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CONTENT

Introduction

CINEMA OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION: FIRST INSIGHT

The articles in this special edition of *Culture Crossroads* devoted to film have been inspired by reports presented at two international academic conferences held in Riga in 2016 organised by two institutions functioning under auspices of Latvian Academy of Culture: Riga Film Museum and Scientific Research Centre. The aim of the conference *Baltic Sea Region Documentary Cinema: Social and Aesthetic Phenomena* was to examine the documentary film of the Baltic Sea Countries (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Russia, and Germany), to study the main trends and authors, looking at specific narrative and formal manifestations of the films. While the conference *Film Director Jānis Streičs: His Films and the Signs of the Time* was devoted to the classic of Latvian film Jānis Streičs, marking the director's 80th birthday. The series of articles whose authors are experienced scholars and young researchers embraces a wide scope of themes which is a significant step in bringing into the focus of attention the regional documentary and feature films in the first special edition of *Culture Crossroads* dedicated entirely to cinema.

The seminal period for the Baltic States documentary film is 1960s and the documentary filmmakers' generation that started working at this time. The authors were notable by their innovative use of film language, more personal themes that re-echoed the trends of the new cinema in the world. Inga Pērkone in her article *Documentary Filmmakers' Anti-Communist Manifesto. The Film "Kuldīga Frescoes" (1966)* analyses the documentary film by one of the most significant film directors of *Riga style* Aivars Freimanis (1936) made in the form of collage about the Latvian town of Kuldīga. The author advances a thesis that the film by Freimanis which was received by critics without any enthusiasm, was made by giving up verbalization that had been introduced in all the strata of soviet life, including documentary films which had been dominated by word since 1930s. "Kuldīga Frescoes" is based on contingency, relying on means of expression that emerge in the interaction between the image and the sound-track, thus working against the conventional approach.

Cameraman Ivars Seleckis (on the left) and director Aivars Freimanis (behind the camera) during production of "Kuldīga Frescoes" (1966). Photograph by Aivars Čakste, from the collection of LAC Riga Film Museum

The link between documentary film with feature films is the focus of several articles included in the volume, and they examine works by specific authors who use dramatized sequences in their documentaries or, quite on the contrary, insert documentary footage capturing reality in their feature films. The worker's image created by the Polish film director Wojciech Wiszniewski (1946–1981) in 1970s is the central theme of the article by Eva Mazierska. Providing several film examples, Mazierska interprets them in the ideological and aesthetic context of those times.

The Latvian film director Laila Pakalniņa (1962), one of the most recognizable Latvian film-makers internationally, is equally active in documentary and feature

film genre. Pakalniņa's documentary "Hi, Rasma" (2015) about the ship that sank in the 1940s by the coasts of Estonia has been chosen as the film through the prism of which Klara Bruveris examines the poetics of the director's film language and its correlation with John Grierson's ideas. Marija Weste analyses documentary film inserts in several Latvian fiction films. By applying the notion of "connectivity" the author examines how inclusion of documentary footage dramatizes feature films not only adding additional visual value but becoming meaningfully significant in the overall imagery of the film. The selected films have been made in the 1960s–1970s, and they have been made by different authors (Mihail Bogin, Rolands Kalniņš and Aivars Freimanis).

Parallel to professional documentary film, a strong amateur film-making movement existed in Latvia since the end of the 1950s. Amateur filmmakers could experiment more freely with themes and means of expression in films, compared to those who worked within the professional film production system. Inese Strupule examines films made in 1970s–1980s by three authors – Uldis Lapiņš (1925–2011), Zigurds Vidiņš (1943) and Ingvars Leitis (1943). The films that are about everyday events in family, travelling and public events offer not only a captivating material for the analysis of their artistic means of expression but also provide perception of political and public events captured from amateur film perspective.

Newsreels that capture everyday events from a certain ideological position have always played an essential role under conditions of different powers and in various territories. Audrius Dambrauskas has researched film situation in Lithuania during the authoritarian regime of Anatanas Smetona (1926–1940), under whose leadership the film censorship law and law on newsreels were adopted (providing that a newsreel is to be screened before every film at the cinema), but a few years later he ruled that the rights of newsreel production are to be delegated to one single person (Jurgis Linartas). Dambrauskas analyses what image of the state these newsreels created, how they were perceived and what is the general evaluation of the fact that film gets under control of the state.

Jānis Streičs (1936) has directed 22 feature films, he has written scripts for his own and other filmmakers' films, and he has appeared as an actor or performed episodic parts in films. The director is characterized by distinctive authorial style marked by irony, hyperbolization of everyday life events, philosophical interpretations, references to the world heritage and visual theatricality. Historical themes in Streičs' films are examined by Vita Zelče, choosing two of his films – "The Boys of Līvsala" (1969) and "Strange Passions" (1983) that are both set in the same year, 1946 shortly after the war had ended, even though both the films were made in different decades. Using archival materials, the author examines

the process of making of both the films, their themes and interpreting the film director's own experiences during the post-war years as representation of cultural memory in film.

We hope that this first issue of *Culture Crossroads* offering a deeper insight into history of the regional cinema and the topical issues will inspire new research, conferences and mutual co-operation to provide grounds for subsequent special editions about film.

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NEWSREELS AND CENSORSHIP IN ANTANAS SMETONA'S LITHUANIA, 1926–1940

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Abstract

December 17, 1926 marked a change for the young independent Republic of Lithuania. On that day a military coup d'état replaced the democratically elected government with the authoritarian government led by ultra-conservative Lithuanian Nationalist Union (*Tautininkų sąjungos*) party leader Antanas Smetona. The new government increased the control of various means of mass communication. In 1932 Film censorship law was passed, which created one centralised institution to censor all films shown in Lithuania (before this law, censorship was sporadic and done by different district officials). The same year Newsreels law was passed, which ordered that before any feature film screening, a Lithuanian newsreel must be shown. This law boosted the small Lithuanian film-making community. But not for long, by 1935 all rights to make Lithuanian newsreels were granted to one company run by filmmaker Jurgis Linartas, and old acquaintance of Antanas Smetona. From then on, only the Lithuanian newsreels produced by Jurgis Linartas could be shown in theatres. By means of censorship and control of newsreel production, Antanas Smetona's regime tried to create an alternative reality to be shown in cinemas. But the *new reality* not only contrasted with real life too much, its making was too much of a task to handle by the regime. Audience reaction to Antanas Smetona's period newsreels and their shortcomings, show us the construction of ideal image of Lithuania failed in interwar Lithuanian newsreels.

Keywords: *Cinema, newsreels, Lithuania, Antanas Smetona, censorship, interwar.*

The first half of the twentieth century was marked by the growing power of radical political ideologies and their leaders (communism and Lenin/Stalin in Russia, fascism and Mussolini in Italy, Nazism and Hitler in Germany etc.), and

the rapid development of new means of mass communications (radio, cinema, later – television). Even the smaller, newly independent, European countries, such as Lithuania, could not evade these processes. December 17, 1926 was a turning point for the Republic of Lithuania. On that day a military coup d'état replaced the country's democratically elected government with an authoritarian government led by ultra-conservative Lithuanian Nationalist Union party (*Lietuvių Tautininkų sąjunga*) leader Antanas Smetona. The unpopular party, that on the eve of the government takeover had only about 2,000 party members and three seats in the parliament, managed to secure their rule of the country up till the year 1940, when Lithuania was occupied by Soviet Russia. The leader of the party, Antanas Smetona, who had served earlier as a first president of Lithuania (1919–1920), now was often regarded as a *leader of the nation* (*tautos vadas*), a hint to growing manifestations of Antanas Smetona personality-cult. The new government increased the control of various means of communication. Cinema was no exception.

In this article I will discuss the general situation of newsreels production and subjects in Antanas Smetona's Lithuania, the influence of regime control over this production, the possibilities to overcome this control, and the reception of newsreels by the viewers. All of these complex subjects deserve an autonomous article of their own. Due to the length restraints, here I could only scrape their surface. There are no English articles about interwar Lithuania's cinema, so my main task was to give a general idea about how newsreels functioned under Antanas Smetona's regime.

Only a handful of interwar Lithuanian newsreels have survived till today, most of them only partly (all of them are digitalized and available online: www.e-kinas.lt). Press articles and archival documents are essential for getting a more comprehensive picture of interwar Lithuanian newsreel productions. The most helpful archival documents are the survived Lithuanian film censorship documents held by Lithuanian Archive of Literature and Art (archival fund no. 91: *Kino filmų cenzūra*). These documents provide us not only with the information about what was censored from one or another film, they also give us the transcripts of film dialogs/texts and summaries of film contents. These films also include Lithuanian newsreels. I'll base my research on the preserved visual and archival material, but not to overcrowd the article with numerous references to various censorship or visual documents, I'll give references only to those that I'll cite at bigger length. I'll be using these documents together with interwar Lithuanian press articles about cinema. These articles are a good evidence of public opinion about Lithuanian newsreels and their shortcomings. The references to the cited or mentioned articles have been provided, but the general statements about Lithuanian interwar cinema have been left without references, for the same reasons as mentioned above.

Antanas Smetona's regime came to power at the crucial time for Lithuanian cinema, a time when cinema was being recognized as serious means of mass communication and legitimate form of art. Though the first film screenings in Lithuanian territory were already held by 1896, and first film shootings took place in 1908, it was in mid 1920s – early 1930s when most of the film-related initiatives were started. In 1924 the First Assembly of Lithuanian Film Workers gathered in Kaunas, in 1925 Lithuanian Society of Cinematographers was established, 1926 saw the establishment of the first Lithuanian film actors' school, and the first Lithuanian film company – *Lietfilm*, in 1927 Lithuanian Union of Film Artists was established, 1928 was marked by public outrage against movie theatres showing Polish film production – several theatres were vandalized, first sound films were screened in 1929, first periodical magazine for cinema – *Kino naujienos* (Cinema news) was published in 1931, the same year, the first (and the only…) interwar Lithuanian feature film *Onytė ir Jonukas* ("Onytė and Jonukas") was premiered. These are just the few examples, though, frankly, some of these initiatives were very short-lived and of doubtful intentions. For example, the first film actors' school was, probably, established with an intention to make some quick money from aspiring actors, the school was closed just after a year by the Lithuanian Department of Education. The Lithuanian Union of Film Artists established in 1927 had only around 40 members, the only group "trained" by the already closed film actors' school, most of these actors were never seen on the big screen [Mikalauskas 1999]. No wonder why the new cinema craze was met with some reservation from some newspapers: "By the end of 1926 there started to appear, one after another, like mushrooms after the rain, various film-art schools and film-production companies. This is, of course, no surprise. After all, we had, in our times, tried making marmalade, had a monopoly for linen, we tried exploiting the moors, made elevators and started various other enterprises. So why shouldn't we try our luck in filmmaking?" [Gejot 1927]. The later initiatives were of no big success either – the first specialized cinema magazine lasted only for two years, and there had never been any other magazine like it, the first feature film *Onytė ir Jonukas*, was a very amateurish work, and a financial failure for the authors. But regardless of that, these initiatives showed the growing public interest in Lithuanian filmmaking.

By early 1930s regime officials also understood the importance of film. In 1932 Lithuanian policemen were being informed that cinema was here to stay and stay strong: "A few years ago, nobody even dared to imagine that cinema would make such an enormous progress as we see it today. It is still hard to foresee the future of cinema, but one thing is clear: it will progress even more, great future awaits it" [Aleknavičius 1932]. In 1933 the first Lithuanian film censor Jurgis Bielinis pointed out the propagandistic importance of Lithuanian newsreels:

"Episodes from our nation's workers-veterans life, after some time, gain a great deal of importance – they are a vivid example of our nation's physical and spiritual renaissance <…> for our young generation it is the most picturesque tool of patriotic education" [Bielinis 1933].

In view of the growing interest in cinema, it is not surprising, that the most influential cinema laws of interwar Lithuania, were released in early 1930s, under Antanas Smetona's regime. These are:

1. *Film censorship law*, issued in July 1932. In one form or another, film censorship was active in Lithuanian already from early 1920s. But till 1932 it was chaotic, sporadic and done by different Lithuanian regional officials. The preparation of the new cinema censorship law began already in late 1920s. The 1932 law created a centralized film censorship institution, where all films to be shown in Lithuania were certified by the censors. Film import law was also changed, so even the autonomous Lithuanian region of Klaipėda could not escape the film censorship from the capital city of Kaunas [Alesika 1938]. For the first time in Lithuania the film censorship became centralized, mandatory and the same for the entire country. The film censorship was the only type of censorship in Smetona's Lithuania implemented on the legislative level, by president and prime minister signing a law. Though, obviously, there were different kinds of censorship, like press or theatre censorship, but there never was, for example, the press censorship law [Vaišnys 1998].

2. *Newsreels law*, issued in August 1932. The idea of compulsory Lithuanian newsreels screening before every feature film programme, was expressed in the press as early as 1924 [Ruseckas 1924], but this idea was met with strong opposition from movie theatre owners and filmmakers. So the idea was realized only after 8 years. The Newsreels law of August 1932 declared that the screening of a Lithuanian newsreel, at least 120 metres in length, is obligatory before every feature film screening in Lithuania. The Lithuanian newsreel was not to become outdated; it had to be changed together with the film programme (usually once every week). The law significantly boosted the small Lithuanian newsreel industry, by mid 1930s, 45–50 newsreels were made every year. But the newsreels still had their flaws. Already by the end of 1932, the press argued that Lithuanian newsreel industry was in a danger of being monopolized and that it couldn't be allowed [Ar gali būti… 1932]. So, of course, it was…

3. *Film concession law*, issued in April 1935. By this law, the monopoly of newsreel production in Lithuania, for a period of 5 years, was granted to Jurgis Linartas, and old acquaintance of Antanas Smetona. The reasons given for the need of monopoly were: Lithuanian newsreel makers were too disorganized, there was too much of the unhealthy competition among them, newsreels were technically

and artistically old-fashioned. All of these reasons were, at least to the largest extent, true. But as we'll see later, the monopoly did not resolve the problems.

As we can see, the main Lithuania cinema laws of the 1930s were of restrictive nature.

Just as in the neighbouring USSR in mid-1920s [Kenez 2001], the government wanted to both profit from the film industry, and use it as a means of propaganda without investing in it too much money. The newly created Lithuania's film censorship institution not only sustained itself from film censorship fees, but also made a nice profit. Only 1/3 of the income from censorship was needed to sustain the institution [Mikalauskas 1999]. The high taxes on cinema theatres and tickets were an object of debate throughout all the interwar period. Government gave almost no financial support for the cinema industry. Antanas Smetona preferred theatre to cinema, for example, the budget of State theatre in 1931 was bigger than that of the Lithuania Foreign Office [Mačiulis 2005]. It is also quite revealing that both Antanas Smetona and Jurgis Linartas used to act in amateur theatre plays in their younger days. Of course, it was not only the government that wanted to profit from cinema. After the declaration of Newsreels law in 1932 movie theatres tried to save money by acquiring the newsreels as cheap as possible, and after 1935 monopoly was declared, Jurgis Linartas was often accused of profiteering from it (in late 1920s – early 1930s Jurgis Linartas was in court twice, for financial scheming, both times he managed to escape from a longer sentence, though these cases had nothing to do with cinema) – cheaply making bad newsreels and selling them for high price to the theatres. Theatres had to show these newsreels, as that was demanded by law, and only monopoly holder could provide the newsreels.

Antanas Smetona's regime wanted to exploit the movies not only financially, but also ideologically. Again – the cheapest way possible – through censorship. As Philip M. Taylor notices "...censorship is the essential counterpart to propaganda. They are different sides of the same coin: the manipulation of opinion. The selective processes by which some information is disseminated and some held back is a problem facing all communicators, but where censorship operates – whether it be institutionalized or self-censorship – one needs to recognize how close one is sailing into the wind of propaganda. This is particularly true if the deliberate withholding of certain information is designed to benefit those who control the flow of information" [Taylor 2003]. Antanas Smetona's regime wanted to project the image of ideal Lithuania: a modern Lithuania in a patriotic robe – a growing, modern country with strong leadership and long-lasting patriotic agrarian culture. But without control of information this image was impossible to reach. There was no centralized propaganda institution in Lithuania. And some of the various filmmakers' newsreels just couldn't fit into Smetona's image of the country. For

example, newsreels maker F. Dunayev made one of the first longer Lithuanian newsreels in 1927, with the intention of selling his work for American Lithuanians. In Lithuanian press this newsreel was criticized for showing Lithuanian girls, not looking as they should look in the film: "But the "most beautiful" impression was left by images of "Lithuanian girls" who wish to correspond with American Lithuanians. Firstly, it seems that none of these girls appeared in national costumes. Secondly, with no insult to girls intended, it should be emphasized that, without a few exceptions, we saw on the screen only strange mannequins with their strange movements, which have nothing in common with Lithuanian type of girls. If the intention, of this strange "exhibition" was to make audience laugh, then it worked perfectly… But in this case, the object of humour is less than well selected. The same newsreel was also criticized for wrongly depicting Lithuanian sportsmen: Way worse is depiction of our sportsmen. You watch and wonder – are images like these intentionally selected… Only losses are shown. And what losses! <...> There are no images from our winning games (for example, Tallinn – Kaunas). I don't know what impression that will leave on our American Lithuanians", critical opinion was expressed also for various other "bad" portrayals of Lithuania [Matęs 1927]. The film censorship law of 1932 had to put a stop for newsreel depictions of the kind. And, more or less, it did. For example, all the newsreel parts that could hint to existence of any kind of poverty in Lithuania were deleted. These included: full newsreels story *Samogitia* [western region of Lithuania – A.D.]. "Types of beggars" banned in 1933, an "image of a shabby house" cut from other newsreel story of 1935, or, even, "the scene showing the poorly dressed boy among the ice skaters" was deleted from one of the newsreel stories of 1939. By censoring images like that, Antanas Smetona's regime not only created a new ideal image of Lithuania, but also tried to legislate and protect their monopoly of power. The better the Lithuania looks, the better and fairer the regime is. The self-interest of regime is highly visible in their censorship of foreign newsreel productions. Any newsreel subjects that depicted the revolt against government or president were not allowed to be screened. These included the overthrow of Cuban president Gerardo Machado in 1933, or various workers' strikes in USA, so common after the economic crisis of 1929. Also, no government election by voting could be showed, probably, because there were no such elections in Lithuania after 1926, and it seemed too risky to remind the public about that.

But in their creation of ideal Lithuanian image on film, the government did not stand alone. Actually, a lot of filmmakers were eager to help the government. Eager to make propaganda films, for the greater glory of Lithuania. In the first Lithuanian convention of sound films filmmakers, famous Lithuanian film enthusiast and promoter (though he never made a film...) Juozas Vaičkus said that:

"tonfilms [sound films – A.D.] flooded the world and made a great deal of rivalry to other art forms. That's how it is, and we must go with it, we must go with the life. Through movies you can make your country citizens as your nation wants them to be. United States of America has fully reached this goal – it changed its citizens to patriots. They see their president on screen and they applaud him, meet him with loud ovations. We must consolidate our nation into a one big family, that's why we have to take interest in making Lithuanian films – so we could express our nation's spirit" [Ar turėsim… 1932]. These thoughts were confirmed, by one of the leading interwar Lithuanian newsreels maker Stasys Vainalavičius; in the interview for the film *Savo praeities beieškant* [dir. Algirdas Tarvydas 2000] he remembered that while making newsreels in interwar Lithuania: "We strived to show the beauty, the beautiful Lithuania. Its lakes and forests, valleys and schools. Its beautiful youth. Everything. We wanted to show that Lithuania is going forward, that there is no place as good, as beautiful as Lithuania" [*Savo praeities beieškant* [film] 2000]. Of course, there was always censorship, just in case the filmmaker would have decided that there is a place better and more beautiful than Lithuania. Actually, the government officials have learned this hard-way. Back in 1928 Lithuanian army general staff ordered to make a full-length feature film about Lithuanian army. The comedy film should have depicted how Lithuanian army could make a decent soldier even from the biggest loser. Army, Lithuanian village traditions, modern cities and even president Smetona was to be filmed. But the ultimate result was unsatisfactory – the film was not allowed to be shown publicly by the army officials themselves. One of the main reasons for the ban – Lithuania looked too poor [N [alias] 1935]. The director of the film was soon to become newsreel monopoly holder, Jurgis Linartas. Probably Linartas learned from his mistake, the censorship of Lithuanian newsreels in the second half of the 1930s was very rare. Most of the newsreels were banned motivating by their low technical quality, and not their "improper" content.

As noted by early Lithuanian posters researcher Juozas Galkus, the patriotic-propaganda posters, ordered by military in the 1920s–1930s were usually of low artistic quality, even when they were painted by the talented Lithuanian painters. The painters treated these assignments as an opportunity for the quick and easy profit, they also had a very limited amount of control over their work. Most of these posters were full of exaggerated patriotic symbols, faces of Lithuanian grand duke Vytautas and Antanas Smetona (Antanas Smetona used the image of the most popular Lithuanian medieval ruler, to legitimize his own rule and policies), and patriotic catchwords. As opposed to the language of metaphors, unexpected parables and even elements of absurd, so common in the poster genre [Galkus 1997]. The posters ordered by military were uninspiring but their content was safe

both for their authors and contractors. The same could be said about Lithuanian newsreels of the 1930s. After the centralization of censorship of Lithuanian newsreels, most of the newsreel subjects were of the safe and overtly patriotic themes. The bigger patriotic victories, like the return of Vilnius to Lithuania in October 1939, could be the only subject shown in Lithuanian newsreels for more than a month, while the sad losses, like the annexation of Klaipėda region by Nazi Germany in March 1939 was not mentioned at all (the only time this subject was touched in a short newsreel depiction of Easter dinner table prepared for the refugees of Lithuania in one of Kaunas schools, all the depictions of Klaipėda annexation were censored from foreign newsreels). The most popular newsreel themes were:

a) Official events: parades, military events, Smetona visiting places etc. Usually included: lots of officials, speech depictions, girls in national costumes, some kind of military activity (at least a military orchestra);
b) Modernization: growing cities, new buildings, factories, technology;
c) Agrarian Lithuania: strong national village character, Lithuania as a growing agrarian power, village traditions meet modern technology, more girls in national costumes;
d) Patriotic youth: right-wing youth organizations in support of Antanas Smetona and *tautininkai* regime. Usually included lots of marching, flag waving, for some organizations *saluto romano*;
e) Sporting events;
f) Lithuanian nature, sea, resorts. These parts were usually accompanied by words "It's beautiful in our Lithuania...";
g) Short patriotic movie posters. Usually some slogans and text urging viewers to join for one or another patriotic initiative, like: "Through donations and Lithuanian determination we have won the independence. Through consciousness and donations for Weapons fund we must save this independence. For this reason, our forefather decided to raise the Lithuanian honor under the command of Grand Duke Vytautas. Lithuanian honor and the future of nation its – donations for the Weapons fund" [from *Lithuanian sound newsreel* no.153, 1938].

But there were also possibilities for alternative images of Lithuania, for alternative subjects of newsreels. "According to them [foreign Lithuanian audiences – A.D.] almost all filmmakers who filmed in Lithuanian, and later showed these images abroad, showed them impassable roads with bogged down carriages or cars; saggy, shabby houses; legless people; types of beggars or drunks; showed them how those people are – in rags, terrible alcoholics; showed them also various other images that depicted only lowlifes, various perversions, and all the other shortcomings

that are still left in our country from older times. These images compiled in an hour-long film caused horror, nausea and outrage for profanation of Lithuania. <...> These images were used by various agitators in their slander campaigns, as an example of what is wrong in that country where "democratic order must be restored"" [Obuolėnas, 1938]. This angry rant was directed against Lithuanian emigrant filmmakers, who could come to Lithuania, shoot whatever they liked, and later show their films abroad – all without interference from Lithuanian censorship. As we could have already seen, scenes like "shabby houses" or "types of beggars" were deleted from newsreels presented to Lithuanian censorship. Though the author of aforementioned article is, probably, exaggerating the "evil" deeds of emigrant filmmakers, yet there were some emigrant newsreels that, probably, wouldn't be allowed by Lithuanian censorship. For example, filmmaker Jonas Kazimieras Milius journey from the USA to Lithuania was funded by American Lithuanian Federation of Roman Catholics, the author filmed all three presidents of Lithuania instead of one "leader of the nation", and showed various political catholic leaders who, from 1927, were in opposition to Antanas Smetona's regime [Mikalauskas 1999]. On the other hand, there were plenty of émigré filmmakers, who reinforced the ideal image of Lithuania. Their films were shown, on some occasions, in Lithuanian theatres, and were received favourably by the press. A perfect example of filmmakers like these could be brothers Motūzai from the USA. Even in their 1963 film *The Tragedy of Lithuania* they presented the interwar footage of the lavish summerhouse in Nida as a typical Lithuanian fisherman house. Actually it was a famous summerhouse designed by architect N. Reissman for the Nobel prize winner in literature Thomas Mann. A house that was far too expensive for any typical Lithuanian fisherman at that time.

The émigré newsreels were not the main problem for the government, the local newsreels were. Without the financial aid from the government, in the hands of shady monopoly holder, the Lithuanian newsreels did not satisfy the public. There were some compliments, but the general attitude towards the quality of Lithuanian newsreels was hostile. Newsreels were accused of being boring and repetitious, of technical and artistic backwardness, and of always being late. For example, it was impossible to convince the public about the modernization of Lithuania through newsreels. Yes, because of censorship and understanding of filmmakers, the newsreels subjects were fit for this task, but the task was ruined by poorly audible soundtrack and mediocre image quality. The deficiencies of Lithuanian newsreels became more interesting to the public than the newsreels themselves: "A lot of laughter is caused by the screening of Lithuanian newsreel. In this newsreel we see as Kaunas municipality is building a new garage in Šančiai, a garage that's already in ruins. During the screening of this newsreel the whole

theatre is laughing. It's a rare occurrence, when the audience greets Lithuanian newsreel with such a good mood" [*Kauno kinuose* 1937]. When in 1935 Jurgis Linartas declared that he would be showing Lithuanian newsreels in international exhibition of film and photography in Paris, this declaration was met with a backlash from public. "The consent to participate in the aforementioned exhibition is more than immodest. Till now we only had worthless, or, on the best occasions, barely tolerable newsreel productions <...> if for 3 years, up till today, we couldn't watch Lithuanian newsreels without nausea, should we show this kind of films abroad? <...> This kind of participation of our film "production" abroad, would be a great promotion for us, just with unpleasant results..." [av [alias] 1935]. It must be noticed, that here the effect of censored, local newsreels is described in quite similar terms to the effect of "purposefully evil" émigré newsreels, described in K. Obuolėnas quote previously, both types of newsreels create "nausea" in the audience.

Lithuanian newsreels that should have represented the ideal, dreamlike, image of the country for the whole world became an object of shame, an image of the country that shouldn't be shown anywhere. It was not hard for Antanas Smetona's regime to control the content of the newsreels, to reject all the themes and images that could oppose the ideal image of modernising country under strong and wise leadership. This was even profitable. But it was hard to make this content look true. The regime that more or less understood the importance of cinema as propaganda medium, put all its efforts to controlling this content, but it forgot that the form maters too. Without the support for film industry, education of filmmakers, protection of film industry from financial mishandling the image of ideal cinema Lithuania just couldn't be reached.

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DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKERS' ANTI-COMMUNIST MANIFESTO. THE FILM "KULDĪGA FRESCOES" (AIVARS FREIMANIS, 1966)

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Abstract

In his book *The Communist Post Scriptum*, philosopher Boris Groys defines communism as a revolutionary project, the aim of which was to subordinate the economy to politics and to transform society from a financial medium into a linguistic medium. In order to achieve communism, it was first necessary to verbalise society.

At the beginning of the 1960s, efforts by Riga poetic documentary filmmakers to work in the *cinéma vérité* style failed because the Soviet people, having experienced a linguistic turn, clearly knew what to say and how to speak when approached by film cameras. It was one of the reasons why part of Soviet filmmakers started avoiding the spoken word in cinema in the hope of approaching truth solely through image.

In the middle of the 1960s, there were two monumental documentaries created at Riga Film Studios that were entirely based on the dramatic expressivity of image: *235,000,000* (1967) by Uldis Brauns and "Kuldīga Frescoes" (*Kuldīgas freskas,* 1966) by Aivars Freimanis. However, I believe that the films went in opposite directions. The epic documentary *235,000,000*, which was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the USSR, actually offered an equivalent visual expression to the leading Soviet linguistic discourse, whereas "Kuldīga Frescoes" liberated visual aesthetics from the shackles of political language, "taking it to another horizon where it becomes free, a new creature in nation humanity" (Rainis). The topic of my paper will be "Kuldīga Frescoes".

Keywords: *Cinema modernism, socialist realism, Riga Style Poetic Documentaries, Communist ideology*.

Philosopher Boris Groys in his book *The Communist Post Scriptum* defines communism as a revolutionary project, the aim of which was to subordinate the economy to politics in order to grant to the power sovereign freedom of action [Гройс 2014: 8]. Groys considers that the communist revolution means a transition of society from the financial medium to the medium of language; the revolution was linked to a linguistic turn in the social practice [Гройс 2014: 8].

The communist society as a **society of word**, similarly to Groys, has been described also by Pyotr Vail and Alexander Genis in their famous research *The World of Soviet People*, claiming that from the perspective of the **word**, the communist era had started in the USSR already on July 30, 1961 after adoption of the 3rd Programme of the CPSU [Вайль, Генис 2001: 12].

In order to reach communism society had to be verbalized first. Verbalization affected all areas of soviet life. Starting from the 1930s it dominated also in documentary film in which the voice-over text of a narrator became the main source of information pushing the visual imagery into background. Verbalization is not to be understood only in its narrow sense as the power of a spoken word; verbalization by definition, namely as ideological patency, clarity of events and thought was accepted by the only artistic form of expression in the USSR – socialist realism. Every painting and every piece of music had to be *talking*.

Alongside with verbalization of society on its road to communism, the new generation of filmmakers in Eastern Europe part of whom were also *Riga style* or Riga poetic documentary filmmakers in the 1960s, tried to get rid of the power of word by giving up the narrator's voice-over and the imposed descriptive blatancy of the image, replacing it with multi-layered form of expression based on visual metaphor. Therefore Riga poetic style can be considered also as a revolutionary anti-communist movement whose goal was to deprive the political power of its unlimited freedom of action at least in works of art.

Taking a leap into future, it should be noted that after some decades the goal was achieved, and as it generally happens in history, the revolution devoured its own children. Financial medium became omnipotent again but language, including the artistic language too, to put it in Groyse's terms, functioned merely as a commodity and therefore became mute [Гройс 2014: 9]. "Protest and critical **discourse is considered to be successful if it can be sold well, and is considered to be unsuccessful if its sales go bad"** [Гройс 2014: 9].

Two monumental documentary films were made at Riga Film Studios in 1966 that were entirely based in dramatic interplay between visual images and music, both films gave up the narrator's voice-over and any other spoken text: "Kuldīga Frescoes" (Aivars Freimanis, 1966) and *235, 000, 000* (Uldis Brauns, 1967). Yet the point of departure in both films and therefore also the achieved results were opposite.

The epic *235, 000, 000* dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the USSR was based on carefully drafted and **verbally** formulated concept of the film by the script author Herz Frank, it was a set of documents called "field manual" and was distributed in the form of a **book** to all the film-crew members [Франк 1975: 150].

The film *235, 000, 000* was supposed to have two plot lines: depiction of individual human lives and events in the country. It is interesting that the field manual envisioned maximum confrontation between the two storylines both content-wise and stylistically, emphasizing in the Human line the private, intimate and individual while the State line was to show events, massive scale, vastness and sensations and the collective [Франк 1975: 151].

Yet by demonstrating confrontation, the goal was not to show antagonism between the state and the individual. The main aim was to create a **unified story**[1] [Франк 1975: 176] that would enable to perceive "the image of a huge and multi-national state" as one single entity [Франк 1975: 149].

Such an aspiration for monumental unity corresponded to the dominant ideological discourse and supported it. Interpretation of the story of human life was also in line with the official positivism that according to the authors was not to be defined in terms of painful and extreme milestones of human life (birth – death) but the reference points were "stepping out of the cradle" and wedding, or as Frank wrote, "pathos of happiness, eternal unity of love".

In between these seminal points there were only light moments of human life, the tragic and the negative remained outside the film [Франк 1975: 149]. Such an approach essentially distinguishes the film *235, 000, 000* from "Kuldīga Frescoes", which does contain some episodes, characteristic of the 1960s optimism: children on a globe, children flying a kite, cliché-like contrast between the old and the new world, working tools and weapons, yet it represents also dramatic and even tragic episodes that speak about death, extinction of the existence and inevitable ruin. In this context one should particularly stress the frescoes "Twilight Hour" and "Work". The latter can be actually perceived as an outline for Aivars Freimanis' subsequent film "Father" (1967), which was banned altogether; in the same way, the soviet cinema administration did not approve the film made by Gunārs Piesis in 1965 entitled "Memory of the Earth", a visually poetic *monument* to the monuments at the Forest Cemetery.

It is still important to note that the idea of **unified wholeness** encoded in *235, 000, 000* (as indicated also by Herz Frank [Франк 1975: 176]) was not always successfully implemented and the visual metaphors of Riga documentary

[1] Bold by Inga Pērkone.

filmmakers sometimes created undesirable associations for the discourse of power. For example, as Herz Frank wrote many years later, the authors of the film were reproached that "it is not clear where the huge plane with the inscription the USSR on its side flies [in the finale of the film]" [Франк 1975: 99].

As a consequence, the 115 minute long version of the film was officially accepted in October 1967 shortly before the 50th anniversary of the USSR, with an approval "for general audience" [Latvia State Archives 142: 1] but it had to be shortened and on March 13, 1968 another act on "appropriateness of *235, 000, 000* for general audience" was signed but now the film was only 74 minutes long [Latvia State Archives 142: 216].

It is interesting that "Kuldīga Frescoes" was not made as a long-cherished idea of its authors but as a peculiar and rapidly prepared substitute connected with the filming of *235, 000, 000*. On 11May 1966, the director of Riga Film Studios Frīdens Koroļkēvičs explained to Latvia Film Committee that their production plan for 1966 included the documentary film by Herz Frank "Youth" about the generation in their twenties. But since Herz Frank had to work on the film *235, 000, 000*, the documentary about the young people was offered to the script writer Armīns Lejiņš and the director Aivars Freimanis [Latvia State Archives 113: 94].

Both the authors initially tried to adapt themselves to Frank's idea, merging the theme of youth with representation of a small-town life, but already from the very beginning they tried out tentative use of the mosaic structure. Yet the first version of the script written in April 1966 called "Frescoes Found in Kuldīga". "Youth" was based mainly on *words* – empty phrases borrowed from the rhetoric of their time, without identifying the possible stylistics and atmosphere of the film: "Peaceful work, peaceful life, principles of peace in relations among nations and countries... Communism – the youth of the world... These are the notions that characterize our life" [Latvia State Archives 113: 109].

Generally, the Film Administration evaluated the idea of the authors quite favourably, but their foremost objection was to the word *frescoes*. On June 13 1966, the chairman of Latvia Cinematographers' Committee Nikolajs Kārkliņš, publicizing the Committee's conclusion about the second edition of the script submitted in May, 1966, admits that it has become more varied and it cannot be reproached of the lack of social generalizations, yet he emphasizes: "We repeatedly propose to consider changing the title because frescoes today can be seen in quite a few film titles" [Latvia State Archives 113: 53].

Thinking about why Nikolajs Kārkliņš did not like the word *frescoes* and looking for those allegedly numerous films of the respective period whose title contained the word *frescoes,* it was actually possible to find only one, but the

events linked with this film or to be more precise with the plans for this film, are sufficiently meaningful and disconcerting, and they could have led to Nikolajs Kārkliņš' suggestion that the word should be best avoided.

The project of the film by Sergey Paradjanov (Параджанов) "Kiev Frescoes" was started at the Ukrainian Dovzhenko Film Studio in 1965 and it was terminated at the beginning of 1966, consequently shortly before "Kuldīga Frescoes" [Steffen 2009]. The scandal that was associated with this expressly experimental film that the director started shooting without official approval and was banned afterwards, apparently was too big for the film administrators of other *brotherly* republics not to have heard about it, besides Paradjanov had invited the most famous Latvian actress in the Soviet Union Vija Artmane to participate in "Kiev Frescoes", thus the information about Paradjanov's film could have reached Riga also via her.

The scholar James Steffen writes that with "Kiev Frescoes" Paradjanov who was also the script writer for this film, had hoped to strengthen his place not only among the soviet but also West European cinema modernists to rank among such directors as François Truffaut, Ingmar Bergman, and in particular Federico Fellini [Steffen 2009].

Paradjanov's "Kiev Frescoes" was envisioned as a feature film dedicated to the 20th anniversary since the victory of the USSR in the Great Patriotic War but in actual reality by its genre it was on the same crossroads of live action and documentary film as "Kuldīga Frescoes" and also the later films by Aivars Freimanis, such as "Apple in the River" (1974), "Life" (1989) and others.

The structure, themes and even captions and sequence of frescoes in Paradjanov's intended film have several affinities with the film "Kuldīga Frescoes", and this is, in my view, another piece of evidence that Aivars Freimanis belongs to cinema modernism that I have already written elsewhere [Pērkone 2013: 35–51].

Some of the literal similarities: for example, when Paradjanov explained his artistic objective to his colleagues at Dovzhenko Film Studio he indicated that the last novella (the word used apart *frescoes* also by Aivars Freimanis) will be called "Morning" – the film about Kuldīga ends with a novella of the same title. "Kiev Frescoes" was basically planned as black and white film but according to Paradjanov's concept the novella "Morning" was to be in colour [Деревянко: 1990, 60].[1]

Paradjanov noted that he was looking for *frescoes of life* and wanted to make a film about Kiev, its people and their national character [Деревянко1990: 56]. The director said that the most difficult task in the genre he had chosen – cinematic

[1] Less than 15 minute footage preserved till today is in colour and at least implicitly is connected with the themes of the film's finale.

fresco – was to find the plasticity to be shown on the screen. **The texture on which the fresco is applied had to be revealed**[1] [Деревянко 1990: 59].

Similarly to Freimanis, Paradjanov had intended his frescoes as kaleidoscopic subjective impressions about people of different classes in Kiev and the city itself. Kuldīga was captured in 19 frescoes, Kiev was to have 10; moreover, the separate frescoes were not to be tableaus made in a single shot, typical of later style of Paradjanov, but as collages saturated with various details and movement [Steffen 2009].

Incidentally, Viktor Shklovsky in one of his letters to Paradjanov in 1972 mentioned Sergey Eisenstein as a creator of film frescoes: it was important for Eisenstein to demonstrate the pictorial nature of a moving image, to solve the problems of coloured background [Параджанов I 1990: 40].

Film scholar Miron Chernenko later called Paradjanov's style ***kaleidograph*** [Параджанов 1990: 42]; it is a label applicable also to "Kuldīga Frescoes".

Stylistics of Freimanis' frescoes is also diverse, the frescoes differ both by their length and tone, they extend from very brief fleeting momentous images captured by camera and concentrated gigs till dramatically and elaborately developed episodes. The authors of "Kuldīga Frescoes" wrote in their treatment: "Dramatic goals are achieved by <u>different means</u>: a) drama of the event itself; b) a radical shift in editing; c) anecdotal twist at the end of novella; d) contrast between image and sound and so on. (..) The sound design in the film plays a hugely important role, which is basically <u>musical</u>. Many novellas are accompanied by already previously existent recordings – they are popular songs by different nations (both folk and pop songs). Therefore the coloured wide-screen shot does not achieve effect designated in Russian by the word *zrelishche* (spectacle)[2], but each novella will convey even with greater clarity the idea that this is not the only nice town in the world and that inhabitants of any city in the world aspire for such a placid mode of life" [Latvia State Archives 113: 116–117].

The idea of the film expressed the filmmakers' interest about the diversity, the contingent, the separate and also elements of subjectivity of the artist's vision, refusing from a detailed film script and rigidly defined plot lines. In his film abstract Aivars Freimanis writes: "The frescoes is the name given to 19 short stories, each of them has its own idea. (..) When the film was finished, its authors were joking that they wanted to make this film as a multi-layered pie – some people might like the surface layer humour, some others might get to the deeper and more philosophical thoughts about life" [Latvia State Archives 113: 3].

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[1] Bold by Inga Pērkone.

[2] The document stored in the archives is hand-written in Russian.

Figure 1. Making of "Kuldīga Frescoes" (1966): on the right director Aivars Freimanis, by the camera cameraman Ivars Seleckis. Photograph by Aivars Čakste, from the collection of LAC Riga Film Museum

The script of "Kuldīga Frescoes" had also included self-reflexivity typical of 1960s film modernism which was not eventually used in the film. This intention is another affinity of "Kuldīga Frescoes" with "Kiev Frescoes": Kuldīga was supposed to be represented through the cameraman image, while one of the main characters in Kiev was the Film director. In his director's script Paradjanov had most probably programmed a means of expression inspired by Dziga Vertov by showing still before the title of the film the filming process – a hand in a white glove opens a box, takes out lenses, the camera moves along rails, the camera lens opens, we see the cameraman, production designer and the director... [Steffen 2009].

"Kuldīga Frescoes" was to have an almost identical beginning: "The cameraman Ivars Seleckis walks unhurriedly across bridges, looking around in a matter-of-fact way. His walk is depicted in a humorous way. (..) His assistant emerges at the right moment on a rooftop. This man is carrying a load like a pack donkey: 2–3 large boxes, 4–5 smaller boxes, a massive wooden support and a camera" [Latvia State Archives 113: 58]!

Ivars Seleckis says[1] that he has no recollection that the crew would have wanted to begin the film with the cameraman image and he believes that it would not have been possible due to the available filming equipment and the budget of the film which could not have *afforded* the second cameraman. Ivars Seleckis thinks that the dandelion seen in the first shot for whose filming in the hotel room three days were spent, is a much better opening episode. "It was a big fuss with those flowers. The close-up of the flower resembles the rising sun. We shot it in the hotel room. We covered up windows and put up lights. It is difficult to shoot anything like that in an open location because lights change, the sun and wind interfere. In one of the hotel rooms we arranged a kind of filming pavilion. We put tripods there, torch-lights, and we filmed photographs. We worked there nicely especially on rainy days" [Jēruma 2009: 90–91].

The dandelion filmed by Ivars Seleckis is a truly outstanding work of art, like the quite fantastic flowers and their collages in the fresco "Gardener Tontegode". It must be noted that flowers had a special significance in Paradjanov's film: they served as catalysts for a fairly relative plot line and became also an expressive visual image. And yet – it is a pity that the intention to reflect the very process of filming in "Kuldīga Frescoes" remained merely on paper.

In comparison to the field manual for shooting *235, 000, 000*, making of "Kuldīga Frescoes" leaves even a flippant impression. Cameraman Ivars Seleckis remembers: "The fresco form made our hands free – we filmed as many as we wanted, one fresco more or less – no one would know that. The film was intended like a mosaic giving insight into life of the town. Something had been previously thought out, something emerged on the spot, besides the town changed as well. The idea of the white fresco appeared when we filmed the secondary school graduation ceremony – white dresses, white lilies and white clouds. Different events happened in the town as well. One day, for example, we saw a fire. Another day we were walking along the city and saw tourists walking away. One of the churches in Kuldīga resembled an Italian church; this is how the Italian fresco appeared. (..) Everybody offered ideas. The film-crew was small and everyone was tossing into that common hat of ideas whatever came in their minds. A domino principle was

[1] The author's conversation with Ivars Seleckis, April 4, 2016.

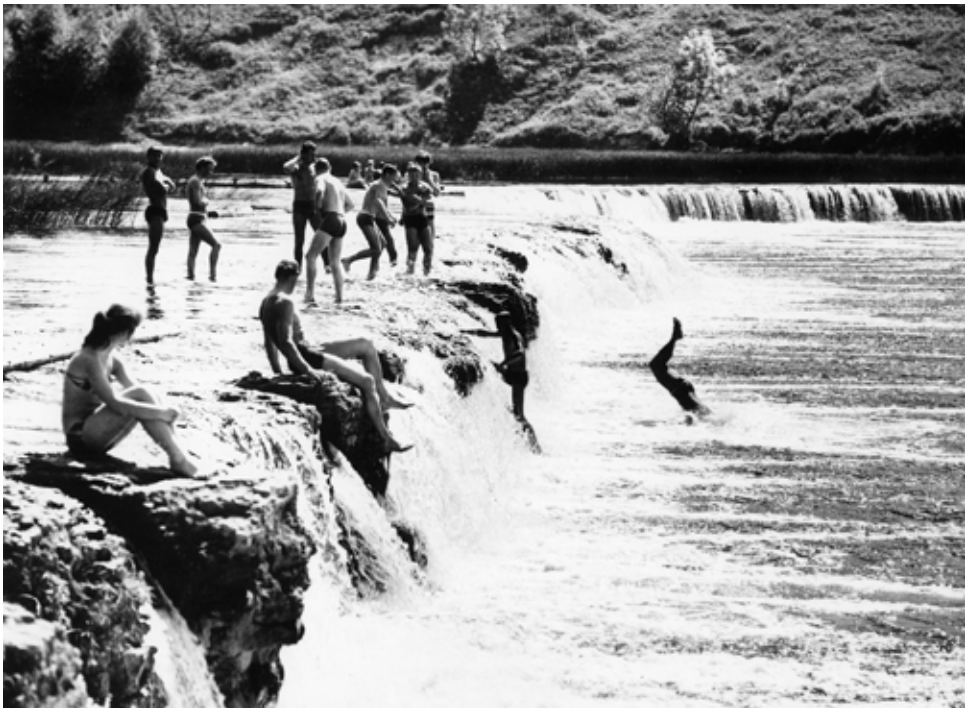

Figure 2. "Kuldīga Frescoes" (1966).
Photograph by Aivars Čakste, from the collection of LAC Riga Film Museum

created – someone moves a piece, then the second and the third one and finally they all "fall" into a pattern no one could imagine before" [Jēruma 2009: 90 – 91].

The playfulness, with which the film was made, emanated also from some of the frescoes, creating in the first part of the film a cheerful and happy small-town atmosphere. Most probably humour was at the basis of the box-office success of the documentary film: during two months "Kuldīga Frescoes" the numbers of audience in cinemas of Latvia reached 17,000 spectators [Latvia State Archives 113: 30]. Perhaps it was the humorous mood established at the very beginning of the film when Riga Film Studio logo was shown in a somewhat grotesque way that was the reason that at least the censor did not notice the heresy of the film crew: its introductory text which used the name of the Republic of Latvia ("The film has been made in the Soviet Union, in the Republic of Latvia, Kuldīga").

Yet apart from the lively mood, ironic tone and sarcasm occasionally emerge in the film: both in the tragic episode *Work*, as well as in the episodes "Kisses", "Kuldīga, Kuldīga..." and "Dog's Life", as well as in the compilation of frescoes about firemen ("!!!" and "???") and others. Irony is a stylistic means of expression that by its very definition is opposite to the unambiguous clarity and optimism

required by communism. Andrey Sinavsky had written already in 1957 that irony actually is a redundant person's laughter about himself; irony is a continuous companion of disbelief and doubts. Vail and Genys indicate in their study that in the second half of the 1960s there is increasingly more irony in the works by the soviet artists [Вайль, Генис 2001: 167], and it testifies to the disappointment of society that almost nothing of the *verbal promise* made in 1961 had been fulfilled.

Yet perception of irony as the deepest reflection of one's epoch, as well as other innovative approaches used in the film "Kuldīga Frescoes" came only later. Initially the film was harshly criticized in the press and looking from today's perspective the criticism was mostly to do with non-compliance of "Frescoes" to the optimistic and impetuous future-focused sense of life existing at least on the verbal level in the 1960s. For example, the young journalist Ansis Epners who later was to become one of the outstanding Riga style documentary filmmakers, called the film philistine and criticized not only its form but also its contents [Epners 1967].

In 1967 the film was harshly criticized by the first "Riga style" theorist Mihails Savisko: "Despite a number of brilliant formal achievements, despite the fact that several scenes (frescoes or novellas) each in themselves seem to be even very interesting, the mood of the film causes deep concern. By dissecting the reality in accordance to their intent, the authors kill the spirit and essence of life. Instead of life we see on the screen merely petty existence" [Savisko 1967: 36].

Savisko criticized the film for the typical diseases of "lyrical style": disregard of real life whose advancement is based on the struggle between contradictions, avoiding of reflection of problems to be solved in daily life, and confining themselves within poetic generalizations. Perhaps for this very reason – as a warning and lesson – the gifted, the searching **artists' failure**[1] will be able to become a more significant contribution in cinema development than their previous highly praised success[2] [Savisko 1967: 37].

Yet as years went by Mihails Savisko re-evaluated the film. For example, in 1971 he wrote about "Kuldīga Frescoes" as follows: "Today it is possible to realize that departure and alienation of the artists from reality was a logical step towards its deeper understanding" [Savisko 1971].

In 1983 the film theorist perceived completely differently the same film he had called a failure: "When after brilliant manifestation of the new principles in "Reporting of the Year" A. Freimanis made the semi-live action series of novellas Kuldīga Frescoes, the author of the present lines accused him almost of betraying the ideals. It was a mistake. (Although a kind of mistake after understanding which one later feels no shame.) The desire to see direct and more in-depth continuation

[1] Bold by Inga Pērkone.

[2] A reference to the film "Reporting of the Year" (Aivars Freimanis, 1965).

Figure 3. "Kuldīga Frescoes" (1966).
Photograph by Aivars Čakste, from the collection of LAC Riga Film Museum

of the process started previously did not permit at the time to appreciate the need of the artist and the artistic trend for a manoeuvre, for enrichment of aesthetic experience (..)" [Savisko 1983].

Mihails Savisko's gradual change of opinion is symbolic for understanding of significance of "Kuldīga Frescoes". From a film that at the time of its release was considered almost a failure among professionals, but for general public – light entertainment – "Kuldīga Frescoes" has gradually become classics of the 1960s modernism, a brilliant gem, although made in somewhat strange Western style, in the wreath of Riga Style films.

Given the context of the present article, especially those features characteristic of "Kuldīga Frescoes" seem to be important that were in opposition to the official 1960s communist ideology and the method of socialist realism: collage as the structural basis of film characteristic of modernism, mixing of genres ("semi-live action novellas"); refusal from verbal text, completely relying on metaphoricity of visual image and non-verbal sound track; contingency as the basis of dramaturgy of the film; representation of life relying on a vast range of different tonality – from humour to irony and tragedy.

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CONNECTIVITY: THE SPACE OF DOCUMENTARY SEQUENCES IN THREE FICTION FILMS OF RIGA FILM STUDIO
Divi ("Two", 1965), *Elpojiet dziļi* ("Breathe Deeply", 1967), and *Ābols upē* ("Apple in the River", 1974)

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Abstract

The subject of this study is the augmentation of portrayal of reality in fiction films by inclusion of documentary sequences. This article explores a hypothesis that in the spacetime continuum, film borders of cinematic genres, the divide between documentary and fiction cinema is disregarded. This divide appears if not artificial, then subordinated to the unity of each particular film as a text. The concept of connectivity can be applied to describe the relation of spaces of the documentary and the fictional sequences in a film. The Latvian cinema offers a wide range of instances for the generic fusion of the documentary and the fiction film as genre.

The practice of including documentary sequences into the fiction films – in a tradition of the Riga poetic documentary school in the case of this study – (re)presents historical dynamics in film poetics. The appearance of several genre s paces in one spacetime continuum of a film (re)constructs the social space of film's production momentum. The documentary sequences in the fiction film function both as an added and illustrative value to the main fictional visual narrative, and gradually become a meaning-making element in the wholeness of this cinematic text.

Initially in the short film *Divi* ("Two", 1965), directed by Mihails Bogins, filmed by Rihards Pīks, and later by Henrihs Pilipsons the documentary sequences were employed to (re)create the modern urban space. Later, as the practice of documentary inclusion became common in the middle of 1960s, the documentary sequences appeared in the musical film *Elpojiet dziļi* ("Breathe Deeply", 1967, directed by Rolands Kalniņš, cinematographed by Miks Zvirbulis) to construct multiplicity of spaces, uniting creative and factual realities in the narrated space of the film.

The film *Elpojiet dziļi* demonstrates that the merger of genres, styles and spaces is creative to the extent of spilling off the screen and into the non-cinematic reality. The film is a story of a fictional boy band. It inspired formation of the band *Menuets* to re-enact the songs written for and performed in the film. The connectivity of the documentary and the fiction sequences in this film achieve a level of connection where it is no longer possible to speak of subjugation of one genre to the other. It can be described as a construction of a new connected and permeable cinematic space.

A further instance of the connectivity of documentary and fiction generic spaces in a film is the film *Ābols upē* ("Apple in the River", 1974, directed by Aivars Freimanis, cinematographed by Dāvis Sīmanis (sen)). This film represents a stream of multiple genres and a flow of various citations, inspirations and ideas featuring the cultural space of late Soviet republic of Latvia. In this film the connectivity of the documentary and the fictional episodes becomes rhetorical means of cinematic expression.

Connectivity in film: genres of documentary and fiction film connected

The connectivity in film is one of the latest discussed subjects in film studies. European Network on Cinema and Media studies organised a workshop on connectivity in 2016 in order to reflect upon the culture of today featured by connectivity. Connectivity is defined as interrelatedness in the basis of culture fostered by digital revolution. Deb Verhoeven researches the role of serendipity in digital humanities. Sean Cubitt argues that the dialectic of culture nowadays is not of high and low culture, but of the seemingly irreconcilable high resolution immersive and low resolution connective media [Cubit 2008]. Both of these approaches suggest ways to (re)view and to (re)structure the space of culture that changes with the approach of digital formats creating a new space of representation. In my study I suggest that the connectivity both digitally and metaphorically is applicable to a single text, a film or a digital web platform and culture in general. This understanding of the space in the given moment of time has been inspired by the renowned work of Russian literary researcher and philosopher Michail Bachtin *Formy vremeni i hronotopa v romane*, in English translation by Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson entitled "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel" [1981]. Bachtin sees not only art and literature, but also science as the object of abstract cognition meant to create meaning [FTC: 257]. Viewed from this functional perspective of meaning creation the digitalization and the interconnectedness of media are merely features of the actual historic reality. The connectivity of media progresses rapidly in the recent decades, however the process of opening media borders and

connecting genres is noticeable both in the early 1920s in the art of Russian avant-garde, where artists inspired by the politcal and social changes created a new revolutionary art, and in the 1960s, where as in the Latvian films analysed in this study the film genres of documentary and fiction joined in the wholeness of one film.

The spaces in the films analysed here were connected physically on one tape of each film, however these were not initially, but only gradually along with the technological development became connected digitally. Today these cinematic spaces of the Latvian films are to various degree digitally connected and interrelated, for instance on the Internet video platform YouTube. The focus of this study lies on the connectivity of spaces within a spacetime continuum of a single film.

The term "connectivity" is inspired by topology, where spaces can be connected in one unit or be disjointed. This notion is also employed in graph theory, planning of space, landscape and transport. The most recent development is to speak of Internet connectivity, i.e. the means by which individual terminals, computers, mobile devices and local area networks connect to the global Internet. The connected spaces are permeable to various degrees and in various ways. The notion of connectivity understood as a literal Internet connectivity can be employed as a metaphor to describe different genre spaces in one film. Different genre spaces are connected according to the essential principle of Internet connectivity, namely, the connected elements belong to the same network, as these are in the same space of a film.

It is possible to speak of connectivity in a film understanding it as a field, formed by several connected spaces of cinematic genres only under a premise, that there is only one space of films, not segregated into fiction film and documentary film as two fundamentally different sets. Both fiction and documentary films belong to one and the same medium of film as a projection of light on a tape. Fiction and documentary are film genres. It must be mentioned that film theorist Robert Stam doubts the concept of genre in his work, questioning genesis of it and its function [Stam 2000]. Still filmmakers program their films as belonging to one or the other film genre and film viewers recognize these. Film critics refer to films where these two genres are mixed as hybrid or cross-over films. In the three films analysed in this study the sequences filmed in fiction and documentary genres exist next to each other without being named and referred to.

There has been growing public interest in the documentaries in the recent years. The documentaries appear on a regular basis not only on television, but also on cinema screens. Film researcher Anja Trautmann analyses the reasons and motifs of the recent trend naming it "rediscovery of reality" (*die Wiederentdeckung der Wirklichkeit*) [Trautmann 2013]. The documentary cinema has worn "boring" label in the broad public, referring to documentaries as sober, precise and didactic,

writes Trautmann. It can be assumed that Trautmann, born in 1977, refers to the culture of her own cultural background – the Western Germany has no experience of documentaries produced in the shadow of the socialist state ideology and of the documentary cinema in the Central and Eastern Europe or other politically motivated, controlled and abused cinema productions. Even keeping this in mind her celebration of documentaries return to the cinematic screens seems relevant. As one of the main reasons for documentary films to turn "interesting" as opposed of "boring" according to Trautmann is the inclusion of narrative in the cinematographic toolbox of the documentary film.

Documentary film is in an ambivalent position. It declares itself a medium the same as fiction film, however it claims to depict the reality in another way than fiction film, in a truthful way. The demand of and the power over the truth is a claim of the documentary in the opposition to fiction film. The reliance on the camera as the guarantee of authenticity of the depicted reality is effectively undermined today in the age of digitalization of images. The images have no other but the individual truth value [Trautmann 2013]. Whether the same pictures are true or not, ultimately depends on the viewer: it is rather a question of faith, if the recipient believes one or the other film. By taking the recipient's point of reference, I suggest that documentary and fiction films are to be portrayed on one and the same axis of films as culture products. The films in fiction and documentary genres would be placed as the oppositional poles on the line, where fiction and non-fiction are defined by the relation of depicted reality and the physical reality as we experience it, know it and collectively agree on it. The definition of the relation between this line of films and the reality lies by the viewer, whereas the relation of one film to another, one genre to another is defined by the production conditions and its historical cultural conventions. No film can be more "real" than another one, since these all are merely (re)presentations of reality.

Accepting the hypothesis that documentary and fiction film are merely two genres of film, let us return to the concept of connectivity, where documentary films are not just a series of inserts in fiction films, but are an integral part of one single film. In studying the space of documentary filmed sequences in fiction films, my hypothesis is that in the spacetime continuum film borders of cinematic genre, the division between documentary and fiction cinema appear subordinated to the unity of each particular film as a text. The documentary and fictional sequences are connected and permeable, where protagonists freely move in the artificially created spaces and the (re)constructed, but still filmic, reality and interact in and with these rooms of narrative.

Connected generic spaces in Latvian films

In the 1960s in Latvia a growing number of films were produced, where spaces of two genres, fiction and documentary, co-exist in one film. The first film to be named as an instance of fiction and documentary genre co-existing on the screen is the film "White Bells", 1961, directed by Ivars Kraulītis, written by Herz Frank. The film is a fictional story of a little girl travelling through the city of Riga alone labelled by critics and filmmakers as documentary. The idea of the film "White Bells" – that is a protagonist on a road, walking streets of Riga, is repeated in the narratively motivated walks of characters of the film "Two". This film is an instance of a fiction film based on actual events, filmed by documentary cinematographers in the field, and including actual documentary sequences. In the film "Breathe Deeply" the characters take different roads, but walk actual streets of Riga towards and away from each other. The film "Apple in the River" is an instance of a merger of fictional and non-fictional plots, documentary camera technique with a narrative voice that chooses a genre of fable.

The three Latvian films I have analysed from the connectivity perspective are "Two", 1965, "Breathe Deeply", 1967, and "Apple in the River", 1974.

The methodology of this study unites the archive research of historical sources, the content analysis and the media analysis that allows the (re)construction of production and reception contexts.

Usually documentary films are bestowed the value of real historic document. Under this perspective connecting documentary and fictional narrative films degrades the trustworthiness of film as a historic document. From the perspective of history, anthropology, sociology all films function as documents of human condition at the moment they were created. German researcher Patrick Vonderau dismisses all prior debates on the relationship between film and history by stating that there are no film types, which are more true or objective, such as documentary versus feature films, no films "contain" history as an unchangeable meaning [Vonderau 1999]. Considering all films: feature, scientific, animated and documentary, they can be interpreted as documents of their context of origin, of their historic momentum [Vonderau 1999]. In the framework of my approach the question is: what does the connectivity of generic spaces in a particular film mean? Both documentary and fiction film form elements of a narrative as recognizable but connected spaces, where another kind of meaning is made of a film as a whole. Relating this phenomenon of connectivity to the historical momentum of its appearance in films helps to uncover some of meanings that circulated in this particular time and space.

These three Latvian films, "Two", "Breathe Deeply" and "Apple in the River", as well as connectivity's effect on the meaning made in each film, are analysed in the

sequence release, linking the changes in film poetics, that is inclusion of documentary sequences in the fiction films, to the historical momentum of the film production.

"Two": (re)construction of real life narrative in a real-lived city

The short film *Divi* ("Two") tells a love story of a musician and a beautiful deaf girl, who met accidentally on the street in Riga. Due to its length, 35 minutes, the film was paired for a full-length screening with a documentary film *Gada reportāža* ("The Reporting of the Year", 1965). In this context the film "Two" was received as a documentary, especially by the home audience of Riga and Latvia. There are indeed several clues for this reception.

The film opens with the sequence showing the Conservatory's open windows accompanied by the motivated soundtrack of musical rehearsals. This sequence is followed by several views of Riga streets, parks and yards and people and vehicles moving there in spite of or ignoring the camera. These sequences are filmed mostly from a pedestrian perspective, suggesting chronicality and documentality of the film.

For some informed viewers the authenticity of the plot might have suggested the documentary genre of the film "Two". The film director Mikhail Bogin told a story of an actual deaf woman, Svetlana, who inspired him and the script author Yuriy Chulyukin, to create this film [Bogin 1965]. Moreover, the footage of the theatre performance was filmed at the actual Theatre of Mime and Gesture in Moscow, at the time the only theatre of and for people with hearing impairments in the world. In the performance, Marta Grakhova starred in the role of Julia. In the film "Two" the true story of a deaf actress paired with the appearance of the actual deaf actress (not the same person) added up to the credibility of the film.

The sequences filmed in Riga streets, including footage of passers-by looking straight in the camera and staged sequences of, for instance, the band performance and the deaf heroine dancing create a united narrative space, where not only two spaces of sound and silence, hearing and deafness, man and woman meet, but also the ontology of space of the 1960s in the Soviet Latvia and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a whole is (re)constructed.

The situation of the public discourse in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s is featured by the distrust in spoken words. Anthropologist Alexei Yurchak argues that after Stalin's death, instead of the process of demystification of the past, the process of demystification of discourse started [Yurchak 2005]. The general mistrust during the totalitarian period under Stalin and the disappointed expectations after the denouncing speech by Khrushchev manifest in disenchantment in words. Words cannot be trusted and can express neither sufferings of love, nor taking a decision for life. Writers and analysts Peter Vail and Alexander Genis link political

Figure 1. *Divi* ("Two", 1965). Natasha (Viktoriya Fyodorova) lives in the Old Town of Riga, where she encounters young musician Sergey (Valentin Smirnitsky). Author unknown, Latvia State Archive of Audiovisual Documents

development in the sixties to events in sphere of words. They write that as soon as the programme of the Communist party can no longer be interpreted as a literary work, its ridiculous verbatim becomes evident [Vail, Genis, 2003]. Vail and Genis claim that in the end of the sixties the ideological words become inaudible.

In this predicament, the successful attempts of the main heroine to survive without hearing are the attempts to live on without the previous totalitarian guidance. At the same time the main hero escapes words in music. The film "Two" (re)presents the situation where two separate and distinct spaces of hearing and deafness become connected on the interpersonal level of two individuals. At the same time the film "Two" offers an exit out of the existentially challenging social situation in the second half of the 1960s, namely suggesting artistic performance, dance, theatre, music to be the united space of wholeness and freedom. The connection of documentary and fiction genre spaces in the film "Two" allows and supports this interpretation of change and switch from one space to another.

"Breathe Deeply": multiplicity of genre spaces opens space for interpretations

In the film that followed chronologically, "Breathe Deeply", the artistic space touched upon also in the preceding film "Two", is the main focus of the plot. It is a story of a young amateur musical band, the poet, who writes lyrics and music in his leisure time and a female critic, who starts a campaign against the frivolous texts performed by the band and written by the poet, Cēzars Kalniņš. The critic, Anita Sondore, meets Cēzars, the poet, in person and gradually changes her opinion on his lyrics. The authors of this plot, script writer Gunārs Priede and director Rolands Kalniņš, believed in possibility of singing and talking freely. Also, belief in possibility of learning and changing, as well in flexibility of opinion as necessity in the artistic space formed the basis of the plot. The prohibition of release in cinema theatres that immediately followed the end of production of the film "Breathe Deeply" (independent of the officially named reasons) proves that this belief of authors in freedom was rather idealistic than realistic. And yet this belief has inspired the production of the film, namely in the construction of filmic space.

Trust in the freedom of the artistic expression inspired authors of the film "Breathe Deeply" to mix several film genres. In the film "Breathe Deeply" several genre spaces are narratively united. The sequences of city streets, of performances, of memories and of dreams are held in the film together by the plot-related sequences. These plot-related sequences depict the factual reality of protagonists. The protagonists move freely in the city, in the memories and in the fantasies. The genres present in the film are documentary, fiction, music and theatre performance.

In the film "Breathe Deeply" there is a connectivity of documentary space of Riga streets and embankments of the Daugava River similar to the film "Two". It adds to documentality of the movie. The presence of film and song author Imants Kalniņš in the audience as well as footage at the artist's Jāzeps Pīgoznis add up to the value of the film as the document of its time.

The sequences of the theatre performance in the house of culture function in film in a similar, documentary, way. Besides this function, the theatre sequence and other sequences set in the house of culture act as intertextual reference. These sequences refer to the film "Carnival Night" (*Karnavalnaya noch,* 1956, dir. Eldar Ryazanov), that precedes the film "Breathe Deeply" in the genre of musical film in the Soviet cinematography. The plot of this film is also set in the house of culture and (re)presents a series of performances. In terms of genre and film space construction the film "Carnival Night" is limited to one genre and one space clearly distanced from later produced film "Breathe Deeply".

At the same time, the film narrative space includes the space of musical performance, daydreams and recollections of memories by the film's characters.

Figure 2. *Elpojiet dziļi* ("Breathe Deeply" or "Four White Shirts", 1967). Cēzars Kalniņš (Uldis Pūcītis) is in his own space of thoughts next to the space of actual events, the house-warming party. Photograph by Juris Dzenis, from the collection of LAC Riga Film Museum

These sequences can effectively be isolated from the film narrative as a whole and labelled the first Latvian music videos. The musical sequences of the film "Breathe Deeply" are available online on the video platform YouTube, beating the popularity of the film as a whole. In the film these sequences form a stylistically separate space, each of these telling its own micro narrative. The musical sequences act as individual documents of characters, as evidences of their psychological and personal development that cannot be expressed in words and resolutions.

The film "Breathe Deeply" is a set of multiple spaces that are constructed by a collection of documentary, imaginary, staged and re-enacted sequences. The multiplicity of genre spaces in this film points at the complexity and the psychological objects' richness of the world (re)presented. The world of the protagonists of the film appears to be constructed of two connected spaces: internal and external.

These internal and external spaces in the film "Breathe Deeply" are both visible as in the sequence of heroes meeting at a party, where the apartment acts as inside, although depicting the performative, extravert events, and balcony as outside, referring to revelations and mental work inside. The sequence of the bureaucrats deciding on the further destiny of Cēzars' songs shows the Soviet ideological machinery at work. Also in the film "Breathe Deeply" the events indoors are

contrasted to the space outside the window. The outside that is created by introducing documentary voiceless sequences of Riga, streetcars and clouds in the sky is in the film the internal mental world of the main hero, where he escapes from devastating and oppressing ideology. It can be concluded that the spaces in the film are connected and pervasive allowing characters to move rather freely from artistic expression to dreams and memories in spite of ideological constraints.

The connectivity of genres in the film "Breathe Deeply" relates to the historical momentum of its creation. Vail and Genis compare the ideological discourse of the late 1960s and the early 1970s to a distant rustle. They write that the fruitful ideas expressed in Soviet society as well-articulated word formulas have ceased functioning [Vail, Genis 2003]. In the film "Breathe Deeply" music is the space, where words function, but the ideological rustle of the censorial commission session is a distant noise. Only expressed as an artistic gesture words provoke, liberate and communicate feelings.

The film "Breathe Deeply" ends with a silent scene. In the Soviet discourse standing still meant holding back and stagnation meant silence, write Vail and Genis [Vail, Genis 2003]. In the final sequence of the film "Breathe Deeply" the protagonists – the musicians, the poet and the critic – face each other. Narratively the scene is entirely silent, but on the audial level the final song is undiegetic soundtrack. This song suggests that there is very little we know of each other. It can be summed up that the only way to know each other more is to occupy oneself with the individual inner world. The film ends with the announcement of the new song of the band. This announcement functions as a hopeful extension of the film space beyond the cinematic screen.

"Apple in the River": two genres and two worlds

The next film analysed under the perspective of connectivity of documentary and melodrama space in a film is *Ābols upē* ("Apple in the River", 1974), directed by Aivars Freimanis. This film unites a story of a young couple, of a fisher village on an island in the middle of the Daugava, the river that divides the city of Riga in two parts, and a story of building a new bridge to connect the two riverbanks and the island. The documentary sequence and fictional narrative are connected on the level of the director's plan and programme. It is the intention and challenge of and by the director Aivars Freimanis to conduct an experiment of documenting unscripted reality. Although Freimanis fails to abandon the script completely, the film he makes is unique in challenging borders of genre and representation.

The film "Apple in the River" is a kaleidoscope of genres, quotations, metaphors, improvisations and other cinematic tools. The space of documentary in the film forms its largest part. It includes a longitudinal observation and interviews.

Figure 3. *Ābols upē* ("Apple in the River", 1974). Anita (Akvelīna Līvmane) and Jānis (Ivars Kalniņš) are on a bridge that does not connect anything. Photograph by Ojārs Griķis, from the collection of LAC Riga Film Museum

Freimanis also engages freshman actors – Ivars Kalniņš and Akvelīna Līvmane, who are supposed to re-enact and improvise behaviour of the young people of the day. The effect of fresh, cinematically virgin faces re-enacting "themselves" in documentary manner failed due to extensive production period, during which actors became famous by their other roles [Zeltiņa 2004]. Unscripted improvisation of young actors, staged sequences of archaeological excavations and intrusive voice-over of the narrator construct the challenging space of the film "Apple in the River".

This film is an authorial project. The director attempts to unite production tools of fiction and documentary cinema in his own understanding. The sequences of interviews, observations of private lives and commentaries, the footage of industrial processes and the views of Riga create a space that is only loosely connected to form a plot by the intention of the director. However, by the effect of connectivity of genre spaces, a different meaning of the film space is constructed.

The connectivity of genre spaces in the film "Apple in the River" is unique due to its historical construction capturing dynamics of the 1970s. The film is featured by the extensive production period of four years from 1971 to 1975. The fragmented micro narratives are united by the location and the observation, in this way producing a variation of slow cinema film. The staged pseudo-documentary

sequences, where actors are engaged, are close to the genre of mockumentary. In this way the genre spaces of the film are complex and complicated, connected in multiple ways engaging the author, the subjects of observation and the viewers. At the same time these players are not involved with each other. The absent effect of involvement can be explained by presence of the narrator's voice in the mode off-screen commentary about the events on the screen.

Apart from the omnipresent camera another tool of marking and connecting spaces in the film is an intrusive, didactic male narrator's voice. Both voice and camera suggest that the spaces are connected, permeable and observable. The ironic commentary of the all-knowing narrator creates an insurmountable distance between the film crew, the characters, the subjects of documentary observation and the film audience. In the world of the film the inner speech of the protagonists cannot be heard. Their thoughts and feelings cannot be discovered with cinematic tools. This paradox of being engaged, but not involved (re)constructs the social situation of the 1970s in the USSR.

The paradoxically connected spaces in the film "Apple in the River" reflect the situation in the society, where the power holders are alienated and not trusted, the private and inner mental life exists, but is impossible to approach it. Irony is employed as the only way of dealing with the dissatisfying, seemingly stable and perceived as unchangeable situation of the 1970s in Soviet Latvia. (This film's reception has been previously analysed by me for the anniversary volume of Ābrams Kleckins, see Krilova, 2010.)

Conclusions

To sum up the analysis of the three Latvian films produced in the ten years from the middle of the 1960s to 1970s in Latvia as part of the USSR it can be stated that in this case the hypothesis appears valid. The distinctions between fictional narrative cinema and documentary cinema seem to be of generic nature that allows connecting these spaces in the wholeness of a single film. In the spacetime continuum of a film divide between documentary and fiction cinema is wiredrawn. Mix of cinematographic genres within one cinematographic text functions as a meaning-making element. Analysis of connectivity of generic spaces, documentary and fiction spaces, allows speculations on construction of the social space of film's production momentum. The films produced at the Riga Film Studio, as well as other European fiction films in the 1960s, deal with the issue of approaching reality, or fiction versus documentary, non-fiction, cinema in an innovative cinematographic mode of representation.

The innovative cinematographic way of dealing with fiction and non-fiction, e.g. documentary films in the 1960s connect these two genre spaces. The docu-

mentary sequences here are not the inserted documentary sequences filmed by others for other purposes as it has been practised before and is still done nowadays. In the 1960s documentary sequences were produced by film authors in the framework of production of this unique film and integrated into the time space continuum of the film as a natural and equal part of it. French Nouvelle Vague, Italian neorealism, Latin American "imperfect cinema" employ the attentive camera to capture non-dramatized details of the time and space. At the same time filmmakers claim for truth was based now on honesty and reflections about their own engagement with and in the filmed and the screened reality.

From the perspective of genre, a newly defined term of "connectivity" can be used to describe this phenomenon. The term "connectivity" is inspired by topology, where spaces can be connected in one unit or be disjointed. Media researcher José van Dijck is occupied with mechanisms and effects of new social media such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. In her book *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media,* 2013, she employs the notion of connectivity, used in graph theory, planning of space, landscape and transport, to describe the transformation culture undergoes along with developments in networks of communication. The most recent technological application of the term is to speak of the Internet connectivity that is the means by which individual terminals, computers, mobile devices and local area networks connect to the global Internet in a permeable way. Van Dijck argues both metaphorically and technologically that the culture of participation in the networks of communication is replaced by the culture of connectivity, where social media platforms, offering space for social participation, gather data and make connections and suggestions based on algorithms developed from the previous decisions of participants. In the culture, so precisely described by van Dijck, I see that on the one hand there are still individual decisions as the source of following network activity; on the other hand, the network activity gains its own medial flow and monetary value. My implication of the term connectivity to describe space of genre in film is of more metaphorical, but still related kind.

In the European films of the 1960s the genres of documentary and fiction films are used side by side within the framework of one film. The original documentary sequences are employed in fiction films to designate the time and space of narrative, the documentary films employ experimental techniques, archival footage and photographs, interviews with historians, vérité camerawork, animation. The film *Vals im Bashir,* 2008 (directed by Ari Folman) is one of the recent vivid examples of the interconnected spaces of memories, dreams, interviews, documentary sequences and animation to create a unique cinematic space of and for feelings. The practice of including documentary sequences in fiction films is not new for the 1960s as well as it is not limited to the decade.

The Latvian cinema offers a wide range of instances for this generic merge of documentary and fiction film. The connectivity of genre spaces within a film allows great variety of interpretations and meanings. The additional effect of the connectivity of genre spaces is the flexibility of the viewer's position – in the films "Two", "Apple in the River" and "Breathe Deeply" the documentary sequences created in the traditions of Riga poetic documentary school place the audience closer to the protagonists. Moreover, the documentary and fiction sequences filmed next to one another at the streets of Riga grant the city a status of an independent living dynamic character.

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Appendixes

Figure 1. *Divi* (*Dvoe*/ "Two",1965). Author unknown, Archive of cinema, photo- and phono-documents of the Republic of Latvia.

Figure 2. *Elpojiet dziļi* ("Breathe Deeply or Four White Shirts", 1967). Photo by Juris Dzenis, collection of Riga Film Museum.

Figure 3. *Ābols upē* ("Apple in the River", 1974). Photo by Ojārs Griķis, collection of Riga Film Museum.

THE PORTRAYAL OF WORKERS IN THE 1970s FILMS OF WOJCIECH WISZNIEWSKI

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Abstract

This article examines representation of workers in the 1970s films of the renowned Polish documentary filmmaker, Wojciech Wiszniewski (1946–1981), whose style is described as *creative documentary*. Wiszniewski is best known for questioning traditional *socialist* work ethics, as epitomised by the figure of a shock worker and his or her representation according to socialist realist aesthetics. In this way, his films make the viewers reflect on the difference between the 1950s and the 1970s, when they were made.

I will consider Wiszniewski's representations of shock workers and ordinary people in films such as *Opowieść o człowieku, który wykonal 552% normy* ("A Story of a Man Who Filled 552% of the Quota", 1973), *Wanda Gościmińska, włókniarka* ("Wanda Gościmińska, A Weaver", 1975) and *Stolarz* ("The Carpenter", 1976) against the background of the Polish history and ideology of state socialism.

Keywords: *Wojciech Wiszniewski, creative documentary, shock worker, state socialism, Edward Gierek.*

In this article I will analyse representation of workers in the 1970s films of Wojciech Wiszniewski. Wiszniewski is best known for questioning traditional *socialist* work ethics, as epitomised by the figure of a shock worker and his or her representation according to socialist realist aesthetics, therefore at first sight his films appear to belong to the 1950s rather than the 1970s. By the same token, however, they make the viewers reflect on the difference between *then* and *now* (where *now* is the time when Wiszniewski made his films). His works also break the boundaries between fiction and documentary cinema. Wiszniewski's films are

classified as *creative documentaries* and Mirosław Przylipiak goes as far as asking whether we should use the term *documentary* at all to describe them [Przylipiak 1984: 16].

I will take a route from the general to the particular, and from the past to the present. I will first present the 1970s and then move to analysing the films. In my discussion I will employ a Marxist framework. This is because, in my opinion, no other thinker captured as adequately as Marx the reality of work under capitalism and his analysis is still valid. The second reason is that, during the post-war period, until the fall of state socialism in 1989, the Polish economy and social life was allegedly organised according to Marxist principles. Using a Marxist lens thus allows us to ask whether and to what extent Polish reality adhered to the ideal of a *workers' paradise*.

My analysis can also be seen as a polemic with writing the history of East European cinema, first prevailing in the West, and after the fall of communism also in the East, which neatly divides these cinemas into a superior type, created by romantic dissidents and an inferior one, produced by filmmakers obedient to the regime (on such conceptualisation of the cinemas of Eastern Europe see Imre 2005: xii-xiv). Such an approach not only leads to a neglect by historians of the supposedly *inferior type*, but also to attempts to amplify the dissident stance of filmmakers belonging to the first group and playing down everything which might suggest their sympathy to the communist regime. In contrast to this approach, I attempt to demonstrate that the attitude of Wiszniewski to the communist idea and the practices of state socialism were more complex than this *romantic dissident versus oppressive state* paradigm suggests, and even that, from today's perspective, some of his films might be seen as apologies of this system.

The 1970s as a watershed

From the perspective of European economy and politics, the 1970s (which metaphorically began after 1968) constitute a watershed. At the beginning of the decade, Western countries conformed to rules, set out by Henry Ford and John Maynard Keynes, which defined a specific version of capitalism, known as "embedded liberalism", because under this system the economy was embedded in state institutions. It was also marked by heavy taxation, a drive towards near-full employment and maintaining the welfare state. By the end of the 1970s the West took a new direction towards neoliberalism, marked by the financialisation of all spheres of economic activity and human life [Harvey 2005]. Under neoliberalism, as in the classical Marxist model of capitalism, money is the absolute king. The shift can thus be seen as a gradual purging of socialism from politics and economy.

In some Eastern European countries, including Poland, one could also

observe a movement away from the centralised and planned economy towards a more mixed system, in which private enterprises were, if not openly encouraged, then at least tolerated. In the 1970s the word *socialism* was frequently preceded by *real* or *actually existing*, suggesting that *real socialism* is not true socialism and Poles have to content themselves with an ersatz. Censorship was also lighter during this period. The drive towards the West was mirrored in better relations between socialist and capitalist countries, so called Détente, culminating in the Helsinki Accords in 1975. The multi-layered changes were reflected in the change of leadership of the Party: the aged, ascetic and conservative Władysław Gomułka was replaced in 1970 by a much younger, *liberal* and worldly Edward Gierek. Gierek previously worked as a miner in France and Belgium, where he was also active in the communist movement.

However, these pro-capitalist reforms were regarded as either insufficient or heading in the wrong direction. This is because rather than introducing any deeper technological and social changes, the authorities merely embarked on a programme of improving housing and the production of consumer goods, mostly to appease the discontented population. The drive towards consumption (condemned under Gomułka as a western malaise), was marked by increases in the private ownership of cars and country cottages. Consumption was in a large part financed by western credit. Its key source was the flood of dollars which poured from multi-billionaire OPEC states, distributed by the international banking system in the form of loans to anyone who wanted to borrow. For the socialist countries which succumbed to it, notably Poland and Hungary, loans seemed a providential way of simultaneously paying for investment and raising their people's standard of living [Hobsbawm 1995: 474].

The social reforms failed to create a more transparent and egalitarian public sphere or establish an efficient administration. Professional advancement at work was often linked to political loyalty. Such an attitude created a sense of unfairness and was regarded as a factor in the East lagging behind the West. However, dissatisfaction, at least among the intelligentsia, did not lead to revolt, but passive resistance, half-expressed and misplaced grudges, or adopting a *dual consciousness*, one at home and a different one in public. Such strategies allowed citizens to vent their frustrations without seriously risking their place in official life. "Real socialism" worked relatively well, as long as the standard of living was rising, which indeed happened in Poland in the first half of the 1970s. The conformist behaviour of Poles during this period confirms Václav Havel's reading of late communist societies as "post-totalitarian": "The post-totalitarian system has been built on foundations laid by the historical encounter between dictatorship and the consumer society" [Havel 1985: 38]. However, when the flood of dollars dried up,

the situation appeared even worse than before and political dissatisfaction grew, leading to the anti-establishment mass movement of Solidarity. My argument is that Wiszniewski engages with these various facets of the 1970s, including consumerism, as well as looking at Polish history from this particular vantage point.

Wiszniewski – work and history

Wojciech Wiszniewski was born in 1946 and died of a heart attack while working on his first full-length fiction film in 1981. The dates of his life are symbolic, the first signifies that he belongs fully to the post-war generation; the second that he experienced no other life than that under the system of state socialism. The dramatic period of the "first Solidarity" mostly eluded him. Wiszniewski's short working life practically coincides with the 1970s; he made his first student's etude in 1967 and his last film in 1978 and the majority of his films portray working-class people.

The director tends to look at the person's work in the context of his or her entire life, but pays little attention to the intricacies of specific occupations. Either this aspect is not presented in his film at all or is reduced to conventional gestures associated with a specific job, such as polishing a piece of wood in *Stolarz* ("The Carpenter", 1976) or presenting the worker against the background of the factory or his/her machine, as in *Opowieść o człowieku, który wykonal 552% normy* ("A Story of a Man Who Filled 552% of the Quota", 1973) and *Wanda Gościmińska, włókniarka* ("Wanda Gościmińska, A Weaver", 1975). In this way Wiszniewski suggests that what he was most interested was work in the context of politics and history, as opposed to processes of work. Such an impression is strengthened by the off-screen commentary, typically belonging to the protagonist who ponders on the changing historical circumstances of his/her work. The most important shift is from pre-war capitalist Poland to the Poland of state socialism. Inevitably, Wiszniewski engages with the ideologies of capitalism and socialism, and with the aesthetic traditions of representing work, most importantly socialist realism. For the purpose of this study, I will divide his films into those about exceptional workers, ordinary manual workers and the lumpenproletariat. Some of Wiszniewski's films do not fit entirely one category, pointing to the fact that the artist is aware of a certain fluidity of the world of work. People can move from one category to the other when external circumstances change.

Wiszniewski's films representing exceptional workers attracted more attention from Polish scholars than his remaining films and virtually all authors who discuss them render Wiszniewski as an ardent critic of Stalinism and socialism at large, who used his characters to mock this system [Przylipiak 1984; Głowa 1996; Mąka-Malatyńska 2006; Śliwińska 2006]. Such an interpretation, which fits the wider

paradigm of an "author-lone hero against the oppressive state", as mentioned earlier, is supported by the fact of "shelving" many of Wiszniewski's films. However, without undermining Wiszniewski's personal struggle with the authorities I propose to read his films as complex statements about the Polish Stalinist past and socialism at large, reflecting the ambiguity of the ideological positions of the bulk of the Polish intelligentsia in the 1970s, including that of the director himself.

The first film about an exceptional worker is "A Story of a Man Who Filled 552% of the Quota", which apparently inspired the celebrated movie by Andrzej Wajda, *Człowiek z marmuru* ("Man of Marble", 1977). The titular character, Bernard Bugdol, was a shock worker after the Second World War, especially in the years 1948–49. He broke records for extracting coal, when working in the mine with his brother. Rather than simply establishing what happened during the time of Bugdol's greatest successes, Wiszniewski assesses the event from a (then) contemporary perspective, the 1970s. This is indicated by including in the film an introduction and a coda, which is set in the television studio, where a programme about Bugdol is being made, presumably the same programme we are currently watching. This framing points to the fact that Wiszniewski is interested not only in Bugdol's real life, but also the play between his life and its media image, perhaps because, in a postmodern fashion, he does not believe in an unmediated reality.

The early shot shows an ordinary block like those where the majority of working class people lived in Poland and where presumably Bugdol dwelled during a large part of his life, although later we see him in his own house (which might be a summer dacha). For a moment he shoots Bugdol from the back and then edits it with the image of the back of a statue, one of a number adorning the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, which represents Bugdol or rather a generic shock worker, based on his image. This editing announces that the film will confront the real man with his monument. For the remainder of the film Wiszniewski offers us numerous official and unofficial representations of Bugdol, as if he attempted to account for different perspectives from which this type can be perceived and contextualised. Such a method brings to mind *Citizen Kane* (1941) by Orson Welles and the previously mentioned "Man of Marble", both films expressing scepticism in the possibility of telling the truth, understood as a version which everybody will accept. The film thus seems critical of socialist realism and Hollywood cinema, which favour simple stories over ambiguous ones. We hear verses and songs devoted to shock workers, most importantly Wincenty Pstrowski, Bugdol's better known predecessors, who introduced competition to the Polish factories after the Second World War. Wiszniewski also shows fragments of old newsreels and a kind of comic strip or a family album devoted to Bugdol's achievements. These official representations are juxtaposed with members of his family and work mates musing

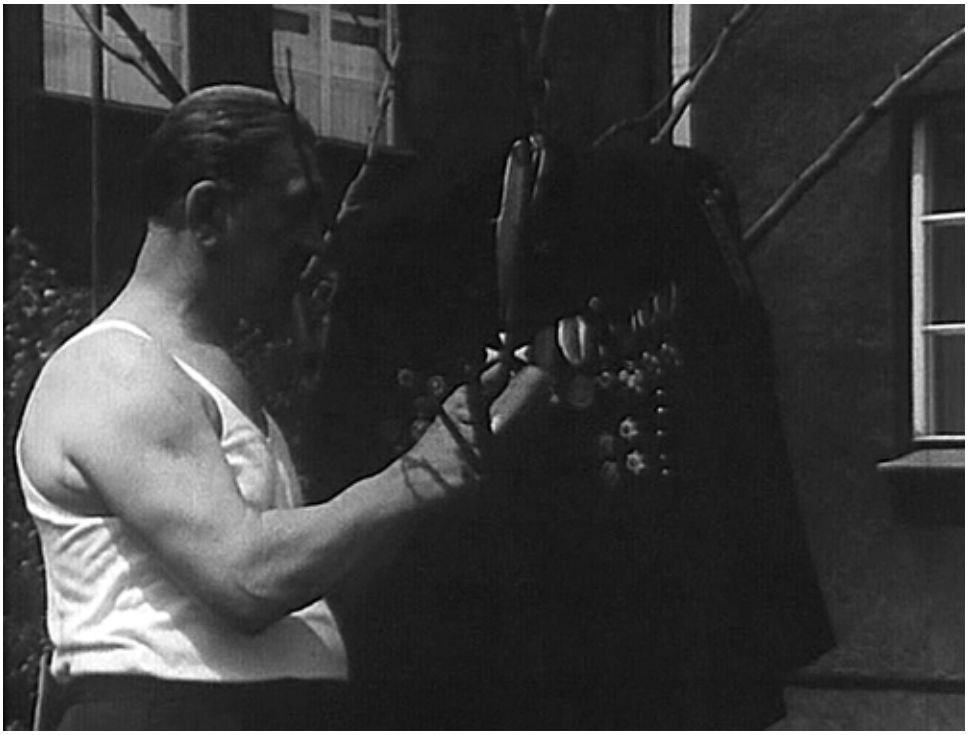
on his past, as well as his own responses to some questions referring to the value of his methods, presumably asked off screen. While in the official representations Bugdol's attitude to work is presented as an example for everybody to follow, in the memories of others we get his less flattering portrayal. Bugdol is subjected to two principal criticisms. Firstly, some claim that his successes had a negative effect on other workers because they undermined their achievements and led to an increase of their quotas. The shock worker thus made everybody else look mediocre. The second criticism comes from his wife who says that preoccupation with work made Bernard neglect his family and treat his wife with a sense of superiority. Bugdol responds to the first criticism that as a result of competition workers did not need to exert their muscles more than normal because the socialist competition was about working smarter rather than harder. He also adds that work quotas would have increased anyway due to progress in technology and the organisation of work, leading to gains in productivity. Ultimately, his pioneering work was meant to make people work less rather than more. Improvements in working methods were also necessary in the context of the backwardness of Polish industry in the late 1940s. Without the work, he pioneered Poland would lag behind forever. Instead, prosperity was achieved. Bugdol also mentions that at some stage he was touring mines and other enterprises to introduce socialist competition and his ideas were taken up in steelworks and textile mills, proving that they were effective.

Bugdol also achieved success in other spheres of public life. He was a director of two mines, an MP, and a chairman of one of the most successful Polish football clubs, *Górnik Zabrze*. He also received a university education, becoming an engineer. These successes are not mentioned in the film, which might suggest that Wiszniewski did not want to praise the socialist system too much. Bugdol's prosperity might also be seen as his partial response to his wife's criticism that the shock worker felt superior over her; he did so in the manner many men (and women), both in the East and in the West, feel superior over their spouses when they are extraordinarily successful. Moreover, we see Bugdol's family together, suggesting that any differences the couple had were put aside and the family remained intact. Ultimately it remained, if not a perfect, then at least a functioning family. Watching the film now I cannot help but think about another Polish family of an exceptional worker, as portrayed on screen: that of Lech Wałęsa in the recent film by Andrzej Wajda, *Wałęsa: Człowiek z nadziei* ("Wałęsa: Man of Hope", 2013). In this family we also encounter a wife begrudging her husband for putting first his work rather than his family and for being arrogant, but this is not a reason to leave him. If anything, such a situation reflects a patriarchal system affecting the way families functioned both in the East and in the West, under the condition of state socialism and capitalism.

"Work competition" and "shock working"[1] appear in the Marxist discourse on work, but not in the context of the ideal future system, that of communism, but its opposite: capitalism. In *Capital* Marx referred to workers forced to work so intensively and for such long hours that they appeared as if in a state of shock. This idea was developed in due course by Walter Benjamin who compared workers labouring in a factory to shell-shocked soldiers [Benjamin 2007: 176–78]. Their argument was that shock was needed by the workers to sustain the oppression of toil. In the Marxist discourse there is nothing positive about competition: it is an instrument of oppressing and fragmenting the working class, and in this way preventing the communist revolution. Not surprisingly, to square the realities of working under the conditions of state socialism with Marxist principles, the state ideologues had to argue that shock working is a special case of competition, very different from the capitalist model, as reflected by adding the word "socialist" to it. This is also the line adopted by Bugdol. He argues that socialist competition served the worker and the whole society, unlike its capitalist counterpart, which was a means to extract surplus value from the worker to enrich the capitalist. Moreover, Bugdol emphasises that shock working was merely a temporary measure; it was suitable to the period following wartime destruction, but not later periods, when the work of manual labourers was increasingly taken by what Marx terms "general intellect". Bugdol's professional successes and his prosperity act as confirmation that socialist competition led to the enrichment of the worker, unlike under capitalism, where the more the worker produces, the poorer and more alienated he is. One cannot find a better advertisement for state socialism as a system which rewards generously hard work.

And yet, as many authors notice, Bugdol's face expresses discomfort or sadness, as if he had to defend his position rather than bask in his glory. However, this sadness does not mean either that Wiszniewski renders Bugdol's life as wasted or that he presents him, as Głowa puts it, as "fossilised", namely locked in the past and immune to new ideas [Głowa 1996: 212]. On the contrary, Bugdol strikes me as somebody with an acute sense of history and understanding of the character of work in a modern society. Rather his sadness results from his retirement and understanding that his successes were so spectacular that he would not be able to match them in the present; he can only re-live them, by polishing his awards, looking at old pictures or giving interviews to people like Wiszniewski. But who in

[1] In Polish language there is a term for "work competition" (*współzawodnictwo pracy*), but not for "shock work". The shock worker in Polish is described as leader of work (*przodownik pracy*), most likely to avoid the negative connotations resulting from bringing together "shock" and "work".



Bernard Bugdol polishing his medals in "A Story of a Man Who Filled 552% of the Quota"

their advanced age would not like to be in such a position? Watching the film now, when opportunities for social promotion diminished due to fierce competition for scarce jobs, Bugdol's story comes across almost as a fairy tale.

The titular character of "Wanda Gościmińska, A Weaver" can be described as a female version of Bugdol. In common with the famous miner, Gościmińska was also a shock worker, whose achievements were showcased in communist propaganda. She was chosen as one of *Ludzie Trzydziestolecia* ("People of the 30 Years [of Socialist Poland]"): an exclusive club of those who contributed in an exceptional way to People's Poland's growth and prosperity.

The film begins with Gościmińska presenting in a voice-over the main facts about her life. We learn that she was born in Łódź, which in the nineteenth century was the cradle of Polish capitalism and by the same token a hub of the working-class movement, and her parents, who had five children, were both workers, with mother also labouring as a weaver. This description renders Gościmińska as a model worker. The fact that her self-presentation contains only essential facts, as opposed to any subjective information, suggests that Wiszniewski is interested

only in what is typical in Gościmińska's life and persona. However, this does not mean that, as Mąka-Malatyńska argues, Gościmińska in Wiszniewski's film comes across as "an artificial character, cut according to the socialist realist pattern" [Mąka-Malatyńska 2006: 112]. Rather, she was chosen by the director because she embodied a socialist realist ideal – there was no gap between her personal views and those promoted by the communist ideology. By the same token, there was a fit between her private and public persona. If she comes across as monumental, then Wiszniewski is as guilty of this "sin", as were the socialist realist artists, by opting not to make his film in a naturalist style, but shooting what Mirosław Przylipiak describes as a "creative documentary" [1986].

"Wanda Gościmińska, A Weaver" is divided into several parts, which are numbered, suggesting that the weaver's life had a specific order, bringing to mind the stages of Christ's road to crucifixion. The idea that "Gościmińska" represents more than her own life is also conveyed by showing her at the beginning among several people of different professions, such as a miner, a farmer and an engineer, standing in monumental poses with their tools in their hands, reminiscent of Soviet political posters under Lenin and Stalin [on Soviet posters see Bonnell 1997]. We also see Gościmińska cutting a loaf of bread, which looks enormous due to using a low-angle shot, and tracking shots of hands in close-ups with dirty or broken fingernails. In the voice over the protagonist alludes to pre-war poverty, saying that her mother cut the bread into small pieces, because it had to suffice for the whole day, while the children wanted to eat it all at once. The hands and the bread stand for working life, which state socialism was meant both to edify and transcend by giving the workers something more than just daily bread.

One part of the film is devoted to the crisis of the early 1930s, which in Europe led to widespread poverty and finally to the Second World War. Visually this is signified by the image of a man chopping a table with an axe (so that the wood can be used as heating material), followed by a shot of a long line of people, queuing for unemployment benefit and one man with a table attached to his body with a sign "I will accept any work". Gościmińska informs us how hard it was to live during this period. The sounds of *International* ending this episode allude to the weaver's joining the communist movement. In a subsequent part entitled "Generations" Gościmińska appears among young people, dressed in white shirts with red ties, a sign of their belonging to the "socialist youth". The youngsters ask her various questions concerning her work and she replies in a calm, patient voice. However, the last question, what can they learn from her example, remains unanswered and instead we hear the noise of clapping hands, perhaps a reference to the fact that in socialist Poland difficult questions were not answered but drowned by exclamations and praises of the communist propaganda.

Wiszniewski's character describes the year 1945 as a year of liberation from a double yoke: that of Hitlerism and capitalism. Like Bugdol, she mentions that when Poland was destroyed, there was a lot of work to do and not enough people to do it. In such circumstances socialist competition was the best way to ensure that Poland was rebuilt and the vital needs of the population were met. There was great demand for textiles and the machines, left by capitalist owners, could not stand idle. For her, who used to beg for any paid work, being rewarded in proportion for her effort constituted great opportunity, which she could not turn down. She says that "somebody has to be first", which most likely means not just the first to work, but also work in a new, more productive way, in her case working on more machines.

In due course Gościmińska is shown at home, sitting at a table surrounded by her relatives and friends, most likely celebrating her success as a "Woman of 30 Years" with food and alcohol. The background to this reception is old newsreels, showing workers engaged in rebuilding the country. The food looks very appealing and everybody enjoys their meal, which gives the impression that in socialist Poland hard work pays well – it leads to an abundance of material goods and joy. Only Gościmińska does not eat, but this is not because she slights the food, but because she is represented as being somewhat above such earthly pleasures, like a goddess placed among ordinary mortals. That Gościmińska is a super-heroine, a towering figure, is confirmed in the part, when we see her again among representatives of different professions, standing still at the two sides of a long hall, most likely in the Palace of Culture, with their tools in their hands, again in a way typical of Soviet posters. They represent those who in 1949 were rewarded by the state with a special medal, commemorating their contribution to building socialism in Poland. The camera is moving slowly between them to reach Gościmińska in the end. She is placed at the top of this assembly, as if she was the most important person among them, perhaps because she is the only woman in this male-dominated society, reflecting the marginalisation of women under state socialism, despite the rhetoric of gender equality. The weaver mentions that her professional achievements made her study and act politically, a fact reflected in her receiving a managerial position, although not as high as that of Bugdol, again reflecting the gender bias in socialist Poland, as elsewhere in the Eastern bloc.

Although the film begins with the image of work-worn hands, suggesting that heavy work leaves a deep scar on the worker, Wiszniewski's heroine does not come across as destroyed by work, but beautified by it. Her clothes are discreetly elegant, emphasising her shapely figure and she wears high heels, more like a professional woman than an ordinary weaver, not least because she became a professional woman thanks to her high achievements as a shock worker. Her face is also more

attractive than her official portrait on a banner, on which her features look coarse, most likely to reflect the fact that in socialist realist art workers were meant to look simple and depersonalised. The overall impression is that in her case socialist work paid well, not only in material terms, but also because it allowed her to become a self-confident woman with a distinctive personality and her own place in Polish history. All in all, Gościmińska's story can be seen as a socialist version of the "from shoeshine to millionaire" narrative.

However, "Wanda Gościmińska, A Weaver" suggests that Gościmińska's case belongs to the past, even more so than Bugdol's who in the film has to face questions about the value of his work methods for contemporary people. This impression is conveyed by the previously mentioned techniques of monumentalisation, such as shooting the protagonist from below, which renders her colossal and in static poses, as if frozen in time, and using close-ups. Mary Ann Doane argues that the close-up conveys a desire "to stop the film, to grab hold of something that can be taken away, to transfer the relentless temporality of the narrative's unfolding to a more manageable temporality of contemplation" [Doane 2003: 97]. The close-ups applied by Wiszniewski suggest that we should watch her closely; in the same way we tend to read history books, trying to draw lessons from the past. Another means which locates Gościmińska in the heroic past is the use of an almost monochromatic image. It appears that the whole film is shot in black and white with the exceptions of patches of red, for example, on a banner carried by the workers. As is well known, red is the colour of communism; it was extensively used on communist posters and in the most famous film about the proletariat struggle, Sergei Eistenstein's *Bronenosets Potemkin* ("Battleship Potemkin", 1925). Victoria Bonnell notes that colour symbolism in Soviet political posters resonated with religious art; the colour red served in religious icons to identify the sacred [Bonnell 1997: 32]. In my opinion, Wiszniewski shows awareness of this symbolism; for the communists like Gościmińska a red banner is like the cross for Christians.

The techniques of monumentalisation and even sacralisation, in which Wiszniewski indulges, do not mean, as Mąka-Malatyńska claims, that Wiszniewski mocks socialist realism and by the same token Stalinism, but merely that he recognises that this period belongs to the past. Moreover, the fact that he uses these techniques, only exaggerating them, rather than offering us a distinctly different view on Gościmińska's life, suggests that, like a model postmodernist, he is unable or unwilling to move beyond what his predecessors (artists representing socialist realism) created. His response to socialist realist "lies" about the shock workers, is not to offer us a competing narrative about them (which would be the case in Wajda's "Man of Marble"), but merely exaggerating the salient features of this narrative, as in the case of paying homage to earlier works.

The principal character of ...*Sztygar na zagrodzie*... ("Foreman on a Farm", 1978), Stanisław Mazur, is not a shock worker, who exceeds the prescribed quota, but somebody who thanks to his successes as a miner embarks on the task of helping an ailing farming community which he left a long time ago, most likely to pursue a more attractive career in the coal industry. The story has a distinct beginning and end, 7 May 1976 and 11 November 1977, the dates when the protagonist and his family arrived at and left a village in the South of Poland named Rydulty Nowe. It is suggested that the miner came there not of his own accord, but in response to a request from the political authorities. On his arrival he found his own house in ruins and embarked on bringing prosperity back to "his" people, by producing sausages. He succeeded, as represented in a stylised shot showing the miner and his family wreathed in rings of sausage in a pose which some critics compared to a Laokoon group. Such an image suggests that the miner-cum-farmer's achievement was greater than life, not unlike the triumphs of Greek heroes.

However, as with Bugdol, we learn that Mazur's efforts were not appreciated by everybody. Some villagers treated the newcomers with hostility, of which the clearest sign was burning his car. It appears that the countrymen begrudged him because his success rendered them failing, and he made them work hard. The film lays bare two shortcomings, which in the 1970s were perceived as Polish cardinal sins: laziness and spite, to which the director also referred, although in a less conspicuous way, in his films about Bugdol and Gościmińska. If the film is critical about the socialist way of work, this is not because the shock workers failed, but rather because the rest of the society failed, not being able to live up to the socialist ideals, behaving more like a disruptive and reactionary lumpenproletariat, as described by Marx in "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" [Marx 1978]. I will argue that in his condemnation of the people from Rydulty Wiszniewski also reveals a typical prejudice of the Polish intelligentsia towards people from the countryside.

Mirosław Przylipiak argues that the story of a foreman can be interpreted as an allegory of Edward Gierek's career. Gierek, who became leader of the Party in the early 1970s, worked in his youth as an ordinary miner in France and Belgium, before he returned to Poland [Przylipiak]. He became the new Secretary in response to an invitation by the Party's executive, which needed a new man able to modernise the country. The modernisation ended very sour with Solidarity's attempt to take over power in the early 1980s and Gierek losing his position. After the fall of state socialism the prevailing opinion has been that Gierek's reforms were a failure, because he squandered western credits and did not go far enough in turning Poland into a capitalist state. However, a significant proportion of Poles look in nostalgia at his decade, believing that Gierek's was the last attempt to

improve socialism from within. If not for unfavourable external circumstances and his countrymen's refusal to collaborate with the Party leader, he would succeed in achieving universal prosperity. If we accept such an allegorical reading of "Foreman on a Farm", then we can argue that Wiszniewski anticipated Gierek's demise and suggested that this would not be due to the leader's incompetence, but rather to the failure of ordinary people to give him a helping hand. However, as with the films about Gościmińska and Bugdol, the prevailing opinion is that the monumentalising gestures signify the director's critical attitude to his characters and the entire past in which they operated [Śliwińska 2006; Przylipiak], rather than fascination with this period and admiration for their protagonists.

Stolarz ("Carpenter", 1976), similarly to *Wanda Gościmińska*, is told in the first person by a man who remembers working conditions in pre-war and war-torn Poland. However, on this occasion the main character is an ordinary worker, nonetheless proud of his achievements. The carpenter does not contrast the bad old days of capitalist exploitation with the good days of socialist competition, but points to the continuity between different periods of Polish history, based on the fact that irrespective of the political regime, people always need carpenter's skills. He mentions that at the beginning of the war he made cupboards where people could hide their belongings so they did not get confiscated, and at the end, following the unsuccessful Warsaw uprising, coffins for the dead insurrectionists. The only exception from the rule that a "carpenter always finds work" is the period of Stalinist rule, when the protagonist was forced to close down his workshop because it was a private business. At the time he found employment as a janitor. Moreover, the film does not finish by praising the socialist regime, but with the accusation of having a very small apartment despite working hard all his life. Hence, in contrast to the film about Bugdol, which pronounced the match between a person's work and his achievement, in "Carpenter" we get a sense of mismatch. Comparing the success stories of Bugdol and Gościmińska with the rather sour tale of the carpenter suggests that the communist regime over-rewarded exceptional workers at the expense of the ordinary ones, not unlike capitalism, which uses it as a measure to encourage entrepreneurship. Such criticism was frequently expressed in post-war Poland, as a claim that Poland was not really a "workers' country" because ordinary workers did not matter there.

The off-screen narrative of the carpenter is accompanied by two types of images and sounds. One shows a carpenter (whom we can identify as the protagonist) working with wood, mainly cutting a board with the saw. He is shown from a low angle, in a way which obscures most of his body, showing only his face and his hands. Often the camera is positioned in such a way that it appears that he is

making love. Similarly, the moaning sound produced by the saw cutting the wood can be mistaken for the sounds of ecstasy. If this was a conscious decision on the part of Wiszniewski, then the most likely idea behind such representation is to show that for a skilful and devoted worker the rhythm of work is like the rhythm of love. The fact that we always see the carpenter doing the same thing, while his story moves through time, adds to the impression that in reality his work remained the same, only its external circumstances changed. The image of the carpenter is juxtaposed with that of archival footage showing important events from the history of Poland and Europe. An excerpt showing a boy carrying pieces of wood through Warsaw before or during the Second World War or of Hitler greeting guests in his Bavarian villa, is repeated many times. In the opinion of Przylipiak, the repetitions undermine the reliability of the film we are watching, warning us not to believe in the "supposedly" documentary images [Przylipiak]. But such repetition might also suggest that the past is always present; we cannot detach ourselves from the past because it affects our chance of success in the present. Such an impression is also conveyed by low-angle shots, presenting the character enclosed by tall apartment blocks. It appears that although he works in an open space, in reality his margin of manoeuvre is small. Unlike Gościmińska, who transcended her position and metaphorically and literally left the factory, the carpenter remained bound to his tools and his class position. The voice-over belongs to Jan Himilsbach, the best-known Polish "natural" (non-professional) actor. Himilsbach, who was a mason, is remembered for his roles in many Polish cult films, including *Rejs* ("Cruise", 1970) by Marek Piwowski. Using Himilsbach in this role might suggest that the story presented in "Carpenter" is a typical fate of a Polish worker, unable to transcend his class. Such an idea is also conveyed by ending the film with the information that he lives in a tiny apartment. "Carpenter" is shot in black and white with only patches of red, the ultimate colour of communism. Predictably, we see a red flag hanging from the window of the apartment block where the carpenter lives. On this occasion, however, the red does not signify the triumph of socialist ideas, but plays an ironic function, pointing to the disparity between the ideals preached by the state and the reality of ordinary people's lives.

31 kwietnia – 1 maja (31 April – 1 May", 1970) opens with images of a run-down tenement block, suggesting a social milieu of the lowest rung of the working-class or the lumpenproletariat. The main character, a man in his twenties, lives there with his parents and a younger brother, which was a typical situation of adult children in post-war Poland. We see him when he leaves the house, either to go to work or to meet his drinking companions. The latter is suggested by a scene of him drinking beer near a kiosk, with other working-class men and women, an activity which in Poland of state socialism signified belonging to a lower stratum

of the working class, most importantly those without a regular job. Before that, on the staircase of his block, the young man meets a musician playing a mandolin and singing in the style of pre-war urban folklore. In this way Wiszniewski points to the continuity between the working-class tradition from the period before the war to the 1970s. It is worth adding that after the war this tradition was treated with suspicion, as it did not fit communal values, but rather attachment to individualism, such as being smart and cheating on others. However, the protagonist and his comrades subscribe to this (at the time of making the film) outdated idea full-heartedly. They all discuss some shabby deals, possibly stealing something or trading counterfeit goods. Near the end of the film the protagonist reveals that his ultimate goal is to have a car, a large house in the city or in the suburbs, lots of money and *not* to work. He does not mention any non-selfish goods such as strengthening socialism or serving his country; for Wiszniewski's character they belong to history's scrap heap. The idea that everything that matters in life are material goods, is juxtaposed with the motif of the special role of work and the working class in Polish post-war society. The protagonist himself says that he belongs to the working class because his mother and father are both workers and he is proud of his class background. Such a declaration, is, however, clouded in irony by the way it is presented, as if the character does not say it with his own words but repeats slogans learnt from the newspapers. Wiszniewski further undermines his sincerity by juxtaposing his speech about one's "fight to be working class", with images of the street fight of most likely drunken men or hooligans. The official discourse is also reflected in images of the May Day Celebration. Several times Wiszniewski shows a well-preserved Art Nouveau building on Piotrkowska, the main street of Lodz, decorated with banners and masses of people walking there with banners. We gather that the protagonist is among them, but not as a participant, but somebody in the crowd either because this is expected of him (participating in May Day celebrations was mandatory in Eastern European countries) or because he likes when "something happens".

The overall impression from this film is that in the 1970s Poland the working people led a double life: official and unofficial, and there was a huge gap between these lives, a statement supported both by common knowledge and sociological research [Świda-Ziemba 1998]. Both lives were inauthentic because the official life disrespected people's endeavour for material goods and a desire to express their individualism and the unofficial life was devoid of higher values and tainted by hypocrisy. This lack of authenticity is underlined by the ironic title of the film. 31 April does not exist in real calendars – it is a nowhere land suspended between the ordinary 30th of April and extraordinary 1st of May. Using such a title might also be a hint to the viewer that the director, due to censorship constraints, was

unable to represent either the official or unofficial life truthfully; he had to put both of them in some kind of brackets.

The background to the life of the main character are fragments of television programmes. Wiszniewski includes three such examples, each suggesting a specific narrative which is meant to fill Poles with pride. The first is a popular Polish series about the Second World War, *Czterej pancerni i pies* ("Four Tankmen and a Dog", 1966–70), about Poles winning the war thanks to collaboration with their Soviet ally. The second is a fragment of a football match, in which the Polish team is winning. It is presented by a charismatic sports reporter, Jan Ciszewski, known for his ability to amplify Polish successes. Finally, there is an excerpt from newsreels devoted to western hippies, who travel to India in search of spiritual enlightenment. The Polish commentary declares that these people obey no moral norms or goals, and their journey will be in vain. Implicitly, this assessment suggests that in Poland or the socialist world at large, people's lives are saturated with higher values. Judging by the life of Wiszniewski's protagonist, this is not the case; it is the life of his "socialist" protagonist which comes across as trite.

Conclusion

In this essay I considered the films of Wojciech Wiszniewski as representations of the situation and mind-set of Polish workers in different periods of Polish history, the times of Stalinist rule, which coincided with the period of rebuilding Poland after the destruction of war and the 1970s, a time of "soft" version of state socialism, when Poland undertook a rapid, even if unsuccessful modernisation. I also considered these films as expressing a particular position in relation to the values informing work in different periods of Poland's history. What transpires in his films is that work as discussed in their films is almost always seen by the protagonists as something more than economic activity, as it is seen in capitalism – a means to gain social recognition, transform one's country, even achieve metaphysical fulfilment. In this way the films, perhaps against their intention, validate state socialism as a system which offered more than just "daily bread".

Wiszniewski's films also point to the capacity of documentary cinema to do more than document the past or the present, namely to participate in ideological debate, thanks to their strong authorial stamp. Wiszniewski's self-referentiality, as conveyed especially in "A Story of a Man Who Filled 552% of the Quota", is nowadays taken for granted, as it is a staple diet of documentary films. However, in the 1970s he was at the forefront of what can be termed a postmodern turn in documentary cinema, not only in Poland, but in Europe at large.

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LATVIAN AMATEUR DOCUMENTARY FILM, 1970s–1980s: FAMILY, COMMUNITY, TRAVEL, AND POLITICS IN THE FILMS OF ULDIS LAPIŅŠ, INGVARS LEITIS, AND ZIGURDS VIDIŅŠ

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Abstract

In the 1950s, amateur filmmaking had become a well-established feature of everyday life in the Soviets Union. However, in contrast to the state film industry, no centralized governmental body existed to control amateur filmmakers. As a result, state ideology was not always the primary motivation for making amateur films. The works that dared to experiment invariably emerged from the periphery, and the Latvian SSR became one of the citadels of the Soviet amateur film movement. Drawing upon the amateur film collection held at the Latvian State Archive of Audiovisual Documents, this paper will identify and analyse the various functions that amateur documentary filmmaking performed beyond its ostensible mission of transmitting Soviet ideology, and examine its role in creating alternative political, social, and cultural meanings, and prospects for national identity development and heritage preservation. It will primarily focus on the documentaries by Uldis Lapiņš, Zigurds Vidiņš, and Ingvars Leitis made in the 1970 and the 1980s, and look at how they used everyday matters – such as family, community, and travel – to express artistically as well as to address broader social and political issues of life in the post-war Soviet society.

Keywords: *amateur film, home movie, Soviet Union, Latvia, documentary.*

The term *amateur* usually evokes two associations when applied to film. The first can be identified as non-narrative point-and-shoot scenes of family get-togethers, children, and pets, or what is most commonly known as a *home movie*. Apart from this, the term *amateur* is often associated with the examples of experimental cinema that challenge professional filmmaking and its infrastructure, in

view of the fact that the term was often used by experimental film practitioners to theorize their work [Deren 1965; Mekas 1972]. This duality has also been perpetuated in the initial academic discourse on amateur cinema, for instance, in the early writings of Patricia Zimmermann, that tended to conceptualize amateur filmmaking practices as either domestic or experimental, implying that these two are also mutually exclusive [Zimmermann 1995].

Such a theoretical framework becomes especially problematic when examining the amateur film tradition in the so-called Eastern Bloc. In fact, most of amateur films produced in various countries under Soviet-style socialism were made about diverse subjects outside the concern of the domestic sphere or the avant-garde. These films covered a wide range of topics, taking place in a variety of settings, and focusing on various people and events. Moreover, the amateur fiction films often drew on recognizable genres of mainstream professional cinema, such as drama, comedy, and fantasy, while non-fiction films developed more according to the documentary film tradition. Overall, they seem to be heavily inspired by mainstream cinematic language, thus their categorization as either domestic or experimental is simply invalid.

Maria Vinogradova is the first scholar to emphasize the difference between amateur filmmaking cultures in the socialist states and in the West in her study of the state-sponsored amateur film clubs in the post-Second World War Soviet Union. In her work, Vinogradova demonstrates that amateur filmmaking culture in the Soviet Union was the result of a state-sponsored non-professional filmmaking network, within which the creative use of film was promoted, technical experiments were encouraged, training was provided, and a variety of lectures, seminars, and amateur film festivals was organized [Vinogradova 2010; 2012]. Indeed, in the socialist states, and the Latvian SSR is no exception, it was common for amateur filmmakers to be a member of an amateur filmmaking club, a great number of which started to appear in the late 1950s, and which were supported through the system of professional unions. Thus, when analysing amateur filmmaking in the context of the Soviet Union, we have to bear in mind that socialist ideology was pushing amateur filmmaking out of the home and trying to encourage its social uses. At the same time, through various control mechanisms that were an inevitable component of state funding, its use for oppositional purposes was also limited. However, since amateur cinema in the Soviet Union had minimal distribution, no centralized governmental body existed to control and censor the output of amateur filmmaking clubs, in contrast to the professional film industry. All these factors created an ambivalent production and exhibition space situated between the private and public spheres, which in turn largely shaped amateur filmmaking practice in the socialist countries.

As pointed out by James Moran, this limiting dual understanding of amateur filmmaking – home movie versus experimental film – springs from "theorizing the mode of amateur practice as a genre, rather than as an economic relation" [Moran 2002: 64]. Moran is inspired by Michael Renov's essay *Toward a Poetics of Documentary*, in which the author conceptualizes documentary film as a mode of filmmaking and identifies and describes several functions that this mode can perform [Renov 1993]. By analogy, Moran proposes to view amateur filmmaking as "a mode (or modes) of practice", and claims that, by doing so, we may discover "common underlying cultural functions" that most, if not all, amateur films perform in one way or another, independent of their aesthetics, techniques, or subject matters [Moran 2002: 65–66]. That is, in order to construct a utilitarian taxonomy of amateur filmmaking practice and move away from the domestic versus experimental framework, we have to consider external factors, such as the intentions of its practitioners and the socio-historical contexts of their production, rather than examining the internal aspects of amateur film's textual signifiers [Ibid.].

Basing our analysis on Moran's ideas, we will assume that amateur film is not a genre with common themes, aesthetics, and techniques, but rather a production mode conditioned by a number of factors, used with various intentions, and fulfilling a number of functions. The question here is how was this production mode shaped by the socialist system? How do we make sense of the amateur filmmaking movement in Soviet Union in general and in the Latvian SSR in particular, where economy, artistic expressions, and even certain aspects of private life such as leisure were to a greater or lesser extent controlled by the state?

Conditioning factors

The nature of the post-war Soviet system shaped amateur filmmaking culture in the Soviet Union, including Latvia, in certain ways. The late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed the maturing of socialism that was manifested through development, professionalization, and centralization of all industries, including the film industry; as a result, professional filmmaking became available to relatively few. At the same time, technological developments in lightweight and amateur film equipment all over the world, including the Soviet Union, stimulated the appearance of numerous individual amateur filmmakers. This created a parallel filmmaking culture, outside the bounds of professional cinema and economic relations, and therefore outside the mass distribution network and the tight grip of the censorship.

In addition to this, the processes of de-Stalinization largely affected everyday life and leisure patterns of Soviet citizens. Many of Khrushchev's policies of the

late 1950s and early 1960s were targeted at making leisure more productive and social, which among other things led to the creation of the network of community-organized creativity clubs, or "*kruzhki samodeitelnosti*" [White 1990: 36–39]. Among various creativity clubs, amateur film studios started to appear on the premises of factories, collective farms, academies, and the so-called Houses, or Palaces, of Culture. For instance, in Latvia, the first amateur film studio was created in 1955 on the premises of the Palace of Culture of the State Electrotechnical Factory (*Valsts Elektrotehnikas Fabrika*, VEF) [Järvine 2005: 476]. Professional unions usually funded these studios; therefore, many individual amateur filmmakers were encouraged to join them to have access to expensive equipment and film stock, as well as to the environment of like-minded people, and platform for exhibiting one's work and learning from fellow amateurs.

These social, political, cultural, and economic factors shaped the functions that amateur filmmaking performed in the USSR. Thus, although sanctioned by the state, amateur filmmaking enjoyed a certain degree of creative and ideological freedom. As a result, state ideology and socialist-realist aesthetics were not always the primary motivation for making amateur films, especially in the case of the annexed states, like Latvia, where the regime never had the same degree of control.

The thematic variations of amateur films made in Latvia during the Soviet period are diverse. The majority of these films are documentaries on everyday topics that are quite neutral and ideologically correct: family, work, community, and travel. However, as suggested by Moran, we shall conceive of amateur film as a mode of practice, used with various intentions, and fulfilling certain functions, rather than as a genre. Elaborating upon Moran's and Renov's ideas cited above, and based upon my research of Latvian amateur films at the Latvian State Archive of Audiovisual Documents (*Latvijas Valsts Kinofotofonodokumentu Arhīvs*, LVKFFDA), I have identified several modal functions that Soviet Latvian amateur films exhibit, beyond their alleged mission of transmitting Soviet ideology. Below I would like to analyse three case studies that demonstrate some of these modal functions at work.

The art of the home movie: the case of Uldis Lapiņš' family films

When family films first became the subject of academic study, there was a tendency to regard them as documents that mainly served a social function, having little artistic motivation and commitment to filmmaking conventions. This approach is best exemplified by the work of Richard Chalfen, who coined the term *cinéma naïveté* to describe the naivety of the film language of family films [Chalfen 1987: 49]. However, as our knowledge of home-moviemaking has grown, and more examples of family films have been discovered, scholars have started to take a

closer look at family films that do not correspond with the formulation of *cinéma naïveté,* that are clearly driven by aesthetic ambitions, and that, rather than serving the function of an aide-mémoire, are committed to telling a story [Shand 2015; Roepke 2013].

The family films of Uldis Lapiņš are a good example of this home-moviemaking strand – they have little in common with the non-narrative footage of the everyday family life, and might be described as artful documentaries about the author's family, in which he expands moments captured in private film recordings into planned poetic narratives. Lapiņš undoubtedly saw the documentation of his family's life as an opportunity for artistic expression – his films are driven by aesthetic ambition as much as the desire to record and preserve fragments of his family's history.

In the post-war period, Lapiņš worked as a chief of production department of fishermen collective farm *1. Maijs* in the harbour town of Mērsrags, in the district of Talsi. He was the head of the *1. Maijs* amateur film studio, and, from the late 1950s to his death in 2011, made a large number of amateur films on very diverse topics, and dedicated several films to his family.

Lapiņš' *Lāčupīte* ("River Lāčupīte") is a family film that the author completed in 1978; it is essentially a story about Lapiņš' children, Andris and Gita, growing up. The concept behind this family film is quite extraordinary, as it is edited using the footage filmed over three decades. *Lāčupīte* starts with grown-up Andris and Gita coming to spend a day on the river bank in the present day, as suggested by the title *1978*. This is followed by the title *1968,* and we see Andris and Gita, ten years younger, having fun on the same river bank. The last instalment of the film is dated *1958,* in which little Andris is witnessed playing alone on the same riverbank and fishing (probably alluding to his father's profession); the viewer assumes that Gita is not yet born. The way this film is executed is undoubtedly a sign of thorough planning on the part of the filmmaker. Furthermore, we are also invited to assume that Lapiņš most probably directed his children in the 1978 segment for the purpose of the creation of poetic effect, as in the very beginning of the film we see a grown-up Gita sliding down the sand dune, mimicking the playful activities that Lapiņš shot in 1968, when she was a child. The poetic narrative of Lāčupīte is adorned with an epilogue quoting the poem by Latvian poetess Aspazija, called *Ilgu zeme* ("The land of longing", 1910):

> *…lai ietu caur visu pasauli,*
> *Tu nerasi vairs to zemīti.*
> […travelling across the whole world,
> you will no longer find that little land.]

Figure 1. Shots from Uldis Lapiņš' film *Lāčupīte* (1958–78), Latvijas Valsts kinofotofonodokumentu arhīvs

The poem was written by Aspazija during exile in Switzerland; in the context of Lapiņš' film (he lived most of his life in Latvia), the *land of longing* can be interpreted as his family's past.

Lāčupīte and other Lapiņš's family films – *Vēstule* ("Letter", 1972), *Ak, vasariņa, mīļa vasariņa* ("Oh, summer, lovely summer", year unknown), *Kad pagātne un nākotne tiekas* ("When past and present meet", 1985) – exhibit a high level of sophistication of storytelling. Through the portrayal of family relationships, they tend to explore broader philosophical themes – the beauty of nature, the passing of time and nostalgia, the strength of family ties and the persistence of family rituals, and go well beyond performing the social function described by Chalfen. For this reason, Lapiņš may be studied as an example of an amateur *auteur* – that is, as a director who exhibits stylistic and thematic continuity.

Seeing *between the lines* of Zigurds Vidiņš' community film *Pa mūsmājas logu* ("Through the Window of Our House", 1984)

Zigurds Vidiņš (born 1943) is better known for his professional filmmaking career in the post-Soviet period, as well as for his work with renowned Latvian documentary filmmaker Juris Podnieks. However, Vidiņš started his filmmaking career as an amateur in the 1970s, and worked at the People's Amateur Film Studio of the Academy of Sciences (*Zinātņu akadēmijas tautas kinostudija*, ZA TKS). Here I would like to examine his film *Pa mūsmājas logu* ("Through the Window of Our House", 1984).

As noted by Nicholson, amateur films showing local people and places are a staple of amateur filmmaking everywhere, because for an amateur filmmaker turning the camera to the world around him or her is a logical next step after recording his or her family. Community films in the context of amateur cinema focus on subjects that might be of little interest to the professional filmmakers, but are significant in the sense of preserving and reclaiming the memories and experiences of a given locality [Nicholson 2012: 118]. In the context of the Soviet amateur cinema, community amateur films often fit within the socialist ideological framework (or are at least politically neutral), and document local history, sports events, public celebrations, and the lives of local communities in general. However, in the context of Soviet Latvia, many amateur community films were born out of the conscious or subconscious desire to preserve certain aspects of the endangered national identity, as well as from the desire to interrogate the status of Latvia within the Soviet Union. "Through the Window of Our House" is a curious instance of implicit critique of the Soviet regime in Latvia, and at the same time a fascinating insight into the history and the present day of the Vērmane's Garden (*Vērmanes dārzs*), the oldest public garden in Riga.

The first several minutes of the film are dedicated to the garden's early history in the 1800s. However, the neutral tone of this historical insight changes as the film cuts to a newspaper clip which features a short article about the renaming of Vērmane's Garden as Kirov's park, and Kirov's bust being erected there, thus hinting at the beginning of the Soviet occupation. This is followed by an interview with a park visitor: she is critical of the way the park is managed currently, and mentions the lack of proper playgrounds for children – for example, the sandbox in the park is too small and dirty. Her interview is followed by an interview with Ēžens Bokanovs, who introduces himself to the camera as Park and Gardens, Renovation and Construction chief, stammering through his long title. He starts by claiming that the sand in the sandboxes is changed regularly and the park is cared for very well; he then contradicts himself by making a series of excuses for the poor condition of the park, and in the end blames everything on the

weather. Contrasting these two interviews is a curious way of commenting on the incompetence of the local authorities, and by extension the Soviet regime in Latvia, with the critical stance of the author remaining unobtrusive.

This sequence is followed by an interview with two old-time park visitors. One interviewee remembers: "There was a Lenin's... I mean Stalin's bust erected behind the fountains there. And then some year they removed it." The other interviewee adds: "He was already denounced then..." As they continue their conversation, we see the common photo of Stalin and Kirov in the newspaper, and thus make a mental connection that Kirov's bust probably took the place of Stalin's in the late 1950s, as a result of de-Stalinization. This sequence can be interpreted as a commentary on the Latvian people being a silent witness to the Soviet usurpation, watching one foreign cult personality replace the other (the interviewee's confusion over whose bust it was becomes quite significant in this connection).

The film finishes with footage of the park in winter, and we see a frontal shot of the Nativity of Christ Cathedral (*Kristus Piedzimšanas Pareizticīgo Katedrāle*), one of the majestic edifices that can be seen from inside the park. The Cathedral shot and the views of the park in snow suggest the holy time of Christmas, a very

Figure 2. Shot from Zigurds Vidiņš' film *Pa mūsmājas logu* (1984), Latvijas Valsts kinofotofonodokumentu arhīvs

significant period in Latvian Lutheran culture. However, this sequence is interrupted with the blasting sound of the military orchestra playing on the park's open stage as part of the New Year celebrations, the only winter holiday accepted in Soviet culture. At this point it becomes noticeable that Vidiņš is building the argument of his film through a number of contrasts on aural and visual levels: honest stories of the park visitors are contrasted with the officious language used by Bokanovs, the quiet Christmas – with military orchestra.

The authorial voice in this film is subdued. However, it can be seen to be critical, especially in view of Vidiņš' personal life and the other amateur and professional films he made. Vidiņš is known as a prominent environmental activist, and the issue of the environment became the area of "the first sustained expressions of dissatisfaction with the status quo", and especially in Latvia tended to be tightly linked to the national liberation movement of the late 1980s [Misiunas and Taagepera 1993: 304–305]. This motive is clearly present in *Pa mūsmājas logu*, and is even more pronounced in other Vidiņš' films, both amateur and professional.

Politically subversive ethnography: Ingvars Leitis' documentaries about Latvian communities in Siberia

Ingvars Leitis joined the amateur film club of Riga Radio Factory (*Rīgas Radio rūpnīca*, RRR) without specific interest in the art of filmmaking, but with the intention of filming the communities of Latvian peasants living in Siberia. These communities were formed in the mid-nineteenth century and consisted of Latvian peasants who went to Siberia in search of land, as well as the *undesirables* deported by the Tsarist authorities [Birzulis 1999]. Leitis describes his case in the following way:

> "[My filmmaking experience] was limited to a very narrow field: documenting lives and histories of Latvians in Siberia. I took a camera in my hands for the first time in 1975 with this specific purpose; I wanted to show what I was discovering in Siberia to people in Latvia. I was not interested in the amateur film movement for any other reasons" (my translation – author).[1]

In 1975, Leitis organised and undertook a 13,000 km cycling trip from Riga to Vladivostok. On paper, he was undertaking an ethnographic study, but the underlying intention of his project was to visit and document fifty Latvian villages in Siberia. *Populārzinātniska lekcija par kādu vēstures tēmu* ("Popular Scientific Lecture on a Historical Subject", 1975–1978) is Leitis' first film on this topic. He attempted to edit and show this film in the 1970s, when the footage was shot.

[1] Ingvars Leitis, email to the author, 15 November 2015.

However, the copy of the finished film was confiscated by the KGB [Briedis and Leitis 2016: 175]. Only in 1986, with the onset of *perestroika* and *glasnost* was it finally possible to complete the film and show it sporadically. It was also the time when Leitis went to Siberia again, which resulted in more films on the same topic: *Ciemošanās Balajā* ("Visiting Balai", 1987), *Lejas Bulānas hronika* ("Chronicles of Lejas Bulāna", 1987), and *White Christmas – 2000* (1989).

Throughout *Popular Scientific Lecture on a Historical Subject* we hear Leitis' didactic voiceover, commenting, for instance, on the scarce use of the Latvian language in these communities. His commentary is of course full of disdain towards Soviet power, so the critical authorial stance is more vocal than in Vidiņš' film. However, at times Leitis, like Vidiņš in *Through the Window*, lets his subjects and the evidence speak for themselves. Mid-film we hear a number of interview segments he recorded during his trips, the most shocking being the interview with two women about the 1937 Stalin's purges. The women talk about their experiences of famine and the arrests of male family members. They are at first careful (one interviewee hesitantly starts by saying "If I'm allowed to say this..."), but then provide gruesome details of the Great Terror in Siberian Latvian communities, such as "They were not taking people without someone telling on them. People were betraying their own"; "When my husband was taken, I was left alone with

Figure 3. Shot from Ingvars Leitis' film *Populārzinātniska lekcija par kādu vēstures tēmu* (1975–78), author's private document archive

five little children", and "They only took fathers and husbands – all innocent, they didn't hurt a fly, never said a word against the government". As we hear these heart-breaking testimonies, we see a travelling close-up through a list of male names, the ones we assume are the repressed men the interviewees are talking about. This sort of openness about Stalin's atrocities was unthinkable in the mid-1970s, when Leitis conceived of this film, but even in the second half of the 1980s, when the film was finally shown, this treatment of the issue can be still seen as daring.

During his trips to Siberia, Leitis also collected a lot of folklore of Siberian Latvian communities, primarily songs. Some of them had never been heard in Latvia and can be assumed to have originated within those communities. Many of these songs were moulded by Latvian traditions as much as by the recent history of Siberian Latvians [Ibid.: 103–104]. The songs featured in the film include *Ne gadiņu nedzīvoju, sola kungi karā dot...* ("I haven't lived there a single year, and the lords send me to war..."), *Aizjāja latviets pa pasauli tālu...* ("The Latvian rode away into the far world..."), and *Uz Sibīrij man jāaiziet* ("To Siberia I must go") cited here in full:

Man kājas rokas saslēgtas
Es guļu cietumā
No galvas man bij nodzīti
Pus mati dzeltainie.

Uz Sibīrij man jāaiziet,
Kur augsti kalni ir,
Tur būs man ogles jāsijā
Līdz pašai miršanai.

Uz Sibīrij man jāaiziet,
Kur aukstie vēji pūš,
Tur izzudīs un pazudīs
Mans vārds no dzimtenes.

[My arms and legs are tied,
I sleep in prison.
My blonde hair
Has faded on my head.

To Siberia I must go,
Where high mountains are,
There I will be sifting coal
Until the very moment I die.

To Siberia I must go,
Where cold winds blow,
There will fade and disappear
My name from my homeland.]

In the context of the Soviet occupation of Latvia, the songs collected and recorded by Leitis can be seen as yet another element in this film, one that balances the political and the ethnographic. Leitis openly admits the plurality of functions performed by his films and is quite open about how he used the premise of an ethnographic study to disguise the act of political resistance. It becomes evident in Leitis' recollection in his memoir of an episode when the KGB inquired about his film:

> "The Cheka *asked* to *take a look* at my film. [Before showing it to them] I managed to change the soundtrack for a different, self-censored one, without any anti-Soviet stuff, just pure ethnography" [Ibid.: 175] (my translation – author).

It is difficult to evaluate the impact of Leitis' films on late Soviet Latvian society; however, their theme and approach resonated well with the national revival movement, now labelled as the Third Awakening that started in the late 1980s and eventually led to the restoration of independence of Latvia in 1991. Leitis recalls in his memoir that his films about Latvians in Siberia were shown throughout Latvia at different events celebrating the Awakening [Ibid.: 176]. Leitis' interest in Latvian communities in Siberia also went beyond filmmaking: he was behind the creation of the Siberian Latvian Support Section at the Club of Environmental Protection (*Vides Aizsardzības Klubs*, VAK)[1], and was active participant in an educational mission targeted at Latvian Siberians that was launched amidst the heat of perestroika [Ibid.].

*

As has been demonstrated, the functions that Latvian amateur documentary films performed stemmed in general from the traditions of documentary filmmaking practices – the desire to record, to promote, to analyse, and to interrogate – but were also largely shaped by their amateur status, as well as by Soviet social realities. By briefly examining these three films, we have seen that

[1] This can be seen as another instance of overlapping between the activism behind environmental protection and national revival, already mentioned in relation to Zigurds Vidiņš' work.

amateur filmmaking in Latvia during the Soviet period was at times a curious practice of using the state resources to produce a cultural product that was not necessarily in line with Soviet ideology. It could be creation of art documentary films about one's family, criticizing the Soviet regime through documenting a local park's history, or exposing Stalin's crimes in the framework of an ethnographic study. It has to be emphasized that these three case studies are not absolutely representative of the whole of the amateur filmmaking movement in Latvia. However, their existence testifies to a curious parallel filmmaking culture. In the context of the Soviet regime in Latvia, it served to preserve the personal, local, and national histories and identities, to interrogate and challenge contemporary Soviet social realities, and to artistically express in a freer way, outside the bounds of the professional, the official, and the prescribed.

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THE ESTONIAN DOCUMENTARY FILM INDUSTRY: INVESTING IN THE CULTURAL GROWTH OF THE COUNTRY

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Abstract

Estonia represents one of the few countries in Europe where short and feature documentaries are produced more than fiction films. According to the latest report published by *Cineuropa* in 2015, Estonia released 8 fiction features and 12 documentaries. Alongside these, 44 fiction short films, 85 short documentaries and 10 short animations were completed, making a total of 159 films produced in Estonia during 2014. Though it has a limited domestic market, Estonian documentary film industry is vibrant and flourishing. Is it possible for this trend to continue as the country faces demographic decline and competes with bigger industries?

The potential of Estonian authors and producers is very high and could be increased. There is a spirit of taking the initiative and good business conditions. Though Estonia does not have huge budgets and public grants that bigger European countries possess, it does have the right qualified workforce. My presentation will illustrate the main trends of the Estonian film industry, with a focus on documentary sector, and suggest a concrete solution to maximize productivity and create a number of inspiring works for international audience. The excellent level of Estonia's educational system and its professionals – especially as concerns primary education – may be combined with the outstanding work of filmmakers, producing documentaries for educational purposes and favouring interactivity, and done jointly with IT experts, among the best in Europe.

Keywords: *documentary, film, education, IT, interactivity.*

The Estonian film industry is one of the youngest in Europe, but also one of the most promising. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the first dark

years as an independent country – the industry reached its lowest point in 1996, releasing only two documentary films – Estonia has started to carefully looking for its own national identity, promoting economic innovation and increasing the public expenditure aimed to deliver cultural products, such as documentaries and fictional films.

Over the last 25 years, the local industry has significantly evolved. In order to understand the main trends of this market, however, it is fundamental to have a look at some specific figures. According to the latest report published by *Cineuropa* in May 2015, for instance, Estonia recently released 8 fiction features and 12 documentaries [Boyce, 2015]. Alongside these, 44 fiction short films, 85 short documentaries and 10 short animations were completed, making a total of 159 films produced in Estonia during 2014. This is a very good result in a country which is suffering from the effects of demographic decline, counting the residing population of just 1,315,944 inhabitants (figure 1). Furthermore, the figures published by *Cineuropa* underline a unique feature of the local industry. Estonia, indeed, represents one of the few countries in Europe where short and feature documentaries are produced more than fiction films (61% of the film production in 2014).

Population, 1 January, years

4 May 2016

	Males and females	Males	Females
2007	1 342 920	624 260	718 660
2008	1 338 440	622 050	716 390
2009	1 335 740	621 320	714 420
2010	1 333 290	620 800	712 490
2011	1 329 660	619 700	709 960
2012	1 325 217	618 138	707 079
2013	1 320 174	616 167	704 007
2014	1 315 819	614 919	700 900
2015	1 313 271	614 389	698 882
2016	1 315 944	616 708	699 236

Figure 1. Stat.ee (Estonian National Institute of Statistics) – Estonian population 2007–2016 (http://www.stat.ee/34277)

On the other hand, also statistics about cinema-going is very encouraging: 2,600,000 spectators attended cinema in 2014 and in 2015 the number increased to 3,093,281 [Boyce, 2016]. These are recorded as the highest attendance rates since the independence. Indeed, Estonians perceive cinema as a significant leisure activity, spending 27% of their budget on watching films and documentaries in 2014.

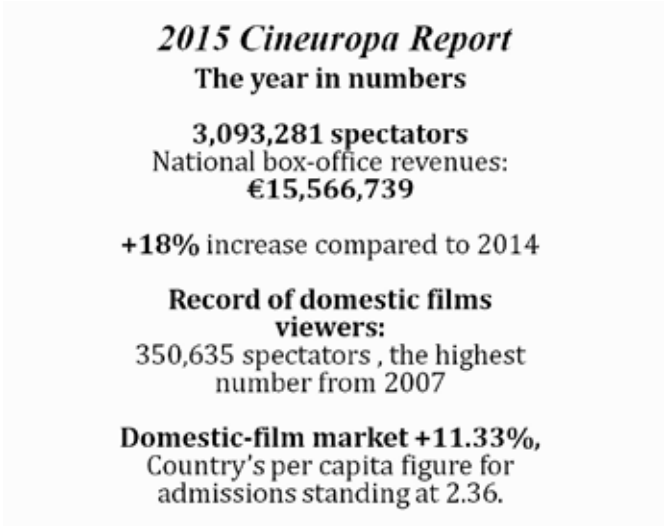

Figure 2. 2015 *Cineuropa* Report – The year in numbers

The domestic market is also growing (+11.33% in 2015, figure 2) and an increasing number of Estonian films are becoming popular abroad, receiving several prestigious awards and participating in international film festivals. The same *Cineuropa* report shows the following films as major successes of the 2014–2015 season:

- *1944*, directed by Elmo Nüganen, 2015 – 115,559 viewers;
- *The Secret Society of Souptown*, directed by Margus Paju, 2015 – 90,746 viewers;
- *Ghost Mountaineer*, directed by Urmas Eero Liiv, 2015 – 50,000 viewers;
- *Nullpunkt*, directed by Mihkel Ulk, 2014 – 43,000 viewers;
- *The Fencer*, directed by Klaus Härö, 2015 – 40,000 viewers;
- *Cherry Tobacco*, directed by Katrin and Andres Maimik, 2014 – 20,000 viewers;
- *In the Crosswind*, directed by Martti Helde, 2014 – 18,000 viewers.

All these statistics seem basically to confirm one point: Estonian film industry is taking the right path, even though some efforts are required in order to increase the funding of local productions. However, the positive and encouraging trends are not only related to the Estonian film industry. In this country another excellent sector is represented by education and its professionals, especially as concerns primary education. Once again, statistics corroborates the high level of Estonian primary education. Particularly, the latest 2016 OECD Review of School Resources

ranks the national school system as "very-high performing" [Santiago, Levitas, Radó and Shewbridge, 2016]. This document pinpoints some of the main qualities of Estonian primary education, such as the full access to education, the very good usage of new technologies for learning purposes, the absence of illiteracy, the good local autonomy of schools and school leaders, and the well-established teacher professional development programs. Nonetheless, further efforts are required in terms of integration practices for Russian speakers and students with special needs as well as greater funding for pre-primary education.

Moreover, 2012 OECD PISA test overview clearly demonstrates that Estonian students at the age of 15 – after having accomplished their primary education – achieved outstanding skills in reading (10th in the OECD zone), science, and mathematics (7th in the OECD zone). Finally, the good quality of Estonian primary education is also confirmed by the average difference in results, between the students with the highest socio-economic background and the students with the lowest socio-economic background, which is just 62 points (figure 3). This number is much lower than the OECD average of 96 points and the lowest gap amongst OECD countries: in other words, Estonian students learn reading, science and mathematics at the same level, regardless of their families' financial position.

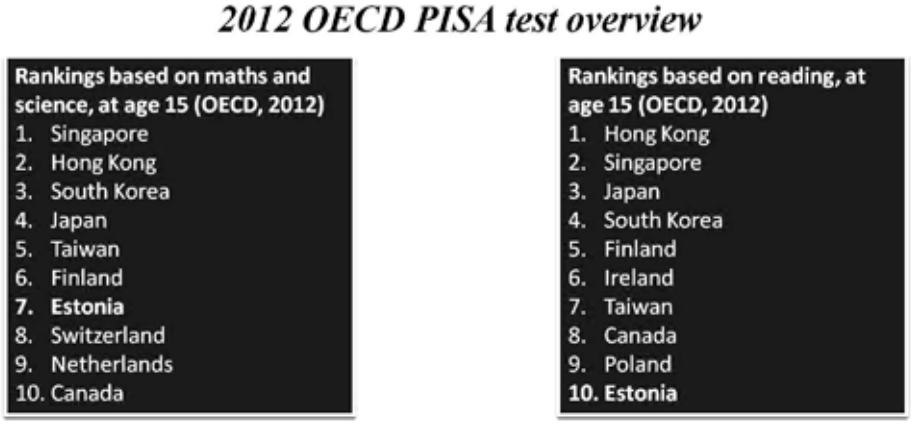

Figure 3. OECD PISA 2012 results – overview

This is undoubtedly a remarkable achievement in a country that is struggling to solve social inequality issues and aims to increase minimum wages, in order to align them with the E.U. average.

The improvement of living standards over the last 25 years allowed Estonia to achieve progressive transition from a Soviet state-controlled system to an advanced, high income economy. The reasons of this success are due to the ease

Figure 4. 2016 Estonia Ease of Doing Business Report
Doingbusiness.org – World Bank Group
(http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreeconomies/estonia)

of doing business, the efficient bureaucracy, and the favorable tax rates (figure 4). Particularly, one of the widest economic sectors which contributed to develop Estonian economy was IT. We all know how much the success of this country is based on Skype, e-residency, and digital tax returns. Moreover, nowadays Tallinn hosts a significant technology cluster, made of numerous startups in continuous expansion. The IT workforce speaks different languages, is well educated and holds a rich set of computer science and cross-media production-related competences. In Estonia innovation is undeniably made through well planned e-strategies, both on a public and private level.

Therefore, we can easily realize that IT sector, primary education and the emerging film industry have an incredible potential for development. Hence, is it possible to combine the right qualified workforce of these three sectors, in order to create excellent products? The following proposal suggests a concrete solution to maximize productivity and create a number of inspiring works for the international audience.

I do believe that these joint forces may be the perfect match to create outstanding didactic documentaries. The right Estonian specialists, indeed, may produce different series of documentaries for learning purposes, divided into several age groups (e.g., pre-school children from 3 to 5, primary school students from 5 to 10, and pre-teens from 11 to 13). Of course, the target audience must be very well-defined, in order to pursue all the pedagogic goals, but also to properly sustain the viewers' attention. The target audiences, in this case, have a deep influence on many aspects of the film, such as length, rhythm, sound, and colours.

In my opinion, all the works should be guided by the highest learning purposes. Even though there may be free space for experimentalism and improvisation, I think that most of these documentaries should follow the basic principles of the

successful format "play and learn". For this reason, I do believe that the active co-operation between filmmakers – who better know the medium "movie camera" – and education specialists – who better know the children and their complex world – is essential. The right alchemy would allow these documentaries to be entertaining, informative, and pedagogically valuable. Filmmakers would not lose their artistic touch and educators would effectively pursue their didactic goals.

But what about the content of these documentaries? There are countless creative possibilities. In my opinion one of the major pressing needs in terms of learning for children under the age of 10 concerns the lack of adequate media literacy. Living in such an overwhelming audiovisual society and not being aware of the different functioning of media leaves our children totally unprotected and, as often as not, isolated. This is definitely a challenging task, but I believe that the best Estonian experts would be able to provide children with valuable knowledge regarding the nature of media, such as television, newspapers, radio, and cinema.

In the same way, different "how does it work?" series of documentaries may be produced. Children, indeed, need to learn what for adults is definitely taken for granted and is part of our society and our everyday life. Most of adults know what is an airplane, how the telephone works, and why cars cause smog and pollution. Most of the children, on the contrary, may acquire a considerable set of skills after accomplishing their primary education, but not be aware about some of the basic aspects which involve their existence and the world around them. For this purpose, also series of documentaries aimed to illustrate cultures and countries of the world may be useful. There is a great need of simplifying knowledge, in order to stimulate students to acquire – in the long term – an in-depth knowledge of the proposed topics.

In order to achieve this goal and to produce high quality documentaries, in my opinion it is important to consider some of their main features. These documentaries, in my view, cannot replace the teachers' work, but may be a valid didactic support; they should have a strong international and multicultural dimension in order to promote the value of integration; they should be – preferably – easy to export through the usage of subtitles and voice-over done by artists; they must present warm, comfortable settings, sounds, and hosts. Documentaries certainly deal with the sphere of unknown, but in this case the primary goal is to provide children with solid knowledge. For this reason, the overall look of these audiovisual products must be somehow reassuring and colourful in the right balance, but at the same time preventing any kind of extreme idealization. Of course, there may be still some space for exploring doubts and uncertainties, but this has to be done cautiously and contents should be accurately selected by filmmakers and education specialists.

At this point, probably someone would ask: what kind of format fits best for this kind of project? There are actually no precise boundaries. The project, for instance, may be launched as a short or feature film for cinema screens, but may be easily transformed into a TV programme. Therefore, films just represent a starting point of a wider learning process. In the 2010s knowledge does not only spread thanks to the extensive usage of merely one medium. For this reason, the most obvious outcome of this project must involve cross-media platforms. At this stage – or even from the very beginning – IT experts may join the team of filmmakers and education specialists and support their work, in order to expand the scope of the contents. These experts possess the required set of skills to develop the interactivity of these contents, which may be also transformed into an application for mobile phones, a videogame, a video installation for a museum, an interactive e-book, and didactic digital devices for teachers, and so on. Of course, there are thousands of possible solutions. Everything actually relies on the primary learning purposes, which will basically guide the selection of contents, formats, and distribution platform ("What do we need to teach?").

Therefore, Estonian filmmakers, IT experts, and education specialists have the opportunity to master a new creative direction, which is mostly unexplored and may specifically support knowledge transmission and literacy processes all over the world. These contents could be especially needed in the poorest and most undeveloped regions of the world, as knowledge, in the long term, may bring more wealth and social awareness. Certainly, it is difficult to have a precise estimate regarding the impact of this kind of products, but the assessment of their export potential is one of the aspects which needs to be always taken into account, in order to make the business profitable and not dependent on state grants.

Though it has a limited internal market, Estonian documentary film industry is now vibrant and flourishing. This project may increase the chances to provide Estonian documentaries with new international audience, mostly represented by children, teachers, and parents. The main limitation is perhaps presented by budgetary constraints, but this problem may be solved searching for the right foreign co-production partners. Finland and other Northern European countries, for example, could financially support these kinds of international projects, sharing their knowledge and manpower as well.

Probably it is not possible for Estonia to compete with bigger film industries on the mainstream level, but investing as much as possible on what Estonians are good at – teaching, shooting, and programming – may definitely give a valuable contribution to the development of the local film industry and stimulate the cultural growth of the country. I am firmly convinced, indeed, that the future starts with children and their education.

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THE "CREATIVE TREATMENT OF ACTUALITY": POETICS AND VERISIMILITUDE IN LAILA PAKALNIŅA'S FILMS

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Abstract

Laila Pakalniņa is a contemporary Latvian filmmaker who works across both documentary and fiction film. Her films are often regarded as avant-garde, experimenting with genre conventions, challenging her audiences to reconsider their understanding of narrative and the cinematic form. Her work also pushes the boundaries between what constitutes fiction film and what constitutes documentary. This arguably occurs because of her engagement with the tropes of poetic documentary cinema, of which there is a strong tradition in Latvia due to the famous Riga School of Poetic documentary established in the 1960s. This paper examines her documentary film *Čau, Rasma* ("Hi, Rasma", 2014) as a continuation of the poetic documentary tropes developed by John Grierson, and argues that verisimilitude can be found in her documentaries through an application of Grierson's philosophical work. The paper aims to contribute to a broader discussion of poetic documentary practices in the current era, and how this documentary approach has developed from its modernist beginnings.

Keywords: *Laila Pakalniņa, poetic documentary, John Grierson, verisimilitude.*

Laila Pakalniņa is a contemporary Latvian filmmaker who works across both documentary and fiction film. It is often hard to distinguish between these two forms in her work [Bruveris 2016: 44]. This is because of the highly poetic nature of her documentaries, and a great sense of naturalism in her fiction films. Pakalniņa's films, therefore, are very interesting to consider when discussing verisimilitude in film. The complex relationship between poeticism and truth in film began when British critic and filmmaker John Grierson wrote about Robert Flaherty's work stating that his films were "documentaries" because they provided a creative

treatment of actuality. Grierson praised Flaherty for demonstrating the higher artistic capability of the documentary. He looked down upon the newsreels and educational films, which he argued were brilliant but also disengaging due to their dry observational manner [Grierson 1932: 39]. He believed that a poetic treatment of actuality footage would be more engaging and effective on an audience. The poetic framing of reality, however, renders problematic the idea of verisimilitude, associated with documentary film. The question that this paper aims to address, therefore, is where we can find verisimilitude in Pakalniņa's films, particularly her documentaries, if they engage with this "poetic treatment of actuality". First let's delve further into Grierson's treatise on poetics and documentary to see where he believed truth and verisimilitude lay.

Grierson's poetic truth

Grierson's film philosophy and practice developed through three influencing factors: the work of Robert Flaherty; the work of early Soviet filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov; and the work of Walter Ruttmann and the city symphony movement. He learnt and was inspired by each, but developed his work further in order to achieve what he believed to be was the purpose of documentary: dramatic, narrativised social commentary.

Flaherty's work, as Brian Winston argues, provided a template for Grierson's "creative" documentary [Winston 1995: 19]. This was because Flaherty was one of the first to structure the filming of "actuality" with a narrative, rather than merely providing a dry succession of facts [ibid]. But, while Grierson praised Flaherty for this aspect of his films, he believed that there was much to be improved upon in order for documentary to become a vehicle for truth. Grierson thought, for example, that Flaherty's films, and those similar in style, were too romantic for they dealt with what was considered back then to be the "romantic image" of the "noble savage" and the "changing seasons of the year" [Grierson 1966: 151]. A more realist documentary would, he believed, make "poetry where no poet ha[d] gone before", to the slums, markets, factories, exchanges and streets of the big cities [Grierson 1966: 151].

Grierson was also influenced by early Soviet filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov. He admired the revolutionary documentary that they strove for, and valued the combination of art and science in their films. He was particularly enthusiastic about the Soviet concept of montage, which he considered poetic, and saw in the Soviet model a successful formula to follow in creating engaging propaganda films in Britain [Vassilieva 2014: 29–32]. Grierson focussed on the British working class, using human labour and social interaction as a source for poetry onscreen [Vassilieva 2014: 38]. Similarly, Eisenstein and Vertov looked at the proletariat and the quotidienne scenes of Russian cities. For him

truth in cinema was found not in the visceral reality, but in the cognitive reality that was created by the montage of images. This is a truth that Lewis Jacobs argues is one that "the eye alone could not perceive, but which the heart and mind could discern..." [Jacobs 1971: 8]. So, while the documentary footage may be treated with poetic license montage could highlight a more abstract truth, a philosophical truth. What lacked, however, for Grierson in this early Soviet tradition was the sense of narrative that he so praised in Flaherty's work [Grierson 1966: 127]. Poeticism was important for Grierson both in the cinematography and narrative composition of documentary film.

The final major influence of Grierson's work was Walter Ruttmann and the city symphony films. He praised this film movement for its rhythmic quality developed from the energies of the cities they examined. As he states: "The life of Natural cinema is in this massing of detail, in this massing of all the rhythmic energies that contribute to the blazing act of the matter" [Grierson 1966: 136]. Grierson further congratulated Ruttmann and his contemporaries on being able to find a story in the masses, rather than relying on a protagonist or hero to develop drama [Grierson 1966: 149]. There was criticism for this film style as well, for although the city symphony films were creative in their cinematography and narrative treatment of the working-class cities of Europe they lacked, perhaps most importantly, any social commentary on the subjects presented onscreen [Grierson 1966: 150]: "They present new beauties and new shapes; they fail to present new persuasions" [Grierson 1966: 152].

The poetic documentary, according to Grierson, should not only capture reality, but treat it creatively. Furthermore, truth is not hindered by this poeticism; rather it is heightened if this creativity is used in a manner so as to provide social commentary on the subject being presented.

Pakalniņa and Poeticism

The contemporary Latvian filmmaker Laila Pakalniņa fits within this Griersonian poetic tradition. Grierson idolised early Soviet filmmakers, but in the 1960s the Soviet filmmakers of the Thaw came to idolise Grierson. As Julia Vassilieva states Soviet film historians at the time praised him for the "poetic, loving and respectful representation of ordinary people and workers" and how his films brought attention to social problems [2014: 38]. This influenced the work of emerging Soviet filmmakers, and in Latvia could be considered to be partly behind the development of the Riga School of Poetic Documentary (RSPD), who as Maruta Vitols states also "drew material from the world around them and used fictive elements in order to form films that display their particular understanding of the world" [2008: 19]. The similarity between the RSPD and Grierson's poetic

documentary tradition is further supported by Līva Pētersone who highlights that both Grierson and the Riga documentarists shared a common goal; to film ordinary people with artistic poeticism [Pētersone 2012]. They also, I would argue, attempted to provide social commentary.

The similarities between Grierson and the RSPD are clear when examining one of the most seminal films from this movement; "The White Bells" (*Baltie Zvani*, Latvia, 1961, directed by Ivars Kraulītis). The film combines actuality footage of Riga in the 1960s with a narrative of a young girl and her journey through Riga to buy some flowers known as "white bells". The film is considered a documentary due to the footage of the city which was shot with no alteration, manipulated only in how the director montaged the different city scenes together, not dissimilarly from Vertov's "Man with the Movie Camera" (Russia, 1929). Not only is there creative treatment of actuality in the montage, but also in the narrative of the film. This comes with the parallel story of the young girl who wanders through the streets of Riga in search of the white flowers. The social commentary is also evident in this narrative as the girl's search for the flowers is said to represent Latvia's search for freedom from Soviet occupation. In this description it seems clear how this film, representative of the RSPD movement, shares similarities with Grierson's poetic documentary. Verisimilitude is found in the locations captured in the footage and in the higher truth presented through the girl's allegorical journey through the streets of Riga in search for her flowers and Latvia's freedom.

The RSPD tradition and Grierson's poetic documentary manifesto are continued in contemporary Latvia through the work of Laila Pakalniņa. Take for example her 2014 documentary *Čau, Rasma* ("Hi, Rasma"). In this film Pakalniņa goes in search of the sunken cargo ship *Rasma*, which sank off the coast of Estonia 70 years ago near Mohni Island. Rumour has it that as it sank many local Estonians pilfered cargo from the ship, mainly bicycles and Singer sewing-machines. Throughout the film Pakalniņa gently probes the Estonians that live on the coast near the shipwreck to see if these rumours are true. This is not the investigative documentary that you would expect, but demonstrates Pakalniņa's poetic treatment of the lives of those in the small coastal town.

"Hi, Rasma" is not dissimilar from one of Grierson's first films "Drifters" (1929). This film is also set in a coastal town and examines the turbulent life of fisherman working in the North Sea off the coast of Scotland. There is no one protagonist in "Drifters" rather the narrative is built around the men who make their living from the sea as well as the sea itself. It was, as Grierson, himself states a study in movement, with each chapter leading to an event [1966: 135, 205]. And, of course, the film provided social commentary on the "the ardour and bravery of common labour" [Grierson 1966: 205]. Pakalniņa also develops a rhythm in "Hi,

Rasma". Interviews are edited together so that the original question is obscured, but a pattern of responses forms that not only highlights the unsure nature of the local Estonians, but captures the monotonous energy of daily life in rural Europe.

Pakalniņa's documentary is also quite symbolic, operating similarly to Grierson's "Drifters". While filming this film Grierson's crew were lucky enough to come across a whale that swam alongside one of the fishing vessels. He decided to include this footage not only to show the audience the impressive creature and its relationship to the working harbour, fisherman and their industry but also in a poetic manner, "as a ponderous symbol of all that tumbled and laboured on that wild morning" [Grierson 1966: 137]. This symbolism is evident in "Hi, Rasma" in Pakalniņa's footage of the sunken cargo ship. The shipwreck is impressive in itself, covered in seagrass that dances through the currents of the Baltic Sea. It is a reminder of the industrial Soviet past that shaped the coastline of the Baltic region and impacted on the development of towns not only along the coast, but generally throughout rural areas. Lastly, the sunken ship is a symbol of the mystery that shrouds its disappearance and what happened to its pilfered cargo, unwilling to share its secrets with those above the water. It could also be read as a symbol of the silent existence of those living in the coastal Estonian town of Mohni, forgotten by the progress and development of modern European Estonia, stuck like *Rasma* in the past.

Conclusion

The analysis of Grierson's "Drifters" and Pakalniņa's "Hi, Rasma" highlights a number of similarities that are based in poetic documentary tropes. If there is a stylistic likeness between the two then perhaps verisimilitude in Pakalniņa's poetic documentary style can be understood correspondingly as well. Truth is not to be found in undoctored, unedited footage, but in the way that a creative use of montage and narrative delivers a higher truth about the subject being filmed. "Hi, Rasma" is about the rumours linked to the disappearance of a cargo ship off the coast of Estonia. It is, more importantly, a film that provides astute social commentary on the rhythms of life in forgotten rural towns. Even though the documentary footage is treated poetically the footage nevertheless attests to the physiological existence of the town and its people in historical time.

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HISTORY IN THE FILMS OF JĀNIS STREIČS

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Abstract

The creative biography of the film director Jānis Streičs includes 22 feature films, 13 of which are devoted to the present day and nine are about the past. From among historical films, one depicts Latvia at the turn of the 19th century, another focuses on the Russian Civil War, two deal with the inter-war period, three depict World War II, and two are about the 1940s. These films offer Streičs' views about the past, his own interpretation of the texts of history. At the same time, events, people, environments and life situations of the past are viewed from the present-day perspective, which includes issues and values from the present day within the space of the past.

This paper examines two films made by Jānis Streičs during the Soviet era, both of them focusing on Latvian history – "The Boys of Līvsala" (1969) and "Strange Passions" (1983), and both of them are set in 1946. The films are different because of the 14 years that passed between the production of the first one and the second one, but they differ even more by the way in which the director sends messages about the past, also displaying his relationship to history and regimes. "Strange Passions" is a challenging film in terms of the history of cinema and the Soviet occupation of Latvia, bringing up the question of whether such a film could have been produced and shown in cinemas and on television. The era that is reflected in the two films is part of Jānis Streičs' own biography. He was a child in 1946, and there was a great deal of tragedy caused by the Soviet regime, its cultivated violence, and the lack of value for human lives.

The paper reviews the history interpretation in these films, and the research is based on documents from the Riga Film Studios materials that are stored at the Latvian State Archives. The conclusion is that "The Boys of Līvsala" and "Strange Passions" provide brilliant evidence of the director's "magical realist" style. They

demonstrate his great skill in transforming the childhood and youth period of his generation into a part of Latvia's cultural memory.

Keywords: *film director Jānis Streičs, film "Līvsalas zēni" (The Boys of Līvsala), film "Svešās kaislības" (Strange Passions), history, cultural memory.*

The film director Jānis Streičs' creative biography includes 22 feature films. Thirteen of them are devoted to the *present time* representing the epoch when they were made, and nine to the *past*. One of his historical films represents Latvia at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, one is about the events during the Russian Civil war, but two films are devoted to the inter-war period while three films depict World War II, two of the films are set in the 1940s. In these films Jānis Streičs offers his vision of the past, one might say – his own historical text. At the same time the events taking place long time ago, people, environment and life situations of the past are presented from his present-day perspective which incorporates into the space of the past also present day topicalities and values.

All films by Jānis Streičs have been made in Latvia but during two different forms of political existence. He made 16 feature films in the non-democratic Latvia that had been deprived of its statehood and had been illegitimately incorporated into the Soviet Union but in Latvia that had regained its independence he made six films. Examining the films produced in Soviet Latvia it is important not only to know but also to understand the "written" and "unwritten" preconditions of the functioning of the national culture at the specific period. The space of the Soviet ideology and culture was variable; it had its topical issues, political and social campaigns, technological possibilities, diverse control practices and cultural policy. An essential role in it all was played also by the position of the communist party functionaries who had the power over the specific practice of implementation of certain ideological postulates. Undeniably, the film directors like all the other individuals working in creative sectors, had to know "rules of the game" in order to successfully function in the cultural sphere of the Soviet state. "The borderlines between the permissible and impermissible were defined by interaction between creative intellectuals and the power. Either of the two were represented by specific people whose understanding of culture, courage or cowardice, personal sympathies or antipathies defined what is permitted and what is forbidden," states the historian Daina Bleiere [Bleiere 2012: 102–103]. Jānis Streičs says that he reached "the peak of his fame" during the so-called stagnation times when "there was ice on the top but beneath it life was throbbing" and in order to work successfully one had to have the command of "diplomacy" of the times. It is the same in one's daily life – when it rains you must take an umbrella along and when it's cold one must put on

boots or a fur-coat. The film director admits that if one knows the opponent then one reckons with him and acts accordingly [LTV 2016].

The present article examines two films by Jānis Streičs devoted to history of Latvia and made in the Soviet period – "The Boys of Līvsala" (1969) and "Strange Passions" (1983). They tell us about the same time in Latvia – about the year 1946. The films are separated not only by 14 year period between their making, but even more by their mode of narrating the past, the author's relations with history and power. The film "Strange Passions" casts a challenge not only to cinema but also to the history of Latvia under the Soviet occupation by posing the question: how such a film was allowed/could be made and screened in cinemas and on TV?

History and Cinema

Discussions in the academic circles about the impact of representations of history in media, especially in film and television, have been long-standing and they always arrive at ambiguous and even contradictory conclusions. Professional historians are frequently critically minded to feature films depicting historical events since they hold the opinion that the versions of history, spaces of the past and (re)constructions of characters presented in them differ from the truth accepted in science of history and/or offer simplifications or even falsifications of history [see: Landay 2001; Cannadine 2004; Hughes-Warrington 2007; Schwartz 2008]. Especially critical reproaches have been received by Hollywood historical blockbusters that are rebuked for "stealing" and primitive representation of the national histories [Puttnam 2004: 160].

People gain their knowledge and understanding about history from various sources – not only from history textbooks and academic publications but also from photographs, historical novels, newsreels and strip-cartoons, yet especially at present mainly from electronic media – by browsing internet. Insights and understanding of the world in which we live is like a kaleidoscope composed of very many small pieces that are organized and re-organized by our own experience, system of values and media narratives. Products of mass media industry link the personal experience of individuals whose experiential reality about the events of the past decreases as the events sink into more distant past becoming part of the historical and cultural heritage of the world. Describing this situation John Thompson uses the notion of "mediated historicity". It includes the sense of awareness of the past formed by mass media (both on a rational and emotional level) and its visual images, the meaning of symbols and stories found in history that influence actions and values of today's individuals [Thompson 1995: 34].

The survey done in Latvia in 2014 about the sources of knowledge of history shows that television and cinema is one of the main sources of knowledge and

understanding of history. 32.4% of the respondents admitted that their main source of knowledge is television programmes but 20% considered it was films. It must be noted that other sources (such as textbooks, research, museums, press, and radio) have much smaller significance. Only stories told face to face by parents and grandparents are a more important source of information about history than television and film. 40.1% of respondents admitted it to be their main source of history knowledge [SKDS 2014].

Films are an extremely influential medium that disseminates notions, ideas, emotions and values which are used by individuals, social groups, including also very large communities for self-defining, formation of identity-building notions about others and creating the image of the enemy. At the beginning of the 21st century the researcher of historical films Robert A. Rosenstone emphasized that the time has come for historians to accept films about the past as a particular form of historical narrative that exists along with other forms of narrating history (for example, the written history and oral history) and each has its own functionality. It is erroneous to evaluate historical narrative in a feature or documentary film according to the conventional criteria of academic research [Rosenstone 2001: 65]. The reality of the past and its reconstruction are usually strongly intermingled in film. In order to restore historical events, the documentary films mainly use archival materials, feature film makers also frequently include in their films excerpts of old footage in order to dramatize the reconstruction of the past, to create a more precise framework of the epoch or do it for some other reasons. In general feature film authors use different technical and artistic means to create landscapes and images of the previous epochs. On the one hand their use enables creating more impressive and credible (re)construction of the past, but on the other hand it also maintains a link with the present, keeps a sense of its presence in spectators who are highly aware of the modern technological achievements of their times [Morris-Suzuki 2005: 126–157]. More than other forms of art, film appeals to the audience's sense of reality, as stressed by semiotician Yuri Lotman. "Sense of reality" means that the spectator does not only become a witness of what is happening on the screen but in a way also a co-participant. Thus, even though understanding non-reality of the events, the spectator treats them emotionally as an actual event. The aim of art is not simply to depict one or another object but to make into a signifier. Sense of reality and affinity to life without which film art does not exist is both a part of the complicated process of art, as well as a link with artistic and cultural experience of certain society [Lotman 2005: 295–296].

A special term "cinehistory" has been coined to designate the film and historical research thus facilitating more in-depth revision of epistemological basis of

history, especially the relationship between history and the specific moment of time depicted in film. Representation of the mode of acting in film typical for the past and a series of characters are defined by many social, cultural and technological preconditions of the specific historical period where an essential role is also played by subjectivity and the author [Swartz 2008: 209]. The culture of the world and national culture of countries have very many films and television series about the past that have facilitated not only a change in people's relations with history but also with the present and themselves – they have broken stereotypes, promoted reassessment, caused compassion and remorse, explained the national trauma, fostered tolerance, facilitated awareness of the significance of moral values. "The history film not only challenges traditional History but helps us return to a kind of ground zero, a sense that we can never really know the past, but can only continually play with it, reconfigure and try to make meaning out of the traces it has left behind," admits Robert Rosenstone [Rosenstone 2012: 186].

Since the very beginnings film has also served as a transcript of human lives and history. Films are also called "canned archives", "moving image documents" and the like, what has been captured in film is used not only to illustrate the past but also to explore it. The need of storing the filmed material and founding cinematography museum or film depository was first expressed already in 1898 by the Polish cameraman Bolesław Matuszewski, being aware how important the events and images documented on the film prints would be for researchers as time goes by. Film archives and libraries were started to be established only in the 1920s and 30s, and films also gradually gained an increasingly important place in cultural heritage and are part of its true values [Fantoni 2015]. The same can be said also about films made in Latvia that are part of the "golden fund" of the national cultural heritage and are stored in the Latvian State Audio-visual Documents Archive of the National Archives, Film Museum, and Latvian TV Video Archive and in other depositories storing documentary materials.

In the overall context of Latvian cinema films about historical issues have an essential place both numerically, as well as by their contents and artistic value. For example, in the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s the filmmakers in Latvia were focusing on the recent historical events – World War I, Independence fights and founding of the state of Latvia. The most important films in this period are considered to be the ones about history, for example, "Off to War" (dir. Vilis Segliņš, 1920), "Whirlwinds of Time" (dir. Piotr Chardinin, 1921), "Bear-Slayer" (dir. Aleksandrs Rusteiķis, 1930). Within the short period of authoritarian rule when film was recognized as a significant means of propaganda and support was started to be provided for making of films, fiction films were made and prepared for production both about historical issues and the present times. One of the

tasks of these films was imposing of the ruling ideology upon the large cinema audiences [Pērkone 2008: 172–225; Pērkone 2011: 19–45].

Out of all the feature films made during the Soviet occupation of Latvia (at Riga Feature Film Studios, Riga Film and Newsreel Studios, Riga Film Studios) about 63% of the films were about the contemporary topics and 37% were about events of the past. Historical films differ by their themes and meaning. They included adaptations of the Latvian literary classics, also purely ideological films serving for the purpose of legitimizing the Soviet rule, as well as depictions of human character, motivation of action and morality during complicated and confusing turning points in history, and also entertaining musical period films with an outspoken narrative code of heroism and freedom made for large audiences. Historical themes dominated in the overall production of films made in the Latvian SSR till the beginning of the 1970s, during the last Soviet decades Riga Film Studios tuned much more actively to representation of its "present-day" issues. Yet also during this period several highly acclaimed feature films representing events of the past including films by the director Jānis Streičs were made. During the last years of existence of Riga Film Studios when perestroika policy started in the Soviet Union with its aim to implement openness (*glasnost*) and the times of Awakening movement aimed at regaining independence of Latvia began, the Latvian filmmakers made thematically and emotionally impressive films exposing the crimes of the Soviet regime, relationship of an individual with a totalitarian regime and possibilities of individual choices to be made: such as "Fortune-Telling With Lamb Shoulder-blade" (dir. Ada Neretniece, 1988) and *Carmen Horrendum* (dir. Jānis Streičs, 1989). Also after restoration of independence of Latvia, filmmakers have turned to the issues of the past on several occasions, mainly examining the pages of history concealed or falsified during the Soviet period and attempting to "awaken" collective memory and pride for history of the state and the nation. The feature films dealing with these themes are the ones that rank at the top of the list of Latvian films with largest audiences.

History of making of "The Boys of Līvsala" and "Strange Passions"

The feature films "The Boys of Līvsala" and "Strange Passions" are among those historical films that were made at Riga Film Studios and, as mentioned before, depict the same year – 1946. It was the first year of peace after the end of World War II, but violence was still going on, and the majority of people were still cherishing the hope that the situation would change for the better and the Western democratic powers would force the USSR to withdraw its troops from the Baltic States [Bleiere et al. 2005: 300–301]. The official Soviet policy in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia was implemented using the slogans of rebuilding economy

and strengthening the Soviet power but in actual reality it was a continuation of the process started in 1940/1941 with a purpose of dismantling the political and economic structures, way of life, traditions and value systems that had been established during independence of these states. The task of the power was to integrate the Baltic States into the Soviet system using political and repressive methods, as well as establishing certain forms of cooperation with the population. The historian Yelena Zubkova calls the period till mid-1947 "the cautious sovietisation" of the Baltic States when the Soviet occupation power tried to avoid explicitly ruthless means and at least partly took into account the local situation, namely, refrained from forced collectivization, preserved individual farms, developed a dialogue with creative intelligentsia, appointed local inhabitants to the positions of the central and local authorities, accepted the use of the national languages, limited the use of repressions by mainly targeting the armed opposition. In autumn of 1947 the sovietisation tactics of the Baltic States changed and it was implemented with explicitly forced and repressive methods in order to achieve unification with the other Soviet territories [Zubkova 2008: 128–131].

"The Boys of Līvsala" (1969) is one of the early films by Jānis Streičs. The film was made together with the director Ēriks Lācis, his friend and fellow-student at Latvia State Conservatoire. They had already co-operated while staging a play in Valmiera Drama Theatre in 1961 and in 1967 at Riga Film Studios they made together the film "Captain Enrico's Pocket Watch". At the time both had already been working as director assistants and as the second directors. The literary source of the film "The Boys of Līvsala" is Laimonis Vāczemnieks' long story under the same title and the writer was also one of the script authors. "The Boys of Līvsala" is an ideologically correct narrative about the political and moral conflicts of the post-war teenagers, their teachers and parents where "truth" lies with those who are on the side of the Soviet power. It was made in the genre of adventure film. The main character of the film Mārtiņš Pūpols, a boy attending form six at school, together with his grandfather goes to live in Līvsala, an island separated by waters from the rest of the world. The adults and children of the village are divided into two political camps that are separated by the attitude to Soviet power. The war between the two parties involves weapons, fists, propaganda, as well as other means. The authority of the supporters of the Soviet power is the teacher Zemītis who had fought in the Red army during World War II. While the fighters against him are mainly from among the rich farmers and teachers, and also the pupils' organization "Līvsala Wolves" [see more about the film in: Āboliņa 2016: 34–41].

The records of Riga Film Studio Art Council show that there were no big discussions about shooting of "The Boys of Līvsala", the largest concerns were to ensure that the negative characters (namely, enemies of the Soviet power)

would not overshadow the positive ones. The script was praised for its diligent development. The records proudly mention the fact that while looking for the players of the main characters there had been meetings with 700 children till Koknese Secondary school pupil Juris Bružiks was cast for the protagonist Mārtiņš' part. On 26 December 1968, the director of Riga Film Studios Heinrihs Lepeško signed an order for starting the filming of "The Boys of Līvsala" and the approval of the film-crew, the planned budget of the film was 283 thousand roubles. On 8 July 1969, the Art Council already watched the film and was generally satisfied with the result. Critical remarks were expressed about the finale of the film that was criticized for the lack of courageousness. The film was approved for screening under the condition that its last part was to be revised [Riga Film Studio 1968].

Reviews about "The Boys of Līvsala" published in press at the time were not particularly favourable. The film was criticized, for example, for showing insufficiently psychological motivation of actions of the main characters and the vagueness in revealing its main theme [Rozīte 1970: 14], for elements of staginess and "feeling of artificiality" when playing out dramatic situations [Augstkalna 1970: 53]. Yet "The Boys of Līvsala" was not criticized too severely either, although the critics were unanimous in their opinion that the directors' Ēriks Lācis and Jānis Streičs first collaborative effort, the film "Captain Enrico's Pocket Watch" was better. The emigré press that was not available in Latvia at the time, indicated that "The Boys of Līvsala" was a propaganda film and its authors were not able to show the actual events, for instance, deportation to "slave camps" of children and their parents who were opposed to the Soviet regime [B. a. 1969: 6].

Jānis Streičs later admitted "that this film was made by using Soviet stereotypes", that it was "a poster-like film". We were commissioned to make it and we were expected to make it like that", "a film pleasing to the party and the government". Yet its making, according to him, was a valuable lesson both by learning how to find the means of expression for depiction of the positive and negative characters, and by understanding the role of music and environment and the processes of film production at the Film Studio. Jānis Streičs also tells that many of his ideas remained unrealized. He had also bitter feelings because of rejection of the actor Edgars Girgensons whom he had wanted to cast for the part of the Latvian language teacher and pioneer leader Zemītis. According to the director, the delicate looks of the actor would have made the image of the positive character not so stereotypically Soviet. During the shooting, he also became convinced that the subsequent films must be made independently and the tandem with Ēriks Lācis had exhausted itself [Āboliņa 2016: 43–53].

Jānis Streičs reached another peak in his career at the beginning of the 1980s. It must be noted that during the time after "The Boys of Līvsala" Jānis Streičs

had become one of the leading film directors at Riga Film Studios, several of his films were in the list of the most prominent Latvian films and were the most loved ones by the audience. Jānis Streičs had also received several awards, among those an honorary title of the Merited Culture Worker of Latvian SSR. Riga Film Studios itself had changed during this time, already in 1970 it had become the 2nd category Studio which meant not only better salaries but also a regular film production commissions [Pērkone 2011: 87]. Remembering Riga Film Studios time in his interviews Jānis Streičs always reminds it was "a factory" with "a rigid plan". Therefore, he had been quite frequently making films necessary for the Film Studio, its status and fulfilment of its plan, while (at least initially) artistically and thematically they were not interesting for him [Zirnis 2016: 15]. Yet becoming part of film production and fulfilment of the Studio plan strengthened Jānis Streičs' reputation and status of a director loyal and necessary for the Studio management. The film "Strange Passions" was chosen due to Jānis Streičs' own interest. Its literary source was the 1971 novel by the Lithuanian writer Mykolas Sluckis whose work was officially highly acclaimed during the Soviet period and had previously inspired interest among filmmakers on several occasions. The novel is set in Zemgale region of Latvia after World War II in a rich Latvian farmstead that has practically perished but keeps on existing by pure force of habit and the hope of surviving. Not only the former hierarchy and kinships have disintegrated in it but also the culture of relationship of the household and people. Under the looming threat of fear of violence and Soviet repressions, human passions are seething: love, lechery, greed, brutality, gluttony, evil and hatred. Microcosm of intensely saturated historical events and human relationships created in the novel by Mykolas Sluckis offered a rich material for film narrative.[1]

The plot of the film depicts the Lithuanian girl Marite's life and her observations in Zemgale at the Valdmanis family house. After the arrest of her uncle she goes to Latvia looking for another relative called Antans who had been a farm-hand in the Valdmanis' farm but usurped the role of its master in the post-war Soviet political system. During the war Antans had been fighting in the Red Army therefore representatives of the Soviet power are his "own people". The old Arturs Valdmanis has long since lost not only his physical and mental strength but also the power in his farm and family. It has been transferred into the hands of his much younger wife Anna who had married him out of convenience. The handsome Antans has been her lover for many years but now "the new master" is

[1] Mykolas Sluckis novel "Strange Passions" has not been translated into Latvian. It has been published in Russian several times. For example: Sluckis, Mykolas (1981). Chuzhie strasti. Roman. In: Sluckis, Mykolas. *Priglashenie k tantsu.* Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel. P. 241–438.

interested in Anna's adult daughter Ausma with whom he wants to form his future life. The war and Soviet occupation have completely destroyed Ausma's future. She has lost her social status, her fiancé has emigrated to Sweden, and being a daughter of a rich farmer she is not accepted at the university. Her elegant outfits can be used only on potato field and the local parties. Ausma despises her parents for their helplessness and servile complaisance: the father who is waiting for his death in an already procured coffin, her mother who tries to please the former farm-hand by giving her love and subjecting the whole farmstead to his avarice. The status of Anna and her husband as the owners of the farmstead and as dignified and respected individuals is seen only for a fleeting moment in the episode when an armed national resistance group arrive at the Valdmanis farm. Despite her family and the circumstances Ausma starts an affair with Antans, yet she does not want to link her life with him and give birth to a child. Finding out that Ausma has had abortion and his dream to become the new and genuine master of the Valdmanis' house will not come true, Antans attempts to kill the entire Valdmanis' family with a grenade. He fails and Antans gets totally wasted. Facing the extinction of his family the old master of the Valdmanis house gets up enough steam to cut off Antans' head with a scythe. At the end of the film the Valdmanis family is arrested and they embark on an unknown journey. This is the end of this family's life in their farmstead that now is to face new times, and doomed to the destiny of Soviet style extinction. These events are watched by spectators through the eyes of Marite. The entire narrative of the film is full of events, emotions, human relations and tensions [see more about the film: Augstkalna 1983: 1–5; Āboliņa 2016: 272–279].

Already on 21 July 1981, the director Jānis Streičs submitted the treatment of the film "Strange Passions". It is written in Russian, in an ideologically appropriate language. The director emphasized: "Although the novel by Sluckis "Strange Passions" is set in 1946, its ideological focus is not the past but the present. [..] Life collisions caused by the struggle of classes, the social life in the village, the atmosphere of historical change, harshness of social problems and credibility of characters are depicted with documentary precision. Due to all that, the ideological dimensions reach a stage where the topicality of the past becomes the significance of today's reality." The director also indicates that the main part should be played by Vija Artmane, mentioning her achievements, awards and their successful cooperation in the film "Theatre". The politically correctly written application makes an especial mention that the intention is to make "a class-conscious film" [Riga Film Studio 1983: 2–5]. The script written by Jānis Streičs was discussed at the meeting of the Script Editing Board on 24 February 1982. The majority of participants of the meeting were critically minded about the script because,

according to them, the scenario did not offer positive emotions expected from it. In his written reference the script-writer Viktors Lorencs made a strong point "that it is a parody about psyche of Latvian peasants, about the whole post-war period and the tragic events of those days. I assume it could be possible to find such excessively degenerative relations among people in some farmstead. But an art work has a power of generalization. And I am categorically opposed to such a generalization" [Riga Film Studio 1983: 19]. The script was not approved at this meeting; it was once again discussed on March 17. It was reminded at the meeting that this film had already been included in Riga Film Studio plans for 1983. Several participants of the meeting expressed their surprise that Jānis Streičs should make a film so uncharacteristic for him. The script-writer Alvis Lapiņš admitted "it is not characteristic of the director to look in his films for the ugly in the normality, but quite the opposite – to look for normality in the ugly" [Riga Film Studios 1983: 22]. Despite the dominant critical atmosphere at the meeting, the Script Editing Board approved Jānis Streičs' film script and promoted it for discussion at the Art Council. On 9 April 1982, the script of "Strange Passions" was approved also by the Main Feature Film Script Editing Board of the USSR State Cinematographers' Committee with a comment that it contained too many events and the narrative had to be made more understandable for the all-Union audiences [Riga Film Studio 1983: 161–162].

On 27 April 1982, the script of "Strange Passions" was already discussed at the Art Council meeting. Its record shows the meeting was long and heated. The numbers of speakers expressing critical opinions or at least concerns were numerous. The first person to express his anxiety was the Studio director and also the chairperson of the Art Council Heinrihs Lepeško. He noted: "I have quite big doubts about this work. Although Streičs has been talking about this film for a long time, I still do not understand what it will be about." Cameraman Miks Zvirbulis' opinion: "The script has been masterfully written (dialogue, environment, and characters). But I am preoccupied with the question – in the name of what? In my life I miss sources of positive emotions. I am not saying that this should be turned into a comedy, but we need films that make individual's character stronger, that facilitate the need to resist or protect and so on." While the playwright Vladlens Dozorcevs was convinced that "Strange Passions" inflict harm to the image of Latvia. "For those people who know Latvia this film will create confusion. While for those who do not know Latvia it will create a bad impression. There are no good or bad nations. This film presents a collection of the darkest features of human nature," he explained. Viktors Lorencs continued expressing his indignation about the script of "Strange Passions". According to him, "psyche of the Latvian peasants is totally different. The script demonstrates

generalizations about our peasantry that are totally fabricated. The Latvian peasant girls did not walk around with cigarettes in their hands; pregnant girls did not attend parties and so on." Yet Lorencs admitted that the war leaves "impact on human psychology". The theatre director Aina Matīsa was also harshly critical of the script. Written opinion about the script was sent in by the director Dzidra Ritenberga who did not participate in the meeting: "The author and director offers to me the setting of my youth and national belonging! Those should be also my passions because I belong to the branch of these ethnic origins too. And here begins my resistance to the material. I try to relate the character to myself, to my nation, my time and I don't hear it resounding in me. I have nothing to do with these people and their passions. They really remain strange for me. [..] Reading the script I could not get rid of the stench of dung and blood. For the first time a literary work caused physical nausea. I support big humane passions. Down with temperance! The holiest task of art is to influence our brains and hearts. But not the stomach because then it is anti-art. We are familiar with Jānis Streičs' capacity to make a film almost from nothing. This script has too much of everything. Let the director have a sharp eye and vigilant heart looking into history and characters of his nation!" [Riga Film Studio 1983: 163–173].

During the Art Council meeting the support to Jānis Streičs was not expressed. The records show it was the only time when the director was unable to conceal his bitterness. "They are not some kind of Lithuanian trash that I will have in my film because Lithuanian Film Studio invited me to make this film with them (and to work there in general). The invitation was extended before Žalakevičius came. At the time I was making "The Unfinished Supper". After that Žalakevičius wanted to buy out screening rights from Sluckis, but Sluckis refused. The national issue was discussed here but one must talk about the class positions. I stand above whether Latvians or Lithuanians will get offended by this film. This is about the social class. Anna is not a beast. You simply see with your mind's eyes the films that portray gloomy relations and so on," this is a quote from Jānis Streičs as written in the record [Riga Film Studio 1983: 171]. Despite dislike expressed towards the script of "Strange Passions", the Council approved it and allowed to begin developing the director's script. In conclusion Heinrihs Lepeško added: "Everyone is afraid whether the director correctly assesses the significance of this film. Jānis, everybody trusts you but the doubts are big. Yet – let the screen show it!" [Riga Film Studio 1983: 171].

The director's script was discussed at the Art Council meetings twice. On 1 June 1982, it was turned down because of a faulty footage. The members of the Art Council were still critical about Jānis Streičs' intentions [Riga Film Studio 1983: 177–178]. On 8 June, the Art Council admitted that mistakes have been

corrected and accepted the script [Riga Film Studio 1983: 179]. On 24 June, it was approved also by the Main Feature Film Script Editing Board of the USSR State Cinematographers' Committee [Riga Film Studio 1983: 183]. During the subsequent meetings the Art Council continued expressing its concerns about the would-be film, although its members admitted that the audition results were good and approved of the players of the main parts. Heinrihs Lepeško was concerned about the possible attitude of the power to "Strange Passions" during the atmosphere when the 40th anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War was to be marked. "… here a front fighter has been fighting to become a rich farmer and uses his frontman's position very well. Won't this film offer to us something that we will be unable to "stomach"?" the Film Studio director asks [Riga Film Studio 1983: 190]. Yet on 31 August, he already signed an order about starting the filming and approved its cost estimate in the amount of 364,000 roubles [Riga Film Studio 1983: 191].

On 23 December 1982, the Art Council discussed the footage of the film "Strange Passions". And again they were dissatisfied but approved of the filmed material. On 7 February 1983, the Art Council was watching the finished film, opinions differed about it. Film critic Valentīna Freimane stated that the film did not reach its goal and "there is no genuine happiness about this work". The editor Austra Zīle's attitude was also critical and full of bafflement: "This debility really offends me as a human being. It is something untypical. I still don't understand Ausma. A circle of feeble characters is created: the old Valdmanis, Imants. I can more or less accept Anna and try to understand her. During the party one can see this debility of people somehow as well." A positive opinion about "Strange Passions" was expressed at the meeting by the editor Antons Broks; and film director Dzidra Ritenberga proposed that the film gets approval and "is taken to Moscow". According to the statements in the record the most memorable was the speech by the director Oļģerts Dunkers. "I am neither in the Art Council, nor a member of the Directors' Council therefore I can only speak as Streičs' colleague. I want to congratulate him on a deep and stylistically homogeneous film. This is an art work built on its own internal rules – it is a fresco. It consists of frescoes superimposed upon each other, and thus a work of art is created. It is statics. The only alive person is the girl. And the main character is lost between these two sides. It is true, he dies. The image of a road is very good in the film. Cameraman shows very well the road along which the mother leaves and along which the protagonist should have left too. Stylistically this is the best film by Streičs. I see a work of an extremely mature person. And for the first time he reveals himself as a philosopher. I like this film a lot. It gives food for one's thoughts," admitted Oļģerts Dunkers. The Art Council approved "Strange Passions" [Riga Film Studio 1983: 201–205].

During the meeting on February 22 by a unanimous vote it was decided that Jānis Streičs' film should be granted the first category.

The file on the film "Strange Passions" stored at the archives demonstrates very clearly the working practice of Riga Film Studio in those times – internal political, thematic and artistic control mechanism, as well as the already mentioned daily practice of the Studio, even its routine – the planned films had to be made by all means. That made the film "Strange Passions" possible. Jānis Streičs facilitated it himself, working according to the so-called soviet-time rules of the game, for instance, by reminding at the meetings of the Art Council that this was a class-conscious film which meant it was ideologically appropriate. Later the director admitted that he intentionally made "Strange Passions" initially in Russian because in Latvian it would most probably would not have reached the screen [LTV 2016].

Critics were quite favourable towards the film and yet also confused. Like the audience. Spectators expected from Jānis Streičs optimism, good-natured self-irony, sincerity, a film permeated with Latvianness instead of harsh self-revelation about the hardest occupation years which in those days were covered by a veil of silence. The culture press emphasized the artistic means of expression of "Strange Passions". For example, Mikhail Yampolsky analysed representation of the film's images and their relations, structuring of episodes, metaphorical images and symbols. He indicated that ""Strange Passions" is one of the few recent Soviet films that consciously, peculiarly and deeply puts forward the issue of the personal meaning as an issue via which the spectators' attitude towards the cinematic material is formed. [..] By making his film, Streičs took into consideration that the meaning of the film is inferred by the spectator, yet at the same time the filmmaker determines the strategy of spectators' perception" [Jampoļskis 1984: 60]. "Strange Passions" received also a special jury award at the All-Union Film Festival in Kiev in 1984. The jury diploma was awarded also to the actor Algirdas Paulavičius for the role of Antans.

Jānis Streičs considers his film "Strange Passions" among his best achievements and one of his artistically the most powerful films. In his interviews he is usually very passionate about its making – about finding the locations, the work of the cameraman Harijs Kukels and the production designer Gunārs Balodis, the outstanding actors, choice of costumes, shooting of many episodes [Streičs 2016; Āboliņa 2016: 261–290]. In 2016 the film "Strange Passions" was remastered at the studio "Lokomotīve". The restored version had its premiere at the Latvian National film festival "Lielais Kristaps" opening night on 5 March 2017; it was shown also on Channel 1 of Latvian National TV [Kušķe 2016; National Film Centre 2017].

Cultural memory and understanding the past

Both films by Jānis Streičs "The Boys of Līvsala" and "Strange Passions" are a cinematic reconstructive transcript of post-war Latvia. In 1946 Jānis Streičs was 10, the co-director of the film "The Boys of Līvsala" Ēriks Lācis was eight. Also the members of the Art Council of Riga Film Studio, who critically discussed both the script and the film "Strange Passions" itself, had themselves experienced the 1940s in their childhood, adolescence or youth. For example, Viktors Lorencs, in 1946 was 26 and a had served in the Latvian legion, Dzidra Ritenberga – 25, Valentīna Freimane – 24, she is survivor of the Holocaust who had lost many of her kin, Antons Broks was 17, Heinrihs Lepeško and Austra Zīle were both 15, Oļģerts Dunkers – 14, Miks Zvirbulis was a bit younger (nine years) and Vladlens Dozorcevs too (7 years). For the players of the main parts 1946 also had a certain significance in their lives: the Latvian film and theatre diva Vija Artmane turned 17 in that year, while Leonid Obolensky, a Soviet home-guard who was taken captive by Germans and later became a soldier in the auxiliary units of the German troops was sentenced to 10 years "for treason" [Kapkov 2007].

The period of time depicted in the films "The Boys of Līvsala" and "Strange Passions" was very well known to its authors, it was part of their own experience and life. From theoretical perspective of memory research, the making of both films is part of social memory that includes the experience of the contemporaries and also their closest generation's attitude to the past. Memory about it is formed and maintained via social communication, as well as preserved in the media of the respective times, symbols and public commemoration. Being observers, participants or victims of the events, individuals are always included in the dynamic context of the historical process. Every person is formed under the influence of certain key historical experiences, and irrespective whether they hold the same opinion as other contemporaries, they use in their life the models of the world outlook, conviction, social values of their generation. It means that the individual memory is determined not only by the personal temporal horizon but by wider horizon of generational memory that is part of or opposite to the grand narratives of society. Sometimes it is stated that generational identity, once formed, is unchangeable [Assmann 2016: 17]. Social memory is a collective memory that is secured by people's conversations, discourses and common life while its transfer to materials and formats that are not so ephemeral as human life (for example, manuscripts, books, films and monuments) creates already a different form of memory – cultural memory. It confers to the individual and social memory a lasting, inter-generational form. Cultural memory includes texts, images and rituals that can be recurrently used and whose usage grants and forms identity of the society, as well as generates solidarity and self-reflexivity [Erll 2011: 28–30].

Only the history version accepted by the power existed in the Soviet public space. This area was under absolute political and ideological control and was full of falsifications about the past because its task was to grant legitimacy to the postulate that the Soviet Union is the world's most progressive, just, humane and best state [Heller & Nekrich 1986: 294–296]. In many works or art human destinies, diverse relationships, the environment, alternative qualities of interpreting of the past were conveyed implicitly by using subtext and other means of artistic expression, and this approach was appreciated by the audience and became part of social memory. The Soviet filmmakers of the stagnation period were sometimes called dissident in thought but conformist in behaviour; they did not openly call into question the ruling ideology in their works, but offered a critical vision of society thus facilitating opposition to the Soviet reality [Shlapentokh & Shlapentokh 1993: 149–150].

Contemporary research and memory stories show that perhaps the majority of Latvians chose not to talk about history of their country, parents too often preferred not to discuss with children the past to make their life easier in the Soviet regime. Jānis Streičs speaks about it repeatedly in his memories. The director admits that during the Soviet rule he had not believed in a possibility of renewal of independent Latvia within his life span and that there had been little information about history of the independent state [Streičs 2012: 550–551]. As for the study of historical impact of Stalinist crimes initiated by Gorbachev during perestroika, Jānis Streičs writes as follows: "It turned out that before that I had been living in darkness with artificial light. Red like in the dark room for developing photographs" [Streičs 2006: 443].

Yet not only "Strange Passions" but also "The Boys of Līvsala" emanates a sense of presence of the bleak 1940s reality created by the film-crew relying on their personal experiences from childhood instead of the ideologically biased history dominating in the public space. In his interviews and memory stories the director always stresses the role of his childhood, the lasting impact of its experiences that left traces in his whole life. Jānis Streičs in his childhood experienced many tragic events caused by the occupation power, its cultivated violence and worthlessness of human life [Streičs 2006: 9–41; Zirnis 2016: 15; Bykov 2016; LTV 2016]. These themes, the visual images of those times, but even more importantly, the atmosphere of the period have been captured in both films. In "The Boys of Līvsala", for example, one must mention the setting and society: children with no parents, mended clothes made of various pieces of fabric or articles of clothing, a cold class-room, cartridges in the school stove and forests, weapons in the hands of children and adults, scanty meals and dreams about journeys to far-away lands. This film made in the 1960s already conveys a sense of pending fear of deportations to

Siberia, a desire to achieve security and stability. Melody of the folk song "Where are you flying, little hawk/With your wax wings…" in the composer Raimonds Pauls' arrangement, contributes to the futureless atmosphere. A flight with wax wings can never be far and safe the same as life under Soviet rule.

The music in "Strange Passions" (composed by Uldis Stabulnieks) from its first moments creates in the film narrative an undertone of anxiety, crumbling of the traditional order of life and lives of people although on the screen we see an excerpt from the official Soviet newsreel: the Soviet troops enter cities and towns of Latvia and crowds of German POWs are on the roads. Atmosphere of fear and mutual distrust enters the film from its first episode: Marite's fear of people met on the roads, suspicious and inquisitive gazes. A truly critical assessment of the Soviet power is expressed also directly – it is advice given by Antans and Anna to Marite, who has remained without her passport, how she should behave and answer not to attract attention of the authorities, and also threat of Siberia, as well as of the people who go to their daily business with weapons. The epoch is characterized also by daily consumption of large quantities of alcohol, a fleeting mention of the Roma tragedy during the Nazi occupation, exaggerated cheerfulness and conflicts at the local party where songs from the independent Latvia can still be heard, the "new life" as shown on the screen at the local cinema, the grotesque trip of the local peasants with the red Soviet flag to the point of delivery of grain, the background sounds – mooing of livestock, dog barks occasionally intertwining with the main musical score of the film. Anna's statement characterizes the times when she says: "Brother kills brother, son fights with father, infants are killed, houses burnt, others' property is coveted, – is that not a sin?" While Ausma says: "The world has turned upside down." Certainly this world too has still values (and/or their deficit) – God's scripture, awareness of sin, respect and compassion. The films "The Boys of Līvsala" and "Strange Passions" create a sense of 1946 reality that enables/makes one perceive the "mediated reality" as seen on the screen as real events of the past and empathise with them. Both films also distinctly characterize the film director Jānis Streičs' "magic realist" film style showing his skills of turning the time of childhood and adolescence of his generation into cultural memory of Latvia. It should also be noted that the film "Strange Passions" is an impressive example of Jānis Streičs' ability of creating an artistically remarkable work of art, despite complying to the Soviet "rules of the game", a work of art that outplays the ruling regime and thus also provides to spectators a possibility of gaining rational and emotional awareness of Latvia as it was in 1940s.

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VISUAL AESTHETICS OF JĀNIS STREIČS' FILMS

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Abstract

Jānis Streičs is one of the key figures in the Latvian film history. His Soviet period films (13 feature films) are distinguished by a certain visual style, as well as by technique and aesthetics of creating characters, sets and the on-screen world. The 1970s and 80s was a prolific time for the director both in terms of genres and subjects covered in his films. Films of this period serve as evidence to Jānis Streičs' strong authorship, as well as give grounds for further research into aesthetic canons, technical possibilities and visual aesthetics of the Soviet period films.

Keywords: *Jānis Streičs, visual aesthetics, cinematography, Soviet cinema.*

The aim of the present report is to analyse visuality of Jānis Streičs' films – what visual aesthetic and technical means are used to construct characters, sets and the on-screen world. The period selected for the analysis – 1970s and 80s – is characterised by a variety of themes and genres of creative activity of the director. By choosing this specific time-span it is possible to examine the visual aesthetics of Jānis Streičs' films both in the context of the soviet period film structuring, aesthetic cannon and technical possibilities, as well as (and mainly) as evidence of his authorship.

Despite diversity of themes and genres, the director's films are united by a visual (and thematic) technique – grotesque. In films b**y** Jānis Streičs not merely a satirical or comic exaggeration is encoded already in his literary film scripts and played out on the screen but also a visual means of expression – unexpected and abrupt contrasts are used in the films that bear additional significance and meaning (henceforward the text will examine his films "My Friend a Light-Minded Man", "Strange Passions" and "It's Easy to Fall into an Overgrown Ditch"). Besides, in several films by the director the contrast is not only created within the film but

also by confronting the on-screen reality with the reality of soviet life. In the films examined later in the report "Theatre" and "Unfinished Dinner", with the help of set design, colours, rhythm and camera movement the director has managed to conjure up a visually utopian on-screen world (practically unattainable for soviet man), and at the same time to "destroy" this utopia by showing with the help of story and acting the anti-utopian "substance" of this utopia – the destructive passions, vice and crimes. Thus, the director has fulfilled the spectator's dream for "something better and more beautiful" (the entertaining function of films – a chance to forget themselves [Dyer 2002: 20]) and at the same time he has skilfully integrated grotesque elements in the visual narrative.

The first independently made film by Jānis Streičs "Shoot Instead of Me" was made in 1970, at the time which is commonly called "the golden age" of Latvian cinema [Pērkone 2011: 258]. It is a time of change for the soviet cinema – more comedies, musicals and adventure films (especially crime films) were made, and a large number of the entertaining or "lighter genre" films were screened at cinemas. Apart from "replacement" of the topical genres, the contents of films changed as well in the 1970s, the social and collective values dominating in the 1950s and 60s were gradually replaced by interest about the personal and emotional themes; from an embodiment of ideals, the actor on the screen became a living being.

This change can be easily detected in the film "My Friend a Light-Minded Man", whose script Jānis Streičs managed to transform from an ideologically programmatic one into a life asserting, always topical and empathetic story "from life" – with authentic and precise heroes whose characters and mutual differences are well-shown also in visual dimension of the film. It is significant that the positive character (Arvīds played by Jānis Paukštello) is not "a flawless man" any more, as it was in films of the 1950s and also 60s; he is simple and humane and appears on the screen in yellow socks with holes. While the setting signifying all dreams come true (the house of Ciekurs, the fiancé of the mother-in-law) turns out to be much less hospitable than the flooded basement flat of Čakāns crammed with paintings and wood-carvings – practically the only place where one can feel free.

Not only the contents of the films changed but also filming technology and its application. Cameras become lighter hence also more mobile but one of the "signs" of those times were *long focus* lens and *transfocator* that was used very often in films of the 1970s. Choice of such equipment provides an opportunity of getting closer to what is filmed without changing of camera position, which means one could remain at an unobtrusive and non-disturbing distance and at the same time make truthful and emotionally expressive close-up.

The use of *transfocator* is a typical "feature" of the 1970s films and one can see it often in films by Jānis Streičs. The first *transfocator* lenses immediately became

"items of fashion" when in the 1960s they were received at Riga Film Studios [Zapāne: 2010]. Due to their use it was possible to give up or diminish the use of rails and crane. The *transfocator* in Jānis Streičs' films was almost an invincible part of visuality – by its application it became possible to show in a single and unedited shot a long-shot of the setting and also to highlight its separate details (human face, an object important for the dramaturgy and so on). The use of such means of expression quite often indicates a dramatic moment of tension, emotional suspense, and events essential and decisive for the story of the film – it guides the spectator's gaze and emotions into trajectory intended by the director. Cameraman Harijs Kukels has claimed that "Jānis Streičs belongs to those film directors who senses the *transfocator* as an organic necessity" [Līce 1995: 124].

Already the first films by Jānis Streičs were marked by the aesthetic means of expression that were developed in his subsequent films. Casting is always done with great care – the actors in films by Jānis Streičs are often given similar roles (for example, the positive characters played by Jānis Paukštello in the films "My Friend a Light-Minded Man", "Strange Passions", and "It's Easy to Fall into an Overgrown Ditch"). The clothes for the characters are selected with utmost care (the authentic, crumpled and even dirty clothes in "Meeting on the Milky Way" or "western-type", fashionable outfits in "Unfinished Dinner" – besides the hot day is conveyed in this film not only by the ever-present props – the fans but also the make-up and the inspector Per Monson's (played by Uldis Vazdiks) sweat-drenched T-shirts. Great role is allocated to props that not only help to reveal the character of the heroes but even advance the action of the film.

In his first films Jānis Streičs worked with different cameramen – "Shoot Instead of Me" (1970, camera: Rihards Pīks), "Little Oriole" (1972, camera: Māris Rudzītis), "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" (1975, camera: Miks Zvirbulis), during later years the director had long and almost constant creative co-operation with the cameraman Harijs Kukels. Their co-operation has resulted in films of diverse genres and themes, and the search for new visual plasticity is always derived from the film contents. Whether those are the modern and "Scandinavian" interiors in the film "Unfinished Dinner" (1979) or the narrow and dark farm house rooms on the Valdmanis' farm in the film "Strange Passions" (1983) – the cameraman's work is purposeful yet unobtrusive and does not draw unnecessary attention. Harijs Kukel's camera most often remains loyal to the qualities called by Leo Baudry as film heritage from Renaissance painting – classical composition of frame, "normal" perspective, harmony of rhythm and academic lighting [Baudry 1985: 534]. While every deviation from this "norm" emphasizes the position of the author Jānis Streičs validating the view expressed by Patrick Ogle: Technologies become supplements of art form only if used wisely. [Ogle 1985: 76]. Images

Figure 1. Shot from Jānis Streičs' film "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" (1975)

captured by Harijs Kukels are a means of telling the story of the film and never an aim in itself.

Making films of a "lighter" genre, such as – "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" – a more radical positioning of the camera helped to bestow comic effects on the episode. Low camera angle, fairly common for visual aesthetics of the 1950s and 60s even depicting everyday situations, had lost its significance – people were usually shown in films without mannerism, by shots composed in a veritable way. Therefore, in the film "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" the comic effect is achieved by the use uncommon and unnatural for its time positioning of the camera – the manager of the factory comrade Jēkabsons standing at the top of the staircase and talking to his subordinates resembles a monument (see figure 1).

It is significant that almost every film by Jānis Streičs has its "framing". Quite often his films are introduced with a dynamic opening; most often it is arrival of the main character in a *new* place. *Protagonist* of the film "Little Oriole" Fiodor arrives to Latvia by bus, the hero of the film "The Master" Artūrs arrives in Riga after his military service by taxi, Sancho's family goes to the Soviet Union by plane ("The Trustworthy Friend Sancho"), Zane Jančevska's Marite in the film "Strange Passions" goes to Valdmanis' house on foot, the main character Artūrs in "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" goes by bicycle but the protagonist of the film "It's Easy to Fall into an Overgrown Ditch" the Komsomol organization secretary Vitolds arrives at his new work place by motorbike. The characters in the film "Limousine in the Colour of a Midsummer Night" following the temptation of the limousine arrive at the main setting of the film – aunt Mirta's house – "each in their *own way*". The film "Theatre"

has a different framing, it is announced as a play within a play; first the spot-lights go up and then the director and the actress announce in the film that is about to be "played". The second part of the film ends by the spot-lights being switched off thus indicating the end of the play (performance).

In Jānis Streičs' films both the documentary setting is designed with great accuracy (the film "Limousine in the Colour of a Midsummer Night" was shot near Cēsis town in a real country house), as well as then the little known "Western world" (the films "Theatre" and later "Unfinished Dinner"). At the opening of the film "Theatre" the director announces that the title of the film has been chosen "because we know so little about England" [Streičs 1978]. But the wittily and deftly designed and constructed setting in the Studio pavilion allows us to believe in the on-screen world forgetting that this TV film's budget was considerably smaller than for the feature films and that Latvia and England are separated not only by thousands of kilometres but in those days also by the "iron curtain".

The interior spaces in the film "Theatre" are characterized by draperies of different colour and texture, luxurious furniture, typical lighting objects (spotlights) and frames – window, painting and mirror frames. It is mirrors and reflections in them that create the visual imagery and multi-layered features of the story-line. Mirror is a recurrent image in the film "Theatre", it appears in different forms and with different frames, and more importantly, does not only allow to show the characters and their "various faces" (symbolically – to contrast life and "theatre"), but also offers wide possibilities for interpretation.

Beginning to make the next film – "Unfinished Dinner" – the director and his crew already had an experience in creating "foreign" setting; this time the action takes place in Sweden and (similarly to draperies and fabric in "Theatre") shutters of different form and colour become an essential interior element (see figure 2). Skilfully designed "Scandinavian" interiors (attention was paid also to minute details, objects and shop signs) but the true shooting location was betrayed only by the locally produced telephones, city panorama and the recognizable car racing facility.

"Theatre" is not the only film by Jānis Streičs in which mirror reflection is allocated a big role. This image is used also later in "Strange Passions" (see figure 3) – Antans brings a large mirror from the town, Antans congratulates his own mirror image with his would-be baby, the old Valdmanis breaks a mirror shortly before killing Antans. But the rhythm and drama of the film is created by camera movement that is combined with *transfocator* movement and the light filters – in particular the red one that instantly changes tonality and atmosphere of the shot (an example – Antans slaughters a cow, the old Valdmanis kills Antans).

Figure 2. Shot from Jānis Streičs' film "Unfinished Dinner" (1979)

The second method frequently used in films by Jānis Streičs is inclusion of screen shots or photos, and it has been done almost in all the films, starting with "Shoot Instead of Me". The occupation of the main character Jezups is screening of silent films – he is a film projectionist. In this film, a film screening becomes a deadly weapon in the hands of the protagonist (and he wins the evil). In the detective film "Unfinished Dinner" *freeze frame* is used as circumstantial evidence (the film is stopped for a moment and the voice-over comment explains whether the person or object seen in the shot has a decisive role in the subsequent investigation). In the film "Strange Passions" a white sheet is hung up in the dancing room and a

Figure 3. Shot from Jānis Streičs' film "Strange Passions" (1983)

film is screened (Ausma ironically says that they should watch "the new life"). TV is watched both in the film "The Trustworthy Friend Sancho", as well as by Arvīds' wife who takes the opportunity of mentioning her mother's new dress while watching a fashion show (in "My Friend a Light-Minded Man"). In the film "Carmen Horrendum" the hospital female patients watch Grigoriy Alexandrov's film "The Light Road" (the on-screen world is more beautiful than the one they inhabit). But photos are used already in the film "Little Oriole" (Fiodor finds out he has a daughter), as well as in "Theatre" and "Limousine in the Colour of a Midsummer Night"; the different post-cards sent to Mirta by Pigalu Prīdis show the flow of time but in a photograph the director has seated Marta again next to Jānis.

The third visual means of expression frequently employed in films by Jānis Streičs is a contrast or opposition by the use of which it is possible to achieve comic or dramatic effect. In the film "Meeting on the Milky Way" (camera: Valdis Eglītis) such a contrast is formed by the bleak war setting and the white lace dress received as a present by the character called Astra who is played by Ināra Slucka. In the film "Strange Passions" a strong contrast is sustained between the exterior of the Valdmanis' house (which creates an impression of a light and spacious impression of the building) and the narrow, low key lit and gloomy interior. While a comic but no less oppressive contrast is engendered by "the order" established in the courtyard of the "shock workers" of the collective-farm (the film "It's Easy to Fall into an Overgrown Ditch"). In one of his interviews the cameraman Harijs Kukels admitted that it has always been important for him to show relations between nature and man: "Nature, like objects, is an extension of a person and help to reveal the character who is either united with nature or contrasted to it" [Līce 1995: 132]. In this sense, the way symbolic character of colour and nature imagery is used, the film "Little Oriole" presents a particular interest – the most memorable scene is one of the last sequences in which the character Ilga played by Līga Liepiņa is killed but the camera moves away from the heroine to show little, red aspen leaves trembling in the wind.

It is interesting that in films by Jānis Streičs the visual imagery is frequently replaced (or supplemented) by a characteristic sound track. In the film "Little Oriole" the army planes are not shown but their presence is heard. But the accompanying sign of the protagonist of the same film Ilga (Līga Liepiņa) is the song that she sings. Voice-over (the conversation between the taxi driver and Artūrs) alternately edited with images of the city replace the necessity to have a long series of shots to explain from where and where to the main character of the film "The Master" goes. Another type of shot "economy" are captions identifying the on-screen location (road signs that indicate the place of location – the border

sign "Latvian SSR" in the film "Little Oriole", the road sign "Cēsis" in the film "Limousine in the Colour of a Midsummer Night", border sign "Rosme" in the film "It's Easy to Fall into an Overgrown Ditch" or inscriptions on the glass phone booth in the films "Unfinished Dinner" and "The Master" ("International phone calls" on the glass behind which Artūrs' military service mate is standing).

In several interviews Jānis Streičs has mentioned that while making the film "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" he started paying attention how with the help of the screen it is possible to show the national self-expression [Cāne 2004]. Yet this film is also significant by the fact that it demonstrated the director's capacity to subordinate the canons and requirements of the soviet aesthetics to his own artistic needs and raise them to a new level. The film contains a number of means of his visual expression that is typical for many of his later films; among the most essential ones are carefully developed visual images of the characters (and by all means also their character features). With the film "My Friend a Light-Minded Man" the director asserts himself as an *author* and in his later films he consolidates this status by using consistent series of visual imagery in his films.

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