

# Grażyna Świętochowska

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## Author(s), authority...

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# Grażyna Świętochowska

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## Author(s), authority...

“Third Annual SCREEN INDUSTRIES IN EAST-CENTRAL EUROPE CONFERENCE: INDUSTRIAL AUTHORSHIP”, 29 November – 1 December 2013, Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

### Under the sign of media nostalgia?

SIECE (Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference) as the platform of sharing perspectives, exchange thoughts and academic discourses, as the idea of academic network has an important value worked out through last three years. The inaugural SIECE 2011 was driven by the need to complement textual analysis with examinations of the institutional contexts that shape the production and content of films. 2012 conference was organized by the Screenwriting theorizing<sup>1</sup>. The main profile of last year conference was a different aspect of industrial authorship and its worth underlying the versatile perspectives located in keynote speeches. However, the question is: what are the definitions of industrial term or the ways that a movie author is migrating into the different level of meaning.

The first conference paper of **Irena Reifová** (Charles University, Czech Republic) presented the outcome of research into the historical dimension of television audiences in the 1970s and 1980s, in the former socialist state of Czechoslovakia. It entered at the same time the panel concerning the question of different/common national television formats and their contemporary and historical ways of reading. The impact of the mythologization-turn-out process indicated the audience's pattern of reaction: how television viewers understood the socialist television serials, actually renegotiating the nostalgic suspicious cult of the packaged of the ideological credos set in the television narrative's structure. The reverse of this mass memory, in a way, was **Sabina Mihelj's** paper (Loughborough University, UK). Yugoslavia's past period of socialist culture in her optic was read through the communist idea of real participation of the working class in all cultural activities, screen industries as well, although the cultural preferences of workers did not necessarily match those held by the elites illuminated by the ideological aims. Participation, authority and control<sup>2</sup> were the three important factors in the majority of the first panel presentations, even when they try to focus on a media culture of the archeological period as a complex environment comprising the aesthetic aspect of the whole propaganda “building” and its contemporary heritage **Dana Mustata's** (University of Groningen, Netherlands) paper took into consideration the final result of an “aesthetic

face” of particular TV programs in early Romanian television<sup>3</sup>. It was the outcome of practical exchanges between European broadcasters – primarily with the BBC – and on the other hand, the result of experimentation with the medium coming from the national movie directors. Cinematic skills used to experiment with the new medium were not a typical Romanian feature. I see the important commentary to that mentioned by Dana Mustata’s direction of *bottom-up* television history of socialist broadcasters in the way the Czechoslovakian New Wave director Jan Nemec claimed that he was indeed one of the first authors of video clips with the Marta Kubišova or Karel Gott performances during the 1960s<sup>4</sup>. Whether we took this example as a dominant factor that formed the creation of early television programs – as a European phenomenon that took similar forms in different countries – from that point of view it is not only about an early institutional authorship of television but a transnational rather than national specificity.

The speech of **Kateryna Khinkulova** (Birkbeck College, UK) was about the Ukrainian identity which is in the centre of the contemporary political situation in this part of Europe and because of Russia demonstrating the power of a grand strategy player in the global political order. As Khinkulova showed the specific form of different ingredients in Ukrainian television proposals shaped after 1991, after the ZSSR collapse, it was based not only on Russian legacy but Western European and American foreign entertainment TV formats as well. Together they lead to the form of a unique individual Ukrainian screen culture. Unique national television programming content is more successful with the local audiences than alternative proposals produced outside the Ukraine. These preferences also anticipated the real social need for an emancipation gesture in the mode of autonomy change.

## Industry turn

The distinctive perspective demonstrated by the main organizer of the event, **Petr Szczepanik** (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) is worth to undermine it. His academic work has embraced “film industry” paradigm for quite a long time and we can also see the effects of this approach in the Polish publishing market (being quite precisely Polish-English because of bilingual publication *Restart zespołów filmowych / Film Units Restart*<sup>5</sup>). *Film Units as (Sub)producers: Possibilities of a “House Style” in the State-socialist Mode of Production* discussed conditions for their actual impact on group-based creativity and style in the state-socialist production system of the former Czechoslovakia, between Polish and Hungarian cases. In his current paper, by focusing on the early stage of the transformation process, when the units – practically substituting hands-on producers or middle managers – were pushed to innovate and differentiate by building informal collaborative networks with young writers and directors, Szczepanik attempted to describe the social workings of group style in its nascent form, before it materialized into the first revisionist film movement of post-second world war Czech cinema. Such a practice-oriented perspective defines group style not just as common for-

mal features of finished films, but rather as a set of shared practices and beliefs of those who produced them. The paper paid particular attention to the manner in which day-to-day creative activities were managed within a system that designated the state the sole official producer, and to organizational solutions which were introduced in an effort to strike a balance between centralized control and creative freedom.

### Co-producing fields

The simple observation that not only Carlo Ponti produced Czech New Waves films (the well-known story of spectacular coproduction project of the third Milos Forman film and finally spectacular withdrawing his financial help in the name of the humble Czech citizen) was the basis of **Francesco di Chiara's** paper (University of Ferrara, Italy). From the early 1960s to the mid-1970s, more Italian producers and distributors were keen on co-financing, or even producing, films from the numerous new waves that were emerging around the world, in Europe as well as in Southern America. The broad area of Yugoslav and Italian co-productions provided di Chiara with three different examples of how authorship could be handled in 1970s European film co-productions: *Maddalena*, a film by Polish director Jerzy Kawalerowicz that was produced by Bosna Film along with Italian company Unitas, and the only two Black Wave films that were co-produced by Italian film companies, Boro Drašković's *The Rogue* (1971) and Aleksandar Petrović's *The Master and Margaret* (1972).

### Historical part

Gloss role to those mentioned presentations asks the question (linking and/or dividing) of what is individual against the collective in Soviet cinema industry (**Gabrielle Chomentowski**, Institut of Political Sciences, Paris, France). The paper was oriented toward searching a balance between two extremes: the collective organization (studios productions were called "fabric" and an artistic group which was responsible for a film were called "kollektiv" in russian) vs. an idea of Soviet cinema history only made by some famous filmmakers such as Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Vertov, Tarkovski, Paradjanov, etc.).

Another conference paper (**Milan Hain**, Palacky University, Czech Republic) demonstrated how different can be entering the strange mode of production. The original story of Czech director Hugo Haas, described earlier by Hamid Naficy, proved his ability to find himself managing Hollywood mode of production. The path of Haas's American career is full of strong archival evidences (in comparison to Gustav Machaty's case of assisting D. W. Griffith for instance). After having spent ten years in the U.S. (at a time when the Hollywood studio system was rapidly changing and its so-called classical era was coming to an end), Hugo Haas – at that time known mostly as a character actor – set out to start his own independent

production company; Hugo Haas Productions, established in 1950. The form of reflection of this choice was a case of classical style in the Czech Silent Cinema, not a minor tendency, but very strong one, as **Radomír Kokeš** (Masaryk University, Czech Republic) claimed (with a support of subsequent during this conference presented in the form of a graph, just after Kovacs' example).

### National, masculine, feminine...

After these historical experiences the paper of **Olof Hedling** from Lund University, Sweden ("An Authoring Discourse of Sorts: Effects of public film support on a national cinema") presented examples from contemporary Scandinavia as a contemporary mode of national cinema. Factors such as language, locations, genre, the nationality of the crew and the actors, and even where the individual crew members are registered as living, are frequently prescribed by provisions attached to the support.

The paper of **Petra Hanáková** (Charles University, Czech Republic) made the form of summing-up rethinking of mainly Czech and Slovak cinema from the perspective of female authorship and the feminist aesthetic. The key platforms were not precise proposals of the feminist cinematic aesthetic but the enumeration of all detail articles and books using these methodological tools that were presented earlier in Hanakova's work (see for example *The voices from another world*<sup>6</sup>).

### The other Author's faces: Źuławski, Kalatozov, Wajda

Another conference paper was set in this transnational perspective, on Andrzej Źuławski's cinematic work, presented by **Michael N. Goddard** (University of Salford, UK). The main question of this speaker was: what happens to the author's work and stylistic signature when it takes place in a markedly different cultural and industrial context, and even political system? He also argued that rather than complete continuity or a radical break, in the case of Źuławski the experience of exile and dislocation resulted in his films made abroad (focusing especially on his films made in France), having a markedly different 'accent', than those made in Poland, even if dealing with overlapping thematic concerns or using similar stylistic tendencies (which from a Polish perspective is something obvious but which probably still needs to be emphasized from the outside perspective).

The other aspects of the process relocating the real influence of film author or naming the different place of his or her implantation in film text were represented in several other papers. The narration on the film career of Mikhail Kalatozov as a symbiosis of *auteurist* aspirations and soviet "corporate" knowledge was presented by **Sergei Capterev** (Institute of Cinema Art in Moscow, Russia). A case of Andrzej Wajda's movies in the 1950s was the centre of interest of **Marcin Adamczak** (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poland). The empirical material of the three initial movies of Andrzej Wajda (*Generation*, 1955, *Canal*, 1957, *Diamonds and Ashes*,

1958) investigated through archival documents allowed Adamczak to draw a more complicated picture. In this alternative view the film director is/was not a figure of an author in the strong sense of the romantic philosophy of art, but a figure functioning and shaping a piece of film art among multiple mediating factors: film unit structure, scripts evaluating committee, censorship, high Party officials, changes of cultural politics determining what is possible, but also film festivals awards, social emotions, and audience expectations and reception. They constituted together a kind of dispersive authorship. The political power and its cultural officials were not only a “disturbing opponent”, but indeed the producer cooperating in film making with its own interests (even if it’s sometimes harsh relation).

The paper of **Lucie Česálková** from Masaryk University (“No Maps, No Lyrics – I am the Director of this Movie”: Short Film, Contracts, and Negotiation”) existed on the similar methodological domain focused on the role of custom nature of short film making in terms of authorship. Specific examples of films produced in post-war Czechoslovakia were examined as intersections of negotiations taking place on different levels: within the company Short Film, on the level of ministerial authorities, but also on the level of sponsor (mostly national companies), or expert advisors authorizing factual accuracy of the film. The marginalized role of yet canonized directors in the process is especially highlighted. As a secondary aspect characteristic for short film’s authorship the paper examines the role of archival footage and animated maps, typical for Czech post-war nonfiction film.

### The cases of paratextualization

More examples of authorizing phenomenon were represented at Screen Industries 2013 conference. The trails connected with the post-Genette paratextual surrounding: the television title sequence as a tool for the revealing or direct articulation of authorship (**Jakub Korda**, Palacky University, Czech Republic), are still present.

Comparison of the opening credits of films of early, mid and late East Central European socialism was represented in the paper of **Constantin Pârvolescu** (West University of Timisoara, Romania) – *The Question of Authorship in Socialist-Realist Film* – reflected changes in the way in which Eastern European film studios and film culture conceived of the social function of film, its authorship and its marketing. The purpose of this speech was next to reveal the way in which title sequences were the loci of negotiation between various organizational, aesthetic, economic, and political discourses and interests of their times.

My paper – *Into the Machine of the Market: The Way the DVD Covers Speak* – established other narrative practices on the Czechoslovak New Wave movement existing in the global DVD market (Facets, Second Run) and in the example of *Zlatá šedesátá* (The Golden Sixties) project (26 film portraits of Czech and Slovak filmmakers, cinematographers, producers, screenwriters, etc. first showed on

Czech TV, then on screen in cinemas in full-length documentary *25 ze šedesátých* (25 from sixties) and then published on DVD as well. DVD with Czechoslovak New Waves films are continuing the very common authorship rituals connected with film festival credits and awards from the 1960s, the “consecration practices” that made the films of the movement the form of art cinema. The *Zlatá šedesátá* project certainly has the strongest ambition of creating the actual canon of Czechoslovak New Wave heritage (including for instance *The man who lies* dir. Alain Robbe-Grillet coproduced by Slovak Koliba and France). These two examples I treat as new paratexts that are reproducing and medicating at the same time the order of centre and periphery.

### Keynote speaker’s voices (and its closest surrounding)

The main profile of the conference, organized for the third time, was a different aspect of industrial authorship and its worth underlying the versatile perspectives located in keynote speeches. However, the question is: what are the definitions of industrial term or the ways that a movie author is migrating into the different level of meaning. Despite the fact that none of these papers entered the revolutionary methodological change, each was an example of an integrated proposal.

The first one, **András Bálint Kovács** (Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary) with a lecture *Shot Scale Distribution and Authorship*, used as a methodological framework a modified heritage of Barry Salt’s stylist perspective based on dominant technical devices: cinematics (the real meaning of relative frequencies (MRFs) of shot scales) understood as an indicator of authorship. Choosing the appropriate shot type for a scene is not only a functional issue and important ingredient of a particular authorial style. Statistical analysis of shot scale distribution of films brings potential analysis to another level: it determines the overall distribution of shot types in a film measured in seconds. Direction of this research provides a histogram representing the proportion of each shot type for a film. In the centre of conference András Bálint Kovács’ investigation was Michelangelo Antonioni’s cinematic work that revealed an unexpected regularity of long shots.

However, I view the idea of non-keynote-speech of **Balázs Varga** (Eotvos Lorand University, Hungary) in the project of finding new forms of authorship (the same first day of the conference, panel “Radical Authorship”: *Auteurs as Brands: Bela Tarr, his Films, the Critics, and the Audiences*) as more compelling. The modes of the European Art Cinema market show contemporary institutionalized subjects of an authorship producing process. It can result in graphic scales as well but not providing the histogram notation. To put together these two different territories of contemporary film studies is not an unrealistic gesture, since last year’s paper by András Bálint Kovács’ concentrated on particular changes in Hungary’s national film industry, the surrounding determined by two important names: Tarr as a well-known film author, the successor of, for instance, Tarkovsky’s cinematic practices, and Andrew G. Vajna, a former hair dresser born in Budapest who from

the 1980s on evolved into a producer of Hollywood action franchises (such as the Rambo series) and returned to Budapest after 1990, in 2010 the government offered him the post of national film commissioner in charge of the new Hungarian National Film Fund (MNF)<sup>7</sup>. This year Varga's investigation in the field of 'industrial auteurship' discussed the ways the brand name and authorial notion of Béla Tarr is produced in different ways and in different discourses beginning with the promotion of his films to the critical reception and audience responses as a part of culture industry in post-Horkheimer-Adorno meaning.

The keynote speech of **Dina Iordanova** (University of St. Andrews, UK) continued another important path of contemporary film studies: film festival culture. This methodological environment allowed the indication of the specificity of recognizability of movie makers and the limitations created at the same time by this film culture linking. On the one side we've got the film festival hypertext and on the other the isolated constellation of local film makers. From this perspective there are well-known film festival brands which doesn't mean too much for the Art Cinema which is from "Inner" Europe in origin. The way these modes of the art film market create the ways the tenuous access to the wider audience is a heritage of the previous Big Authors Age in new circumstances which indicates the logic of shrinking real power of film critic. So the question is whether Béla Tarr is the beneficiary of the same festival's practices or not?

Actually the process of adopting Western patterns of wide understanding of film festival culture (based on selected historical experience) was described, during the same conference, by **Francesco Pitassio** (Universita degli Studi di Udine, Italy) in his paper 'I didn't do it!' Authorship, Realism and Socialism. Italian Neorealism Goes East. The intention of this speaker was to inquire how neorealist culture was promoted through a series of actions in Czechoslovakia as a case study, including the Italian presence at the international film festivals in Mariánské Lázně and Karlovy Vary, and how translation of statements, reports, film critics and volumes, cultural mediation, through few Czech intellectuals (Brousil, Kautský) were different aspects of the penetration of the East by Western aesthetic machinery. Neorealism was considered the expression of Western progressive culture, giving a harsh description of national society.

Finally, the last keynote paper was concerned with runaway film (high-budget film) productions that have the purpose of (re)creating the vanished historical world. A few examples with the reservation of possible bigger number of continuation – two Polish films *Knights of the Teutonic Order (Krzyżacy)* (1960), *Pan Tadeusz* (1999) and one Czech film *Marketa Lazarova* (1967) – were used by **Ian Christie** (Birkbeck College, UK) as a visualization of some amalgam designer practices. The basis of this research direction was connected with the conviction that, in film practice, there are no unique historical roots in the idea of (re)creating film image of the past but only some universal material fetishes that can be quoted in different surroundings (the initial findings: 'The past is a foreign country?'). From this point of view, the name of a particular film director was a side issue compared to that of



a set or a costume designer. In this case the current frame for this profile research is still the idea of transnational cinema.

## Documentary versus others

**Mirosław Przyłipiak** (University of Gdańsk, Poland) was the only speaker who raised the nature of authorship in a documentary film comparing it with a bricolage made of bits and pieces that in themselves are beyond the power of the filmmaker (*The Nature of Authorship in Documentary Cinema*). This point of view does not set the question of authorship in no-mans land, but only emphasizes its different nature than other film genres. Differences between documentary subgenres must be taken into account as well. The nature of authorship is different in a personal documentary, whose aim is to present some aspects of the filmmaker's life, different in a poetic documentary, which freely uses all means of film form, different in an observational film, which strives to enable a direct contact between a viewer and reality, and yet different in a corporate, expository film, which attempts to present a certain problem and stir social action to resolve it. Each of these cases should be considered separately, authorship in each of them takes on a different form. The centre of this paper constituted the paradigmatic case of individual/co-authored documentary of Marcel and Paweł Łoziński: from the idea of making one joint documentary project to the emancipation of two separated projects that work on the same initial material. *Ojciec i syn w podróży* (*The Father and Son in Journey*) directed by Marcel Łoziński and *Ojciec i syn* (*The Father and Son*) directed by Paweł Łoziński. A significant shift is not a case of the film's length (father's film lasts 75 minutes and son's only 54 minutes) but a strategy of selecting and editing. It is the purest form of demonstrating the borders/limits of documentary's author and its ways of expression.

What is worth emphasizing is the fact that SIECE serves as a unique forum for exchanging ideas and initiate publications introducing regional screen industries and allowing for a more thorough and comprehensive comparative approach<sup>8</sup>. SIECE as an important place (despite where it's actual located) of transferring the academic schools, theorizing on cinema, industry and the direction of Eastern-European Cinema. Must have it!

*Grażyna Świętochowska*

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Two previous events were: Screen Industries in East-Central Europe: International Conference 2011, an outcome of the NECS Film Industries Work Group and Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference and Theorizing Screenwriting Practice Workshop, Brno, 22–25 November 2012.
- <sup>2</sup> It was also a part of Sabina Mihelj's paper's title.
- <sup>3</sup> As Dana Mustata mentioned in one of her earlier articles that readers/viewers around Europe may rightly associate Romanian television with its live screening of the revolution in December 1989. However, the story told by the Romanian television archives goes far beyond the screened event. See D. Mustata, *History*

- In The Backstage Of Romanian Television Archives*, "Journal of European History and Culture", Vol. 1, 1, 2012.
- <sup>4</sup> See for example *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about My Heart...* An interview of Ivana Košuličová with film director Jan Němec <[http://www.cereview.org/01/17/interview17\\_kosulicova.html](http://www.cereview.org/01/17/interview17_kosulicova.html)>. Accessed: 28 February 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> See *Restart zespołów filmowych / Film Units Restart* (ed. M. Adamczak, P. Marecki, M. Malatyński, Kraków 2013).
- <sup>6</sup> P. Hanáková, 'Voices From Another World: Feminine Space and Masculine Intrusion in *Sedmikrásky* and *Vražda Ing. Čerta*', in Aniko Imre (ed), *East European Cinemas* (London: Routledge, 2005), pp.63-80; Eadem, *Głosy z innego świata. Przestrzeń feministyczna oraz intruzja męska w "Stokrotkach" i "Zabójstwie inż. Czarta"*, „Kwartalnik Filmowy” 2007, nr 57-58, s. 287-299.
- <sup>7</sup> See O. Hedling, *Screen industries in East-Central Europe: Cultural policies and political culture (22-25 November 2012, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic)*, Jan Hanzlík, *Bridging the Gaps. Screen Industries in East-Central Europe Conference and Theorizing Screenwriting Practice Workshop, Brno, 22–25 November 2012*, "Iluminace" Ročník 24, 2012, č. 4 (88), pp. 120-122.
- <sup>8</sup> The conference achieved stable position, every year attracting researchers of the region studying cinema industries, and thus it has become an important forum for intellectual exchange and publication initiatives, such as annual special English issue of the journal „Iluminace”. See M. Adamczak, *Ekrany Europy Środkowej*, <<http://publica.pl/teksty/ekrany-europy-srodkowej>>. Accessed: 3.03.2014.