sun Alley* by Leander Haußmann (1999) and Jacek Borcuch's *All That I Love* (2009), as well as clearing films like *The Lives of Others* by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck (2006) and *Pupendo* by Jan Hřebejk (2003)?”

Well, not exactly for that bunch of films, but generally I think that it's possible to indicate the similarities in cinematic constructions of the communist past and the time of transformation within the cinema from Central and Eastern Europe. I think, that we should focus on parallel structure of film protagonists who are young people (young adults, teenagers, their subcultures, including music as a symbolic factor) and the film plot (stories of experience, first love and friendship, first disappointments, which uses biographical elements and schematic cinematic structures associated with the remembering). Youth as a film hero of communist era and transformation process? Why not?

People who remember the time of their youth (and childhood), who tell the story which is set before the transformation or in the process are also characteristic literary figures can be found in literature after 1989/90 (for example books by Jana Hensel, Claudia Rusch, Thomas Brussig or various comic books by Marzena Sowa, Peter Sís, etc).

According to Jan and Aleida Assmann, texts of culture could be seen as storage of images for cultural memory, and “cultural memory transforms history into myth, remembered history”. In this storage we can find also cinematic images of the communist past and the period of transformation. Structures and narratives which are offered by filmmakers easily can be seen as figures of memory, symbolic stories use in the process of creating commemoration of the important events, that become the basis for national identity and myths. Everyday life stories of ordinary young people with iconic images of the fall of the Berlin Wall and GDR past in German cinema, year 1981 and Polish Solidarity movement in Polish cinema, year

1968 and seventies or eighties in Czech cinema work as carriers of meaning, a way to deal with burden of the past and memory. The memory which reconstructs the past and in the same time deals with the present and the future, so different for each society.

Films which I find useful to present the construction of heroes of transformation and the communist past are: "All That I Love" by Jacek Boruch and its German equivalent "Never Mind the Wall" (2001) by Connie Walter, "Beats of Freedom" by Leszek Gnoiński & Wojciech Słota, "OstPunk! Too much future" (2006) by Carsten Fiebeler & Michael Boehlke, "Here we come" (2006) by Nico Raschick, "Sun Alley", "Good bye, Lenin!", "Kleinruppin forever" (2004) and "Heroes like Us" (1999) based on Thomas Brussig's novel, "Pelišky" (1999) by Jan Hřebejk as well as Slovak film "Muzika" (2008) by Juraj Nvota.

Mass-media as a factor of national culture transformation

Tetyana Kuznyetsova

Under conditions of spreading globalization processes, many countries start to pay great attention to national self-consciousness, preservation of national and cultural identity. Succeeding in that may depend on mass-media activity, which plays a role of culture translator in informational society. That is a main instrument of delivering messages that influence social consciousness, state of public opinion in general. Mass-media broadcast national cultural values, its traditions, achievements, ideas.

Giving the information, mass-media form and develop abilities of its audience to esthetic perception and experiencing, to creation of esthetic values, tastes and ideals. Nevertheless modern mass-media broadcast cultural values through special "glasses", through which one thing can be seen and another can not. It is the "glasses", thanks to which people make their choices and percept chosen by mass-media facts. This, in its turn, greatly influence state of the culture itself, values of a modern information consumer, valuable priorities of social being.

Mass-media not only provide embracing of huge audiences in the information epoch, but offer to society a number of new valuable dominant, that can "root itself" in mass-consciousness, displace previous values of a recipient, socio-cultural / ethno-cultural groups or society in general.

Modern information space differs with active tendencies to replication of aggression in variety of forms of its revealing. It can cause a whole number of negative mental states: anxiety, helplessness, nostalgia, fear, hatred, contempt, rage, anger. That, in its turn, can increase recipients' aggression, reduce their sensibility to cruelty, to form not adequate image of social reality.

Especially brightly such tendencies are seen in Ukrainian informational space that is occupied with foreign linguistic, violent, pornographic, low "culture". It denationalizes children, adolescence, and youth. Media, as a rule, represent mass-culture. The most bright features of it are commercial success, popularity and entertainment, hedonism cult and consumption, schematic and stereotypic generalization, simplifying of all life phenomena, bad taste, sometimes inappropriate form and meaning.

Today mass-media orient information consumers firstly according to species of borrowed low culture. It receded into the back ground valuable dominants of society.

Modern Ukrainian media-space is characterized with obtrusive propaganda of corrupted ideas of national and cultural values, traditions of Ukraine. It is well seen at giving materials that make people reconceive, change their perception of ethic concepts, facts of the past. It is also vivid, when moral and mental values are replaced with phenomena of physical comfort, spread consumption.

In this situation the vital need is to fill up modern mediasphere with potent system of valuable dominants that is capable to consolidate society, to preserve its national and cultural identity. With this purpose, to our opinion, firstly is needed:

- to implement strategic program of forming and developing of national information space,
- to create conditions for broadcasting mental values not under strict control and at authorities order, but on the basis of interest of information consumers,
- to increase journalists' qualification level, who would be ready to professionally enlighten cultural phenomena.

The Image of Communism in Romanian Popular Culture. A Case Study on the *Libertatea* Newspaper

Manuela Marin

The passing of 21 years since the demise of communist regime in Romania determined contradictory references to this period in the recent history of the country. While in 2009 the argument of anti-communism helped a presidential candidate to win the elections, in 2010 two opinion polls, the last one published in December, mentioned that 60% of the Romanians considered Communism a good idea. This is just an example among many others that best describe the Romanians' altering perceptions on Communism and its significance in country's recent history. My paper will analyze this contradictory reference on a part of the Romanian population to Communism by employing a case study on a national newspaper, *Libertatea* (*TheLiberty*). This is among the first three most popular (tabloid type) newspapers in Romania. For a month and a half in 2010, *Libertatea* published on daily basis a series of articles under the title of "Romanians during the Golden Age" (the Golden Age being a common eulogistic label for designating Nicolae Ceausescu's leadership, the last Romanian communist leader). My investigation will consider not only the articles published by this newspaper but also readers' commentaries on the subject of the articles or on other readers' opinions concerning the main theme of the contributions, all of them published on the website of *Libertatea*.

The first part of the paper will identify the main thematical lines of the articles published by *Libertatea*. These subjects range from music, television, trademarks (related to cosmetics, cars, cigarettes, sweets), communist commercials, fashion, cartoons, money, food, children's games to short biographies of the Ceausescus, of some of his closer collaborators or specific policies of the former communist regimes (the forbidding of abortion, the compulsory wearing of uniforms in schools, patriotic works, etc.).

The second part of my paper will concentrate on readers' commentaries about different features of the Romanian communism described by the press articles. These comments trigger a comparison between the communist experience and contemporary realities. Consequently, my paper will focus on analyzing the content of this comparison which highlights both good and bad parts of the communist period as they are identified by *Libertatea* readers. A last point of interest of my paper will be to demonstrate how this black or white remembrance of communism is rather related to the contemporary realities faced by the readers than to the authenticity of living the communism.

Revolution on Wallpaper: Cultural Transformation of Post-Soviet Interior

Maria Pasholok

I am staying on the third floor of a *khrushovka*, a thirty year old apartment building in a muddy Moscow suburb. Constructed entirely of prefabricated concrete blocks, the exterior is a communist issue but the interior is a paradise of a vinyl parquet flooring and a full-sized wall mural featuring a birch forest permanently lit by the soft radiance of early fall. Moscow, it seems, is a city of interiors.

Tijana Vujisevic, *A Tour Through the Entrails of a City*, 2007

The Soviet Union was a closed country. Closed like a room: the country built *a wall* between Europe and itself and decorated it with an iron *curtain*, and even up to the present day the Soviet Union is often described as a single communal *apartment* by its citizens, as well as by journalists, artists and scholars (Brodsky 1987; Levrent'eva 2009; Boym 1994a,b; Slezkine 1994; Utekhin 2001).

The quintessentially delimited space of the interior thus has played a crucial role in the self-perception of Soviet culture after 1917, when many Russian intellectuals found themselves, for the first time, actually confined to the space of just one room by the policy of *uplotnenie*, yet also saw this limited personal space as a 'haven' in a generally hostile world, the room and the home became a key setting of imaginative self-exploration.

In 1989, however. the doors were open, and the wall was destroyed, the Soviet room went under another transformation: what traces of Soviet empire were left there on the walls of the rooms of ordinary people and artists? What memories emerged through the layers of old wallpaper? Was a room still a home, or an exile?

Questioning this, my paper views rooms, interiors and domestic spaces as a vital to our understanding of cultural and social transformations of 1989. It briefly traces the development and transformation of the room during the Soviet era through various public campaigns invoking domestic architecture, and through their artistic reflections in texts, films, and images of the period; and closely examines the link of the room with national identity and self-representation as the different social and cultural practices of post-socialist Russia emerged.

Methodologically, this paper is designed to trace the changes in post-Soviet interiors through the examination of different layers of wallpaper on a set of imaginary and real walls left from the great Soviet communal apartment thoughtfully decorated by an iron curtain for so many decades. The case studies include rooms from films, novels, and memoirs of the period, thus building an imaginative gallery of the post-Soviet interior life.

The new gay-face. Gay popular fiction after 1989

Paweł Rams

After 1989 there were a lot of important changes in a sphere of culture. The censorship has been abolished. But not everything has changed. In the sphere of morality people remained very conservative. At the beginning of the 21st century this part of social life was changing, but still very slowly. Culture was being changed in its every dimension.

After Poland became a member of the European Union, the sexual minorities start to demand their rights. First thing to do was to change the mental attitude of the majority. One of the most important things in this process was (and still is) the culture in general and popular fiction in particular. Between 2005 - 2010 on the Polish book market fiction about sexual relations between the same sex people started showing up. This subject was coming out in literature written by Polish writers and also in translated fictional literature.

In this essay I aim to see how gayness motive functions in popular fiction. I will take the most important and representative titles and examine them with regard to a few specific fields which are characteristic for this kind of literature.

1. How do these books place themselves on the field of popular fiction in general?
2. How does the semantic structure function in these books?
3. Is there something specific in this kind of popular fiction except homosexual motives?
4. How does the stereotype of the same sex relations work?
5. Who is actually the projected reader of these books? Do only gay people can read them?
6. What kind of relations come into being between the reader and the book?
7. What subversive potential does the popular literature have?
8. What is the relation between the Polish and the foreign gay novels?

My reflection will be anchored in new literary theories, as following: reader response, gender studies, gay studies, queer studies, ethical and political attitude to literature. My main aim will be to answer the question of relations between gay fiction and social stereotypes about gays - has anything changed thanks to this new kind of novel? Has the stereotype changed?

To resume I'll show the changes in social consciousness about sexual minorities in Poland not only on the cultural field, but in general.

Transformation and Its Ghostwriters:

A Comparative Analysis of Short Stories from Aleksandar Hemon's Anthology *Best European Fiction 2010*

Aleksandra Rychlicka

The process of European integration, which after the fall of Communism included Central and Eastern territories, has significantly influenced the status and perception of national cultures. In Aleksandar Hemon's anthology *Best European Fiction 2010* the stories of authors from Post-Soviet territories are no longer treated as 'other literatures', but as a part of new European literature. Placed in an alphabetical order, Hungary comes right after France, and Poland is situated between Norway and Portugal.

However, despite the disappearance of external divisions, the short stories by authors from Central and Eastern Europe remain noticeably different from the works of their Western colleagues. The shadow of the Communist past and the rapid transformations of the present produce a clash of realities that defines the literatures of Post-Soviet region. Although officially marked as European, the short stories by Central and Eastern European authors represent a particular approach to their homelands, assuming a position of cultural exoticism and attempting to explain to an external audience how it is to live 'here'.

The paper poses a question to what extent the writers creating in the times of transition are determined to become the annalists of that historical phase. Is the writing in the period of transformation doomed to become a cultural ghostwriting? The comparative case

study of short stories collected in Hemon's anthology allows exploring crucial for the region questions, namely who one writes for and what one represents when there is no longer an external demand to represent anything in particular. The paper investigates the notion of the cultural representation and its influence on the voice of the new generation of contemporary Central and Eastern European writers.

Russian and Soviet advertising posters in the 20th Century

Nina Sorokina

Advertising is closely related to the society way of life because of its significant role in the economy which reflects a high degree of competition. When we talk about posters advertising we are more likely to be linked to art as well as to cultural and artistic life. However, the Soviet posters advertising is often associated to government propaganda as an ideology instrument to such an extent that sometimes we even forget the existence of advertising prior to the 1917 Revolution. This latter has its own history and development pattern which takes its origin from the image Epinal, the "loubok" and even from domestic commercial signs. Nevertheless, this pre-revolution advertising sometimes adopted external artistic movements which indicates that it was connected to the rest of the world.

It seems clear that even if the legacy of this period's advertising is very rich, it became of real interest only after the breakup of the Soviet Union in the 1991 (I mean a wide public and not experts on art's history or graphic art's specialists). Why? May be this is due to the fact that the soviet government has used the advertising for ideological purposes. The slogan

“ “Soviet” means perfect!” is intended as “choice without having a real choice”. The soviet advertising posters are linked to political art and alters its perception by people as graphic art.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union people have had access to archives, collections, documents and they rediscovered the russian advertising as being different and more varied. The posters: russian and soviet become very popular. But is it only fashion? Or identity research?

Currently the globalization concerns the advertising posters too. What impact will this have on the development of advertising? I'll try to answer to these questions.

Ideological Clichés in Ukrainian Literary Criticism of the 1990s

Olena Synytska

Already in the second half of the 80s the thought about the priority of human values in art and about the limitations of communist view on the essence of creativity increasingly spread, articles with serious revaluation of literary phenomena appeared. However, the breakdown of ideological “social realism” took place only on the verge of the 80-90s. Thus, the 1990s in literary criticism can be defined as the transitive period as long as the whole society went through the transformation from the totalitarian model to democracy, from unified canon to the freedom of creativity and cultural polyphony. Consequently, the period before the new turn of centuries in Ukrainian literary studies is characterized by the complete rejection of previous Soviet approaches for analysing fiction. During the past twenty years Ukrainian literary scientists were mostly focused on investigating Ukrainian literature of modernism, unexpectedly and artificially interrupted by the Soviet regime. The necessity in fast analysis and reformulation of literary canon switched the attention from contemporary literature and its inner processes, though this period deserves special research attention. During the last decade of the XX century Ukrainian literary criticism experienced gradual purification from outdated critical concepts and need in the formation of new alternative ones.

The data for the proposed survey will be primarily collected from the periodicals of literary criticism, published in different regions of Ukraine in 1990s. Special attention will be paid to those journals, which have their roots in the Soviet times and were renamed after independence (*Vitchyzna*, *Dnipro*, *Dzvin*, *Berezil*, *Literaturna Ukraina*). The analysis of publications in these magazines is supposed to show not only superficial changes (renaming, reformatting, and alterations in editorial policy), but also slight inner discursive nuances. On the one hand, crucial social and political changes in the early 90s fundamentally affected the humanities (including literary criticism). But on the other hand, despite evident thematic switch, soviet clichés implicitly remained in critics’ style of argumentation. These rudimentary ideological clichés, which are stable and repeating connotative textual elements with the features of ideological load, can be singled out from linguistic expressions in series of critical articles. Thus, despite obvious changes in the Ukrainian literary criticism after

collapse of the Soviet regime (as censorship abandonment, return and revaluation of texts banned during the Soviet period, revision of value coordinates), the style and manner of Soviet rhetoric implicitly remained in critical articles. Primarily, ideological clichés in literary criticism are connected with the categories of values and quality. Hence, as the world-view changes are happening slower comparing to the thematic ones, the general approach to the text analysis by literary critics' remains overfilled with Soviet ideological clichés during the considerable part of the 1990s.

The proposed investigation about ideological clichés is the case study within the frames of author's PhD thesis "Epistemological Transformations in Ukrainian Literary Criticism at the End of 20th - Beginning of 21st Centuries".

Changing Direction: Post-Soviet Transformation of the Ukrainian Children's Book

Anna Tretiak

Along with the collapse of the Soviet Union its ideological frameworks became irrelevant for newly arisen independent states. The need in such frameworks in Ukraine was strong; however, there was no common idea about what one should believe in or rely on. Politics, historians, artists proposed different social and cultural perspectives for Ukrainians. The change of the global paradigm led to the transformations in every single aspect of the culture, including literature. While 'adult's' books were reflecting experience of being a post-Soviet human, children's authors faced another kind of challenge. Due to the specific needs of its reader, this kind of literature more than any other asks for a concrete frameworks and moral guidelines. Therefore, children's books of independent Ukraine can be investigated as a reflection of post-Soviet social changes.

The proposed study analyses transformations that were made to the children's text due to the changes of the social frameworks. This survey compares two editions of the famous Ukrainian juvenile book, trilogy *Two toreadors from Vasukovka Village* by Vsevolod Nestaiko. All three parts of this book were published in 1973 for the first time, and the new edition made by author and the publisher Ivan Malkovych appeared in the 2006. The comparative analysis of these two versions points at the unsystematic nature of the changes, as only several realities of Soviet times were replaced with Ukrainian counterparts. Thought

there were no major transformations made to the plot, the cultural perspective changed a lot turning or even returning to the historical Ukrainian and religious values. Changes appeared on such levels as language and style, history and geography, attitude towards religion. Altogether these little editions create a new cultural framework for the reader, which supports the principles of the independent Ukraine.

Post-Soviet Transformations in Contemporary Kyiv: At the Intersection Point of Public and Cultural Spaces

Anna Tretiak, Olena Synytska

Announced presentation aims to show visual post-Soviet transformations in different kinds of the present-day Kyiv's public space. Using the concept of traces/proto-traces by J.Derrida and theoretical approach, which allows analyzing visual objects, it is possible to detach three types of interaction between signs of the Soviet and independent Ukrainian cultures. *Rejection* is an active type aiming at substituting irrelevant symbols with appropriate counterparts. In contrast, *disregard* is a passive type of response, when traces of the past are left without changes. The third type is *adaptation*; it means replacement of an ideological connotation if the sign cannot be changed, but it is too important to be disregarded.

Visual material for the presentation includes discourse analysis of Kyiv metro stations, which play an important role in everyday city routes; exclusion and appearance of politically marked/neutral monuments; and, finally, modification of industrial objects (factories & warehouses) into commercial and business centers.