

# Miscommunication Patterns in Contemporary East-Central European Cinema

International Conference - 28-29th of September 2023

## Abstracts and Author's Bios

Thursday, September 28th

### Panel 1: Gendered Misapprehensions

Moderator: Liri Chapelan

#### **Irina Trocan - Misunderstanding Women: Female characters in Yugoslav War films**

**Abstract:** Whenever films represent the violent dissolution of SFR Yugoslavia, the tendency to focus on the deeds of armed male protagonists is nearly irresistible, especially given cinema's (and especially war films') affinities with on-screen dramatic action and its breathtaking, graphic outcome. However, female characters are often present in these scripts and often have semantically central, if dramatically passive or ineffective, roles, which moreover, given the extraordinary living circumstances in the Balkan region in the 1990s, often deviate from Western media clichés in depicting women. Rejecting the destructive nationalistic urges, then in full swing, and often shown as objectified, violated and instrumentalized at the hands of men, female characters are often morally ambiguous, either muted, traumatized or otherwise impaired in their self-expression (since foreign journalists' and UN troops' presence in the region is cinematically prominent, this also frequently involves a language barrier), with their domestic roles and agency suspended by the radical shift of their surroundings into a physically and mentally threatening environment. Several tendencies are worthy of scrutiny, including mythologizing women's inherent humaneness. If sociological and journalistic accounts (see Glenny: 1996) suggest that women often sided with their husbands even against their own ethnic origins, cinematic female characters predominantly aspire – presumably by virtue of their gender – to peace and reconciliation, to immediate action against violence (Quo Vadis, Aida?, 2020), crippling bureaucracy (A Perfect Day, 2015) or generalized indifference (No Man's Land, 2001). In other cases (the teacher/victim in Pretty Village, Pretty Flame, 1996), they embody the abuse and abjection to which the once-beautiful Bosnian homeland has succumbed. This paper looks at the cinematic means and their corresponding vantage points (of foreign/domestic filmmakers of fiction and documentary) which shape the specific types of female characters associated with the 1990s wars in former Yugoslavia. While verbally inexpressive characters allow for cinematic richness, it is also worth inquiring whether this also sacrifices women's subjectivity to artistic ends.

#### **Author bio**

Irina Trocan is a Lecturer at the Film Faculty of UNATC Bucharest and coordinator of the online magazine Acoperișul de Sticlă. Her PhD thesis (published as Audiovizualul în opoziție.

Gândirea critică în eseuri video și cinema-eseu. IDEA Design & Print, 2020) speculates on the roots of contemporary video essays in the essay film tradition. She is a Fulbright alumna (2017-2018, University of Pennsylvania) and former New Europe College fellow (2020-2021), and published film criticism in Cineaste, Sight & Sound, desistfilm, IndieWire, among others.

### **Klaudia Rachubińska - The Girls Would Prefer Not To. Radical Refusal and Postcolonial Theory in Agnieszka Smoczyńska's The Silent Twins**

**Abstract:** In one of the chapters of *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), Jack Halberstam explores „a feminist politics that issues not from a doing but from an undoing.” The author tracks examples of anti-social femininity from literature, pop culture, and the visual arts „through territories of silence, stubbornness, self-abnegation, and sacrifice.” Departing from a critique of the Western-centric assumptions of liberal feminism, Halberstam explores alternative models of female agency, (self)destructive ‘shadow feminisms’ that do not adopt active forms of resistance but seek emancipation in „negation, refusal, passivity, absence, and silence.” In writing about anti-social femininity, Halberstam draws on Jamaica Kincaid, Saidiya Hartman, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, non-white authors interested in decolonized strategies of resistance, refusal to assimilate and enter the world on terms other than their own, even against themselves. Such strategies are situated not alongside but outside the dominant discourse, not only rejecting its ideas, principles, and values but disrupting its language and even the very notion of the subject. This radical refusal is not reduced to opposing dominant narratives but calls for their complete abolition, becoming, in a sense, unthinkable. A similar intention can be found in the films of Agnieszka Smoczyńska, a Polish director who consistently depicts female characters who „would prefer not to.” Smoczyńska’s heroines differ from a significant proportion of other female film rebels by their attitude of radical refusal, the stakes of which are not feminist criticism leading to a change in the rules of society but the complete abolition of these rules and the rejection of society as such. In my paper, I intend to apply the perspective of negation-based feminism outlined by Halberstam to her most recent film, *The Silent Twins* (2022) – a biographical story of two black girls who refused to speak to anyone but each other.

**Author's bio:** Klaudia Rachubińska is a film and visual culture scholar, graduate of the Faculty of Psychology and the Faculty of Polish Studies, University of Warsaw. Editor of the academic film journal „Kwartalnik Filmowy” (ISPAN), former editor of the Polish film quarterly „Pleograf. Kwartalnik Akademii Polskiego Filmu” (FINA), member of the Polish Society for Film and Media Studies. Winner of the Grand Prix of the XXIII Krzysztof Mętrak Competition for young film critics. Currently working on her PhD thesis on the images of women in popular music.

### **Denisa-Adriana Oprea - Group Portrait with Lady: graphic blocking of female characters in Cristian Mungiu's films**

**Abstract:** Two of Cristian Mungiu's most popular films (*4 luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile/4 months, 3 weeks and two days*, 2007; *După dealuri/Beyond the hills*, 2012) stage female leading characters caught in a difficult, traumatizing situation, out of which there is little or no escape. Their position provides powerful insights into both the status of women in communism (as in 4

*luni, 3 săptămâni și 2 zile/4 months, 3 weeks and two days*) and post-communism (as in *După dealuri/Beyond the hills*) and some of the critical issues Romanian society was facing during these periods. The two films also show a remarkable similitude from the point of view of the graphic blocking of female characters in crucial moments of the action. In a metaphorical rewriting of the Last Supper, they are depicted at the center of the image, surrounded by secondary characters whose verbosity is in striking contrast with their silence or their sparse participation in the ongoing conversations, as well as with their inner turmoil. We propose here an inquiry into the meaning of this compositional choice from the point of view of incommunication, a French communication theory concept that addresses communication failures. More precisely, we are going to show that this metaphorically sacrificial positioning of the leading female character, correlated with her silence or minimum interference with the outside noise, indicates both her struggle to preserve her inner self and her failure to do so, as the contextual elements are overwhelming and exceed her freedom of choice.

**Author's bio:** Denisa-Adriana Oprea, Ph.D., teaches courses on communication theory and Romanian film after 1989. She has published or coordinated several volumes and articles on media representations of contemporary social phenomena or on media effects. Currently, her research interests revolve around themes such as misinformation and media education, communication theories or miscommunication in contemporary Romanian film. Since 2014, she has been coordinating the Center for Career Orientation within the College of Communication and Public Relations. She has translated several books from/into French.

### **Lucia Chicoș - Cristian Mungiu's Mysterious Bears in R.M.N. (2022) and False Feminisms in Late Romanian Cinema**

**Abstract:** Nearly 10 years ago, an overview of female representation in both commercial and festival-oriented Romanian cinema could easily identify its dominance of patriarchal dimensions and sexist stereotypes. Meanwhile, the 'western winds of change' did not leave our auteurs unstirring. This presentation looks into the latest film of previous pALme D'or wINneR Romanian director Cristian Mungiu's RMN, that could have been a complex exploration of a locally-flavored modern masculinity crisis put in relation with the origin of xenophobic attitudes. Matthias is dissatisfied with the way Ana ("the cold wife" x romanian cinema classic housewife) handles their young boy who saw something in the woods that scared him into complete silence and bed-wetting (a premonition of his grandfather's suicide?). Matthias's mistress is goddess-like Csilla, also the girlbo\$\$ at the local bread factory and a strong advocate for the recently hired 3 Sri Lankens who are persecuted by the community. Mungiu does a wonderful job in hinting on Matthias' masculine anxieties, his difficulties of verbalizing his feelings and connecting emotionally, which culminates in the baffling metaphorical image of the bears. But Csilla's flawlessness, the way Mungiu films her naked body and the cliché turn of events, might let us wonder whether the writer-director did indeed ask himself the questions he wanted to, or was he too much in a hurry to shoot in time for the next Cannes. This seems to align itself with a new tendency of late Romanian Cinema, especially of men-directors, to "agency"-fy its female characters, by making them more action-driven and sMarT\_sEXuaL, but ending up in fact with rather aspirational figures that do not really transcend patriarchal patterns or transgress the

male gaze. What other kinds of vocabularies, besides that of feminism, could come in aid for creating fairer and more interesting female representations in Eastern European Cinema?

**Author's bio:** Lucia Chicoş (1998, Iaşi) is a young emerging Romanian film director. She is a third year PhD candidate and a teaching assistant at UNATC - National University of Theatre and Film I.L. Caragiale Bucharest, Romania, where she graduated with a Film Directing BA and MA. Her PhD thesis is called Cinema as Art of Presence. An emotionally intelligent approach to teaching film directing. Her short fiction film *Contraindications* was awarded 3rd prize in Cinéfondation at Festival de Cannes in 2020 and her first documentary feature-film, *Where I Am Now*, co-directed with Alexandra Diaconu, had its world premiere at IDFA in November 2022. Her latest short, *Berliner Kindl* received a Special Mention of the Jury at TIFF (Cluj) 2023.

Panel 2: Special Panel on Cultural Trauma – Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj

Moderator: Denisa-Adriana Oprea

**Andrea Virginás - Small national trauma processing in filmic narratives: In the Name of the Father, Balkan Champion and Mom and Other Loonies in the Family**

**Abstract:** Screenplays and the mental-cognitive processes framing their writing and the production of the ensuing films are considered here the Source/Sender in the processing of two simultaneous collective traumas unfolding by the Iron Curtain: the Irish Civil War, and the Cold War, with cultural difference-based violence an important factor in both. Multidirectional and nonlinear memory-work through filmmaking is conceptualized as “[s]hared memory ... built on the division of mnemonic labour”, with Assmann’s model of communicative generations employed to suggest a possible way of Margalit’s ‘division’: the first generation of the victims followed by the second generation whose “task” is to forget and the third generation who needs to remember and mourn the dead. Considered particularly pertinent for the medial-filmic-cultural representation of the two simultaneous collective traumas on both sides of the Iron Curtain, 2006 Hungarian-German *Balkan Champion*’s writer-director R. Kincses, 2015 Hungarian *Mother and Other Loonies in the Family*’s writer-director I. Fekete and 1994 Irish *In the Name of the Father*’s creative producer, A. Lappin were first interviewed by the author in 2016, 2017, and 2022, with later instances of research-based clarifications in all cases. All were addressed the same set of pre-established questions referring to their professional itinerary, their ethnic-linguistic-cultural identities, and the specific processes of writing and/or making the mentioned films – with strong autobiographical roots, fully non-fiction (*Balkan Champion*) or including segments of documentary and archival nature (*Mother and Other Loonies*, *In the Name of the Father*). To the three structured life-path interviews the comparative narrative-formal analysis of key scenes in the screenplays/treatments, and in the films are added, complemented by production data. Alexander’s theory of social-cultural trauma guides the analysis of how the small national filmmakers interviewed describe, understand, and theorize their own reworking of tensions within the Irish Civil War and the Cold War through chamber dramas of strong family relations, and associations of genre(s). These creative processes are also positioned in relation to the sketched model of the ‘communicative generations dividing the mnemonic labour’. The trauma

theoretical aim is to differentiate collective trauma processing through screenwriting and filmmaking from 'simple' "allegorical meaning making in third world literature" (Jameson), situating it instead amid mediatized processes of remembrance such as 'premediation' (Grusin) or 'banal commemoration' (Vinitzky-Seroussi). The small national, peripheral film production cultures – Transylvanian, Hungarian, Irish – facilitate these through the overvaluing of written, literary or theatrical culture(s) so important for small national identification, with cinematic representation free to experiment and eventually 'stumble upon' creative formulas that resonate with professional and professional audiences alike while culturally and cinematically processing collective traumas.

**Author's bio:** Andrea Virginás is Associate Professor in the Faculty of Theatre and Film, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. Latest volume: *Film Genres in Hungarian and Romanian Cinema: History, Theory, Reception* (Lexington Books/Rowman and Littlefield, 2021). Bolyai János Research Fellow (2021–2024) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with the project *Feature Filmic Processing of Collective Traumatization in Contemporary European Film: A Possible Model of Mediated Public Memory-Work*, and project leader of *Cultural Traumas in Contemporary European Small National Cinemas*.

### **Mihály Lakatos - Miscommunication between the centre and the periphery: cinematic narratives from the Jiu Valley**

**Abstract:** Lucian Pintilie's *Too Late* and Andrei Dăscălescu's *Planeta Petrila* are two movies of different genres, produced 20 years apart but both of them are set in the same geographic regions: in the Jiu Valley. Pintilie's feature film released in 1996, following the first mineriad (an event in which miners from the Jiu Valley played a significant role in post-revolutionary Romanian politics) and tells the story of a young prosecutor from Bucharest, who is entrusted with the investigation about the suspicious death of a Jiu Valley coal miner. *Too Late* depicts the post-1990 Romania as a harsh, decaying, 'an eye for an eye' space through the metaphor of a dissolving mining community, or as Daniel Iftene describes it: "the New Barbaric Periphery of Europe." *Planeta Petrila* is a documentary, released in 2016, after the Rosia Montana and the Colectiv protest-series (described by Tina Olteanu as the civic awakening of the first generation matured in the post-revolutionary Romania), and shows the efforts of an ex-miner turned artist/activist to stop the demolition of the historic buildings of the oldest coal mine in Romania. His quest is not only to preserve the history and the distinctive identity of his hometown, but also to find a way to keep together the disintegrating community by giving them a future: a cultural future. My argument is that based on these two movies not just the miscommunication between the center and the periphery (Bucharest vs. the Jiu Valley, the Romanian elite vs. the working and the underclass, Europe vs. Romania), can be detected within a socio-historical perspective, but the but ongoing traumatizing crisis caused by the fall of the „strong and caring” communist state.

**Author's bio:** Mihály Lakatos currently is second-year PhD student at Babeş-Bolyai University's Communication, Public Relations and Advertising Doctorate School, his research focuses on

music videos produced in Eastern Europe before and after the fall of the Iron Curtain. He published scientific articles within the domain of film studies, cultural studies and popular music studies. He also works as a visual artist (with a special interest in reusing archival images) and as a filmmaker.

### **Ábel Kovács - Miscommunication as a symptom of individual trauma in *Külön falka* (2021) and *An Cailín Ciúin* (2022)**

**Abstract:** Both in Hungarian Hajni Kis' *Külön falka/Wild Roots* (2021) and in Irish Colm Bairéad's *An Cailín Ciúin/A Quiet Girl* (2022) the cornerstone of the narrative is the visual and symbolic representation of the constant presence of individual trauma and the multifaceted examination of how any kind of verbal and/or non-verbal channel and mode of communication can be established between traumatized, interdependent individuals who have not come to terms with, or even confronted their past traumas. In both these films, there is a stark contrast and yet a palpable similarity between the way adults and children are dealing with the issue of miscommunication. Primarily, adults are trying to ignore their personal traumas by avoiding direct communication about the past, while children are hiding in their safe and familiar shell to avoid the reliving of communication interference or the tragic failure to communicate their thoughts without any repercussions. The child protagonists, deprived of their voices, are unable to communicate their feelings and thoughts in a nuanced manner. The adults, while trying to communicate with the children and decode their language – consisting mainly of silence -, are also struggling with the problem of miscommunication, which is an accurate symptom of their own inability to face their past traumas. *A Quiet Girl's* predominantly Irish language usage, its choice of subject matter and its minimalist, art-house style based on intimate character sketches and narrow spaces, allow it to be seen in a broader transnational framework connecting it to the wider European cinematic landscape. Just as *Wild Roots* is undeniably Eastern European in its magnification of distinctive social phenomena, but goes far beyond it in its thematic discourse and tone, the characteristics of *A Quiet Girl* allow us to juxtapose contemporary Irish cinema to the likewise small Hungarian cinema in the attempt to deep dive into the examination of the ways miscommunication provides us with a wider lens through which we can interpret the behavior and actions of the characters struggling with buried personal traumas.

**Author's bio:** Ábel Kovács has studied film history, film theory and filmmaking at Sapientia University Department of Film, Photography and Media. He has finished his studies there in 2022, obtaining his bachelor's degree. Currently, he is a first-year MA student in Film Studies at the same university. He is also part of a team, working in a film scientific project with the name of Cultural Traumas in Contemporary European Small National Cinemas.

### **Boglárka Angéla Farkas - Listening to “human trees”: Types of (mis)communication, climate trauma and anthropocentric vision in *White Plastic Sky***

**Abstract:** Tibor Bánóczki's and Sarolta Szabó's animated feature debut, *White Plastic Sky*, proposes a grim future in which the Earth becomes barren, having lost its flora and fauna. In order to survive, the remaining humans must sacrifice themselves after they reach the age of 50

– hereby securing the life of younger generations. The 2023 Hungarian-Slovakian coproduction offers a dystopian, but also post-Soviet scenery, placing its narrative in the Eastern European region, showcasing the Hungarian capital city Budapest and the Tatra Mountains, among others. The animation presents its post-apocalyptic world through Nóra and Stefan, a married couple, whose relationship weakened after the traumatic loss of their child. In this paper, I'll argue that *White Plastic Sky* develops the themes of (personal and) climate trauma by displaying different types of communication. As a dystopian world populated by humans and “chimeric trees” (who were formerly humans), the narrative grants Nóra the role of the mediator, establishing interspecies communication. Being in a transitional state between human and tree, Nóra becomes an interpreter, channeling through herself decades of miscommunication and trauma. The woman's transformative journey also restores her marital relationship with Stefan, their endpoint suggesting that eventually, they will reach a posthuman state. Furthermore, by engaging in a peculiar interspecies communication, the narrative reinforces its anthropocentric vision, deconstructing the hegemony of the human race. Basing my argumentation on literature related to climate trauma – as a new form of trauma beyond cultural trauma – and the Anthropocene, my overall aim is to validate *White Plastic Sky*'s position as a tour de force animation, which provocatively prepares its viewers for the dawn of humankind.

**Author's bio:** Boglárka Angéla Farkas is a PhD student in Film Studies at Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania), her doctoral thesis focusing on the relationship between contemporary science fiction film and Greek mythology in the Anthropocene. She worked on several research projects, most predominantly regarding Transylvanian film, where she examined István Fischer's documentary work from a minority perspective. Currently, she is involved in two research projects, AGE-C: Ageing and Gender in European Cinema and Cultural Traumas in Contemporary European Small National Cinemas.

### Panel 3: War of Words

Moderator: Irina Trocan

#### **Claudia Fiorito - Broken Ties: Investigating Communication in Films on the Russo-Ukrainian War**

**Abstract:** In the 2022 film *Broken Ties* by Andrey Loshak, the documentary investigates the relationships between young Russians and their families in the aftermath of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The film explores the effects of the ongoing war on the Russian population, which – with due exceptions – resulted in a dichotomic divide between the younger generation opposing the war and the older generation supporting the state's decisions. The impact of the war on Russian families thus led to a breakdown in communication among family members and, as a result, an interruption of their relationships. How does the trauma of war affect communication for those directly and indirectly affected by it? Building upon this question and delving into the theories on trauma and film studies (Hirsch, 2004; Walker, 2005), this paper offers an analysis of a selected filmography of contemporary East European films focused on the Russo-Ukrainian war, ranging from Nariman Aliev's *Homeward* (2019) to

Kateryna Gornostai's *Stop Zemlia* (2021), aiming to highlight the effects of war trauma on its victims, which often, though not always, lead to silence.

**Author's bio:** Claudia Fiorito is a doctoral candidate in Film Studies at the University of Padua, Italy, and visiting PhD at the Research Center for East European studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. Having completed her studies in Russian studies, she is currently writing a dissertation on the production of science fiction film in the U.S. and USSR during the space race years. As of 2021, she started conducting research on films and serial products of Ukraine, attending and as well organizing seminars and conferences dedicated to contemporary Ukrainian cinema at Italian and international universities.

### **Mariana Hebling Alen Loureiro - Screening the unspeakable: the silences of war in *Pismo Ocu* and *Muškarci ne plaču***

**Abstract:** After the 1990s, cinematic production dealing with the wars flourished in the post-Yugoslav space. While local cinema artists elaborated on their personal experiences amidst the dissolution of the country, the “spectacle of the Balkan wars” brought international curiosity to the region, encouraging the financial support of Western European companies for the production of feature films. While many film directors have dived into the painful topics of war violence, the cinematic representation of the battlefield experience and its effects poses a problem – that of representability. For Walter Benjamin, the horrors of war are beyond communication, narration, or representation: as lived experience is the source of storytelling, its annihilation provoked by tactical and mechanical warfare disrupts the possibility of transmission. If “the visual is essentially pornographic,” and as such, it “has no interiority, hiddenness, or mystery,” cinema “asks us to stare at the world as though it were a naked body”– in its combination of image, sound, and language. As the contradiction embedded in the visual screening of the irrepresentable and incommunicable becomes evident, this paper aims at exploring the narrative tools used in two films – *Pismo Ocu* (2011) and *Muškarci ne plaču* (2017) – to convey the impossibility of communicating the traumatic disruption of the battlefield experience. Drawing on the allegorical use of silence and absence, both films address the brutal impoverishment of experience denounced by Benjamin and faced by the war veterans, raising a series of open questions on the very possibility of reconciliation, and the limitations of any attempt of (re)establishing lost forms of communicability.

**Author's bio:** Mariana Hebling Alen Loureiro holds a Bachelor's degree in History from the University of São Paulo, is a researcher for the Centre for Asian Studies (LEA – University of Sao Paulo), and a Master's student at the University of Bologna, in the Eastern European and Eurasian Studies program. Since 2019, she has been researching (post)Yugoslav history, from the intersecting perspectives of memory studies, cultural and social history, and cultural studies. Her dissertation will explore the cinematic imaginations of the socialist past in post-Yugoslav cinema, focusing on the complex interaction between historical practices, cultural production, and nostalgia.



## **Zdenko Mandušić - Cinema and the Limits of Language: Can Images Determine What Words Cannot?**

**Abstract:** In Jasmila Žbanić's 2020 film *Quo Vadia, Aida?* the titular character is a Bosnian woman who works as a translator for the Dutch detachment of the United Nations Protection Force during the July 1995 genocide in Srebrenica. Aida mediates exchanges between the UN, Gen. Ratko Mladić, the commander of the Serbian Republic Army, and the local Bošnjak residents fleeing the captured city who take shelter in the UN base. By defining her protagonist as a translator when she wrote and directed the film, Žbanić foregrounds communication as a primary concern in *Quo Vadis, Aida?* In this manner, the film highlights the difficulty of describing what took place in July 1995 and prompts questions about the capacity of language to describe individual and collective trauma sufficiently. Starting with *Quo Vadia, Aida?* this presentation will examine how recent films from Southeastern Europe combine communication problems across linguistic, ethnic, and political boundaries with aesthetic strategies that crucially reveal the limits and inadequacies of language for confronting war crimes, mass killings, and genocide. In Radu Jude's *Îmi este indiferent dacă în istorie vom intra ca barbari / I Do Not Care If We Go Down in History as Barbarians* (2018), Mariana's extended discussions with the local bureaucrat Movila over the theatrical staging of the 1941 Odessa massacre reveals bureaucratic efforts to whitewash and obscure elements of history. Language about war crimes is largely absent in Ognjen Glavonić's *Teret / The Load* (2018), as truckdriver Vlada does not want to know or talk about the bodies of massacred Kosovar Albanians across Kosovo and Serbia. By addressing the breakdown of communication about ethnic cleansing and mass killing, all three of these films call for new models for addressing collective memory and trauma of events that are difficult to speak about.

**Author's bio:** Zdenko Mandušić is Assistant Professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on Balkan and East European cinema, specifically on issues of film style, cinematic representation of war and trauma, reality effects, the imaginary conceptualization of technology, and the influence of discourse on the production and reception of art. He is currently working on a book manuscript titled *Soviet Docufictions: Politics of Film Style and the Historical Understanding of Film*, which focuses on questions about Soviet feature films and cinematic claims to authenticity. He contributed to the recent anthology *ReFocus: the Films of Andrei Tarkovsky* and his articles and reviews have appeared in the academic journals *Russian Review*, *Studies in East European Cinema*, *Moving Image*, and *Slavonic and East European review*.

## **Milana Vujkov - To publish and to perish? Or, why I did not release my film review**

**Abstract:** In examining the impact of collective trauma on an individual's creative output, through my own experience of self-censorship in publishing my five-star review of Jasmila Žbanić's *Quo Vadis, Aida?* (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020), a harrowing account of the Srebrenica massacre, to an international audience, while being in Serbia — this paper aims to address broader dilemmas and a refusal to fully engage in the public sphere present in professionals who hail from countries formed following the civil war and breakup of Yugoslavia.

Inheriting a shared culture and post-conflict patterns of miscommunication, a competitive mistrust, as Slavenka Drakulić termed this in her *Café Europa Revisited* (2021) — an atmosphere of perpetual nationalist fuelling of fear, these stifled attempts at communication may, primarily, have to do with an anxiety in facing public backlash in the era of social media. On the darker side of the social outrage spectrum — there exists a real fear of threats in terms of bodily harm. This idea of self-censorship as self-preservation further calls for the consideration of consequences this unwillingness to engage in dangerous but important topics could have on personal integrity and artistic authenticity — as well as the quality of artistic output in national, regional, and international cultural spaces. Detailing the history of the various attempts I had in writing the piece, the emotional impact of the film text, and my own trauma and complex relationship to the political divides in the region, I would also focus on the timing of the release of *Quo Vadis, Aida?*, in view that a Serbian film on a similar topic, but based in WW2, in the fascist Independent State of Croatia, dealing in the horrors of the Jasenovac concentration camp, Predrag Antonijević's *Dara Of Jasenovac* (Serbia, 2020), had also been released — as well as the online 'battle of films' which ensued.

**Author's bio:** Milana Vujkov is a writer, artist, independent film scholar, researching psychology of cinema, fusing poetic art and alchemical storytelling. Author at Poets, Mavericks & Prophets, filmologist and film critic at Lola On Film, host of Lola & The Poets podcast. Graduated in Psychology, University of Novi Sad, MA in History of Film and Visual Media, Birkbeck College, University of London — thesis on black humour in early 1980s Serbian cinema (tutor, Professor Laura Mulvey). In 2005, curated a short season of Serbian film 1995-2000, entitled *No Exit*, at the ICA, London. Two decades of experience working in the UK arts, media and entertainment industry (reporting, curating, events, marketing, criticism). Academic interests include film spectatorship, the female gaze, narrative enchantment, psychology of creativity, psychogeography, consciousness & culture. (Serbia/UK)

#### Panel 4: Intra and inter-medialities

Moderator: Alex Sterian

#### **Peter Virginás - From feel-good documentary drama to unsettling fiction**

**Abstract:** Insofar as the film is conceived as a medium, and so it establishes 'betweenness' (Bruno 2014), it also enables various positions. Due to the mediating function of the film, the spectator is typically thought as being the most straightforward, but we may also refer to the mise-en-scene as encompassing various relations: between the actors in a scene (a linguistic superimposition of the actor-network theory approach), their relations with both the camera-directing cinematographer and the film-director, and so on. In simple terms, film-makers have been increasingly aware of the teamwork character of any cinematic enterprise, notwithstanding the tension between the collective and the individual activities. To the extent that such tension is a proprietary, 'first' quality of the film as medium, we ought to pay attention to the lengths film-makers are capable of going to in order to distill, eliminate, or change that tension so as to ultimately affect us, viewers. In my presentation I will explore tension-levels in

the films *David* (2022, by Radu Muntean) and *Perpetuity* (2021, directed by György Pálfi). *David* is labeled as an educational movie, where the tone and feel of realist cinema is applied to a real-world situation, which becomes a (half-) fictionalized account. The layers of meaning appear in retrospect as disturbing one another because, on the one hand, the film-making context has been that of real hiking routes designed by a civic association to promote such activities in the Carpathian mountains of northern Romania. On the other hand, that which unfolded on the screen has had the ingredients to induce aesthetic, sensual film-viewing experience. As a juxtaposition I turn to the at once contextual and dystopian world of *Perpetuity*, which has envisioned a war across the Ukrainean territories (and allegedly on the northern part of Hungary) before the Ukrainian war of our times. In terms of its 'world-building' we find an amalgam feeding on the representation of rural provinces (as in Hungarian arthouse movies from the last decades of the 20th century) and destruction as in post-communist war films set in the Balkans (Imre 2009). Next to real-world correspondence, or the spatial and temporal closeness to the Ukrainean situation, the stripping of characters' emotions and the denouement offered hinder release as catharsis.

**Author's bio:** Peter Virginás holds a Phd in Philosophy from Babes-Bolyai University, Romania and an MA from Central European University, Hungary. His research interests lie in film festivals and contemporary cultures of consumption. He works as a researcher at the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities.

### **Alexandru Maftei - Visual representation of online chatting and falling in love with a stranger in Romanian film "Hello! How are you?"**

**Abstract:** Introduced to the wonders of online chat by some younger friends, an estranged husband and wife rediscover separately a passionate attraction for a stranger that seems to resonate with their old fashion spirit. The secret, ineffable attraction for their unknown lovers from the chat room mixes with the guilt of cheating each other after more than twenty years of faithful marriage. The mystery aura of their secret lovers falls apart when they discover they were chatting with each other. Cover with guilt and shame they decide to divorce. This is a short synopsis of the film. My paper focuses on the cinematic representation of this text based communication between the two, the visual approach to this incognito state of communication they experience and on how their subjective interpretation of words can build misunderstanding that lead to their separation. As the film director of this movie I'm remaking the meandering road from the script to the visual concept of the movie, from the storyboard to the actual film shots. How you picture a stranger you chat online with? How you picture text based messages in a long feature film without showing too much computer screens? How you picture a person in love dreaming of a stranger. In my paper I'll analyze the creative answers to these challenges and dismantle the bigger artistic communication process into simple pieces. Ultimately my reflections have to do with how mediated, online communication that exploded in the late '90 in Romania is failing our need for social, direct contact, despite their wide, popular appeal.

**Author's bio:** Alexandru Maftei is a Romanian film and stage director. He graduated Film & Theatre Academy from Bucharest and has a PhD in Visual Arts at the National University of Arts

in Bucharest. He teaches screenwriting at National University of Theatre and Film “I.L. Caragiale”, Bucharest. His book *The black box of the film director* (Editura Universitară, Bucharest, 2019) follows the complex transformation of the screenplay into the movie, combining theoretical research with in depth analysis of his working methods. His filmography includes TV feature *Keep your eyes on happiness* (1998), seven episodes of TV series *Lombarzilor 8* (2006), bitter sweet comedy *Hello! How are you?* (2011), *Miss Christina* (2013), a fantastic thriller based on Mircea Eliade’s novel.

### **Ion Stavre, Sebastian Chelu, Monica Ilie-Prica - Communication failures in *Aferim***

**Abstract:** Film is a communication tool that has evolved a lot from the Lumière brothers to today, both in terms of content and in terms of technology and ways of broadcasting. However, something remains unchanged. The purpose of any film: to communicate something and shape the behavior of the audience. In this intervention we want to analyze the capacity of the Film *Aferim!* to communicate with the public. If the success of a commercial television show is measured in audience, by reach and share, the success of a film is measured by the number of paying viewers and possibly by the awards received. The film *Aferim!* has benefited from a European award for the best director, Ursul de Argin in 2015 at the Berlin Film Festival and a national award at the Gopo Awards in 2016. The film also had the highest grossing among Romanian films in 2015 , 76,693 spectators, collecting 908,144 lei. From this perspective it can be said that the film *Aferim!* was a success. And yet, was it a success? The second film by director Radu Jude, however, had just over 9,000 viewers. To what extent did the Berlin award boost the audience for *Aferim*? To what extent did the viewers in Romania resonate with the film? We will try to answer these questions in this presentation.

**Authors' bios:** **Ion Stavre** is a university lecturer at the Communication and Public Relations Faculty at SNSPA, where he teaches since 1995. His didactic activity has evolved in parallel with his practice at the National Television, started in 1991. He was a journalist specialized in politics, economy and the environment. At the moment, he is the producer of political talk-shows for the TV channel TVR1. He made over 3000 news stories and 50 interviews and documentaries.

**Monica Ilie-Prica** holds a Phd in Communication Sciences and, between 2019 and 2020, she was a post-doctoral researcher at SNSPA. Since 2014, she has been teaching lectures and seminars, especially in audiovisual media, such as TV Production, Informational discourse in radio and television, Audio-visual communication and Advertising in audiovisual media. Her domains of interest are film and television.

**Sebastian Chelu** is an associate teacher and PhD student at the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations. The holder of the editing course from the master's programs at the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, he is also the coordinator of the post-production service in SRTV. He collaborated with great directors from Romania, such as Liviu Ciulei, Geo Saizescu, Alexandru Tocilescu, Ioan Cărmăzan and television personalities such as Lucia Hossu Longin, Titus Munteanu and Ioan Grigorescu.

## **Igor Pop Trajkov - Sisters by Dina Duma: Explicit Fear from the Contemporary Communication Forms**

**Abstract:** The film *Sisters* by Dina Duma described well the situation in SE Europe, in more particular in North Macedonia by regarding the outburst of the new communication technologies and the associated criminalization, violence and abandonment of human rights accompanying them. This film was inspired by a true story about a high-school student being filmed having sex followed by the viral cultural output in the social networks. The real life debate showed the weaknesses of the young democracy of North Macedonia, the incapacity of the local intellectuals to handle the case. E.g. in the many public debates which were transmitted via the mainstream media, the intellectuals reached a consensus that at least till they finish high-school young people should be protected from these violations. But does this mean this is not a crime if done to an adult? The constitutions of all modern democracies guarantee the equal right for all their citizens- for privacy and for freedom of movement. This case showed that communication can violate someone's privacy and impose a whole threatening network following the victims so that they could not fight the violators. Now using the new communication technologies everyone who has a bit deeper pocket can easily organize a threatening network which can make one lose its courage for movement, for talking freely or whoever he/she likes to. The film of Dina Duma is a proof for this because during the debates raised by this first regional-solo production shown on Netflix, one could sense how the attendees were afraid to freely talk, and how the moderators used the provoked by the uncertain society fears to harsh the debates and direct them in favor of the hybrid infiltrations. Namely e.g. the case of the violated by the chat in Private Room woman was proclaimed as Russian hybrid attack in no mainstream media in NM, although this was organized by the Russian platform. Almost all of the violators in this case reached safe haven in Serbia.

**Author's bio:** Igor Pop Trajkov is renowned writer and film director from North Macedonia, multidisciplinary international artist as well. He is very prolific in all literary disciplines, including film reviews. Intellectualism, theory and activism are also part of his rich agenda. He was published in some of the most significant literary magazines and academic journals, and won few prizes for his achievements.

Friday, September 29th

Panel 5: To Tell the Truth

Moderator: Alexandru Maftai

**Alex Sterian - Visual representation of communication failure. Intertextuality as a reference for past and present diegesis in documentaries**

**Abstract:** In this abstract we aim to discuss the photographic based reality as the reference of a diegesis about communication as seen in three documentaries, one where the story starts from a photo taken during the Vietnam war, the second as a journey to another reality constructed in

the Siberian vastness and the third one composed on a multiply layered reality between a diegetic Voice Over and a collection of photos from a remote Bărăgan city, Slobozia. As a starting point, this ontic reference of the still photos and motion pictures taken in each environment works as a different aesthetic approach while documenting a potential reflected reality. The story captured within these compositions drives the creators to manipulate the support's referentiality, either physically or virtually. In feature films, mockumentaries or documentary movies this ontic value has been used towards different stylistic approaches throughout the history of cinema. Despite the genre's diversity, the expressivity of the film's medium adds a supplementary layer of aesthetic value to these examples. From Marker's *La Jetée* (1962) to Godard and Jean Pierre Gorin's *A Letter to Jane* (1972), a possible communication failure has become an intrinsic diegetic value. We experience this sense of dichotomous expression of solitude and alienation from two visual approaches, a montage of still photos in Godard/Gorin's *A Letter to Jane* and a suggestive mix of still and motion picture captured in Chris Marker's *Lettre de Sibirie* (1957), a remarkable documentary about the vastness of Siberia. In their movie, Marker and Sacha Vierny (the cinematographer) chose to shoot on a surprising 4/3 aspect ratio which better emphasizes emptiness and alienation. This narrative approach, built on the medium's specificity, seems different in *A Letter to Jane* vs *Lettre de Sibirie*, but the communication failure is the utmost stylistic means for both movies. The story, as a distant reality mediated through a set of still pictures, is reinterpreted in this meta documentary about the Vietnam war as seen by a Washington Post photojournalist. Godard and Gorin speculate on Jane Fonda's photograph while visiting the communist troops in Hanoi, North Vietnam. These two far east movies are a prelude to a recent documentary of a Romanian director, Radu Jude's *Dead Country* (2017). In the film, the Voice Over's intertextuality leads us down through a criss-crossed path to an overlapped diegetic structure composed from Emil Dorian's diary, Costică Acsinte photographs and triumphalist 1940's music and speeches. The visual support is used to underline the physical damage of the black and white photos (gelatin on glass) sometimes illegible. With a background of military choir music, Acsinte's characters are resurrected despite the viewer's reticence for this historical mismatch. This essay about a possible synchronicity and simultaneity completes a half-century journey between Godard/Gorin's *A Letter to Jane* and the structural documentary. Jude's options to mix two potentially contiguous layers build another form of communication failure linked to a merely rural space populated with Bărăgan steppe glorious vistas.

**Author's bio:** Alexandru Sterian is a Professor at UNATC IL Caragiale and, since 2018, a Visiting Professor at Babeş-Bolyai University. Since October 2022 he is the Head of the UNATC Doctoral School. In the last six years, he published four books and numerous academic articles. He's an active cinematographer with a career which spans almost 30 years.

**Liri Chapelan - Babi Yar. Context and The Exit of the Trains: archival documentary strategies, between augmentation and simplification**

**Abstract:** East-European cultural production has a long and circumvoluted history of attempting to conceive representations of real events that would break through the protective shield of populations unwilling to admit or relive the past, as well as through the alternative storytelling

elaborated by subsequent authoritative figures or bodies trying to forge a certain brand of national identity. The mass extermination of Jews on Eastern European territory during the Second World War, with the support of local authorities and often with the explicit or tacit agreement of parts of the population, is but one example of a reality that still lingers at the border of the collective consciousness of the nations involved, in between ignorance, admission, repentance, attempts at exculpation and outright denial. For this talk, I will concentrate on two recent documentary films that set themselves the goal of tearing any veil of uncertainty that might have lingered on Ukrainian, respectively Romanian participation in the massacre of the Jewish community on national territory by Nazi troops: Sergei Losnitsa's *Babi Yar. Context* (2021) and Radu Jude's *The Exit of the Trains* (2020). Both films are made entirely of archival material, moving and still images that reinvigorate once again the debate surrounding the ethical limits of representing unspeakable (but also unshowable?) tragedies and the specific means cinema has at its disposal to give them a new kind of presence in collective memory. Through an intricate web of similarities and divergences, Losnitsa's and Jude's films illustrate the impact of the age of the archive fever foreseen by Derrida on communication and transmission strategies and practices, narrowed down to the case of the mission of artistic expression to incarnate unspoken (hi)stories.

**Author's bio:** Liri Chapelan holds a BA in Film Directing and a MA in Film Studies from the National University of Theatre and Film "I.L. Caragiale" in Bucharest. She is currently embarked on a PhD with a thesis that endeavors to develop a typology of contemporary hands-on usages of obsolete film technologies. A few of her areas of interest include the sociopolitics of the acts of film making and film viewing, the underrepresentation of animation in film studies and the efforts of preserving and restoring cinematic heritage, especially in non-western countries. She aims to explore these topics by fusing archival work, editing, academic writing, teaching and curating.

### **Loránd Gábor - Where are you from? Well, I am from Romania, but I am Hungarian**

**Abstract:** What is identity? Is it genetic or cultural heritage? Ethnic Hungarian film director Lakatos Róbert from Cluj-Napoca, Romania, questions his own preconceptions regarding identity while trying to find a suitable mate for his purebred dog, Talpas, from the traditional Hungarian breed called Kuvasz. In his documentary satire *Whose Dog Am I?* (2022), international identity politics are mirrored in the politics of dog breeding, where Kuvasz dogs bred in Transylvania find themselves unable to be recognized as Hungarian for being born outside the country and destined to degeneration resulted from inbreeding because of the strict rules regarding purebreeding. The creation of a new Transylvanian Hungarian breed is out of the question too, as any new breed created on the territory of Romania would be recognized as Romanian and because of a new Romanian law which mandates the castration of stray dogs. Drawing on Axel Honneth's Recognition Theory, this presentation explores the way allegory – and in this specific case – the film *Whose Dog Am I?* can aid recognition and understanding of ethnic groups and their struggles of recognition and identity formation, as one similar to what Alfred Schuetz described as the identity of the stranger – with one confusing difference, that of the fact that, in this case, we are not dealing with immigrants. This crisis renders historical ethnic

groups, like Hungarians from Transylvania, feeling not fully represented either by Hungary, nor by Romania, hence the need for a regional identity, an idea incompatible with the Romanian Constitution's definition of nation state. Refusal to communicate develops political dimensions, ethnic groups are criticized for their doubtful loyalty in a country where a slur word – albeit of unconfirmed origins – exists for those without a country: "bozgor".

**Author's bio:** Loránd Gábor is a scriptwriter, film director born in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He studied film directing at Caragiale National University of Theatrical Arts and Cinematography in Bucharest, Romania. During his studies, he shot fiction and documentary shorts, "How to Fly a Kite?" being his thesis film. The film premiered at numerous film festivals including The Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival, Sarajevo Film Festival, and won several prizes including the award for Best Student film at Kyiv Molodist International Film Festival and the Grand Prix at Poitiers Film Festival. Currently he is a PhD candidate and teaching assistant at the aforementioned university and is writing a dissertation about the representation of otherness in Contemporary Romanian Cinema.

### **Alina Predescu - See Our Say: Filmed Reports from the Labyrinth of Reaching Out**

**Abstract:** The experience of documentary film involves a compounded process of communication, where the filmmaker frames the communication between the social actors within a representation he delivers, thus further communicates, to the viewer. If the definition of communication implies the participants' arrival at a form of meaning, where is the meaning of communication located in a documentary film?

I look at two films that depict spoken interactions between interlocutors situated in settings constrained by distance – a distance that either defines the parameters of the filming and interviewing, or is implicit in the types of activities filmed. In *The Balcony Movie* (Pawel Łoziński, Poland, 2021), the filmmaker records from his balcony his attempted conversations with random passersby. While the interlocutors can see each other from afar and over a virtually non-passable demarcation, the viewers inhabit the point of view of Łoziński and have visual access only to the people he calls upon. In *End of the World*, (Monika Pawluczuk, Poland, 2015), various people call on the phone two different institutions. The interlocutors do not occupy a shared space, and we can see only the radio producer who launches the questions and takes the answers on the air, and the hospital emergency dispatcher in charge of taking the calls of people in distress. These formal constraints introduce and maintain a discomforting imbalance in the processes of interaction, imbalance that some protagonists address directly (in Łoziński), while others attempt to ameliorate, or acknowledge as irremediable (in Pawluczuk). I propose that the meaning of the films stands in their representation of people's continuous striving towards a communication never fully actualized. Or, along with Maurice Blanchot in *The Infinite Conversation*, the films suggest a form of communication that happens in so far as it acknowledges its own failure due to the impossibility of arrival to knowledge.

**Author's bio:** Alina Predescu is an independent scholar who has just completed the doctoral program in Film & Media Studies at University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation "People Have the Word: Experiments with Voice in Polish Documentary 1960 -1984" proposes an



analysis of the politics and aesthetics of documentary forms of address in the films of Krzysztof Kieślowski, Marcel Łoziński and Wojciech Wiszniewski. The focus of her work is the evolution of approaches to filmic interview as social encounter, against the political and cultural shifts engendered by the Solidarity Movement.

Predescu is also interested in the deterritorialization of the concept of “documentary film” through its recurrent shifting between fiction and non-fiction forms. She presented at numerous conferences such as Visible Evidence (XX, XXIII, XXV), SCMS (2012, 2015, 2018), AICED (21, 22) and others and has published essays in Comparative Studies in Modernism, Pluralities - A Forum for Documentary Disruption, and The University of Bucharest Review: Literary and Cultural Studies Series.

#### Panel 6: Localism, Regionalism, Globalism

Moderator: Andrea Virginás

#### **Veronika Hermann - Transition in transition. Misguided representations of systemic changes in Hungarian screen culture**

**Abstract:** The portrayal of the political, social and cultural aspects of the Eastern European transition period has been constantly changing since 1989. These representations are not only generically and aesthetically, but also politically overdetermined. They draw attention to the political involvement of the illiberal state in supporting the arts, and bring out the historical anomalies of the 1989 transitions in the region. A great example of this process is the 2022 feature film *Blockade* (*Blokád*, dir. Ádám Tószér), funded by the National Film Institute Hungary. It presents a one-sided portrayal of the biggest domestic political crisis of transition-era Hungary in the fall of 1990, when taxi drivers blocked the country to protest the rise of gas prices. Through comparative narrative and textual analyzes I will show the rhetorical overlaps between contemporary political discourses and the portrayal of this crucial event of the late socialist and transition period. I also argue that the depiction of this particular event is part of the wider representation of the regime change, which has provoked debates about credibility and authenticity not only in political but also in intellectual discourses. My example reveals how the 1980s and early 90s are one of the blind spots of Hungarian memory politics, and there is no consensus on how to (re)construct them. In this mnemonic vacuum, popular cultural products play an important role. I will also cite some contemporary examples (e.g., HBO Hungary series *Golden Life* and *The Informant*) that were created by global media networks independent from state funding, in an attempt to map how political debates interact with fictionalized narratives of the transition period in popular culture.

**Author's bio:** Veronika Hermann is Assistant Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Her research interest covers Cold War popular culture, contemporary and 20th century Eastern European popular culture, relations between socialism and nationalism, and structures of social history in literary and media texts. She has publications and she lectures in Hungarian and English. Her first book *Identity politics in literature* was published in 2020.

## **Marta Brzezińska-Pająk - „Look with thine ears”. Communities of misunderstanding in selected Polish film debuts**

**Abstract:** My paper will be focused on selected feature film debuts by young Polish film directors after year 2000. These debut films created new paths in Polish cinema: experimenting, different, sometimes very openly distancing itself from the Polish past, history and traumas. What interests me the most in such a complex bunch of films is the presence of the conflict and violence on a various levels (between national and regional communities, groups, generations, or based on ethnic, social or cultural origin). I am interested how filmmakers tried to depict the problem of culture clash, how they tried to describe the contemporary reality, which is seemingly so coherent and homogeneous, but heading for disintegration, for communication failure. I am going to show how filmmakers struggle with Polish identity, how it interferes with the provincial context as well as European aspirations. Important medium of this inability to communicate at the micro and macro level are: the sound and the language. The language used for communication does not fulfill its role, it is a kind of mask or identifier used by the characters. Linguistic forms serve not so much for communication, for resolving a conflict, as for a ritual performance. The sound usually counterpoints scenes, binds together, creates a space of understanding, opens up cinematic meanings. However, constant interferences, mismatch, incompatibility are the leitmotifs of many scenes. As part of my paper, I plan to refer to the anthropological view of community and language, as well as to the concept of performativity. I am going to focus mainly (but not only) on films: „Bread and Salt” by Damian Kocur (2022), „Tower. A Bright Day” by Jagoda Szalc (2018), „Eastern” by Piotr Adamski (2019), „Supernova” by Bartosz Kruhlik (2019), „Silent Night” by Piotr Domalewski (2017).

**Author's bio:** Marta Brzezińska-Pająk, PhD works at the Department of Intercultural Studies of Central and Eastern Europe at University of Warsaw. She is an author of the monograph "Spectacle – border – screen. The Berlin Wall in German Film" (2014) and editor of the volume "Cinema – postcommunism – politics. Film in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Processes of Political Transformation and the Consequences of 1989" (2018). She is interested in Eastern and Central European cinema with particular emphasis on German and Polish film, especially regarding the period of postcommunist transformation. She particularly appreciates all non-obvious approaches of cinema analysis.

## **Krystian Przybylski - Whether and how to strive for (new) understanding - a voice based on the works of Puiu, Domalewski and Mungiu**

**Abstract:** Taking into account the cultural and geopolitical ties between the countries belonging to the Central and Eastern Europe, the search for common perspectives presented in the cinematographies of these countries gains important justification and opens up interesting interpretation possibilities. A comparison of film works created in a similar period, the Romanian film Cristi Puiu “Sieranevada” from 2016 and the film “Silent Night” (pol. “Cicha noc”) by the Polish filmmaker Piotr Domalewski from 2017, provides an opportunity to look at the similarities

and differences in depicting experiences and phenomena, including the condition of the contemporary family of several generations and the current potential/disturbances/impotency in the sphere of mutual understanding. In turn, the inclusion in the research area of the new film by Cristian Mungiu "R.M.N." from 2022, will additionally be a tool for verifying the validity of observations and a barometer of possible trends and changes (Tallerico 2023, Wróblewski 2023). The family as a reflection of the world in miniature with the complexity of characters, experiences, positions and interactions focuses - both in the case of Puiu, Domalewski and Mungiu - broader social phenomena, especially with the celebration of holidays or family celebrations as a background (Gorzo 2016, Tarbu 2016, Filimon 2017). The metaphor of a house/home and individuals gathering in it, creating a community of diverse, and at the same time not accidental, people, allows for a reliable diagnosis of the observed communication disturbances and barriers. The adopted strategy of silence - in the face of the challenges of (post?)modernity forcing one to believe in the necessity of silence about one's own experiences, attitudes and decisions - is another important element present in this discourse. An interesting point of view is the analysis of "Silent Night" that takes into account the theory of affect (Massumi 2013) and the so-called the project of New Sincerity (Kiełpiński 2022), which no longer assumes the self-realization of an individual as a key need, but a sense of security, belonging and recognition. The international context emerges through the theme of economic emigration and exclusion of the protagonists of Domalewski's film, which is also manifested by the lack of a language community and brings new references, e.g. "Euro-orphanage" visible in the latest film by Mungiu. What values, practices and strategies, if any, make it possible to renew disrupted understanding and to rise to the common ground of dialogue - metaphorically a dialogue across borders? Is it possible, and with what, to replace the rejected and abandoned word in communication, which often seems unable to bear the authentic meaning? Where are the biggest areas of disruption, what is the biggest challenge in this area? Is it even worth fighting for, striving for, when the disintegration of communities seems inevitable? These are the questions the author will try to answer in his speech based on the analysis of the aforementioned works.

**Author's bio:** Krystian Przybylski is a graduate of film studies from Adam Mickiewicz University, additionally he holds a master's degree in theology and cultural studies. He is currently preparing a doctoral dissertation on new Romanian cinema (New Wave and the phenomenon of mioritism). His recent publications are related to this area of interest ("Close the door" or using the cinematic space to evoke the sacred on the example of Cristi Puiu's Sieranevada, "Images" 2020; The image of the "Romanian soul" present in literature and film on the example of the ballad Miorița and the New Wave in Romanian cinema, "Język-Szkoła-Religia" 2022; A short history of a certain reconstruction - recreating and shaping one's own identity in Romanian cinema, AMU Scientific Publishing House - publication in progress).

**Karolina Przybylski - Specific Locality: New Polish Social Cinema in the Context of Western and Eastern Socialist Realism**

**Abstract:** The convention of social realism is stereotypically associated with British or, more broadly, Western European cinema. The names of Ken Loach, Mike Leigh or Jean-Pierre and

Luc Dardenne seem to serve as a kind of synonym for this kind of cinema. And yet, over the last decade or so, filmmakers from Eastern and Central Europe have been leaning towards this convention, trying to express not only the current systemic problems that societies are facing, but also the baggage of the past, which in the case of all these countries is quite traumatic. An excellent example of this practice is the so-called Romanian New Wave, which is often regarded as the hallmark of realist social cinema from that part of Europe, as well as a showcase for contemporary Eastern European cinema in general.

In my presentation, I would like to focus on two Polish films that can be seen as marking the local direction of social realism: *I Never Cry* (Jak najdalej stąd, 2020) directed by Piotr Domalewski and *Bread and Salt* (Chleb i sól, 2022) directed by Damian Kocur. As they both deal with the social situation in small towns in Poland after the country joined the European Union and the problems caused by economic emigration, they seem to be good material to treat as a kind of reverse of Western social realism, at the same time firmly rooted in the Polish tradition of social cinema.

In my presentation, I would like to ask questions about specific narrative practices communicating local issues, their legibility for Eastern and Western audiences and their self-consciousness in constructing a distinct method of realism, also in relation to Polish and Eastern European cinema history. Drawing on - and countering - the writings of British theorists such as Raymond Williams, John Hill and Samantha Lay, I would like to outline a framework for regional reflection on this specific mode of cinematic practice.

**Author's bio:** Karolina Kosińska (PhD) is an associate professor in the Department of Film Studies, Audiovisual Arts and Anthropology of Culture in the Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Science (ISPAN). She is an editor-in-chief of an academic film journal "Kwartalnik Filmowy" published by ISPAN. She is the author of the book 'Androgyne. Identity, longing and desire' ['Androgyn. Tożsamość, tęsknota, pragnienie'] (Warsaw, 2015). She is interested in British cinema, especially in the history and aesthetics of British social realism.

### **Casandra Boldor - Reception of The Romanian New Wave Cinema in Uruguay**

**Abstract:** The Romanian New Wave directors and their award-winning films are well known at the European level and they are beginning to gain more success at the local level in the recent years. But what about Latin-America? Has this cinematography reached that far? How do the film reference institutions present it and how does their public perceive it? This is the presentation of the reception investigation results on The Romanian New Wave Cinema in Uruguay. It follows the presence and the awards in the International Cinematographic Festival of Uruguay and the local distribution. On the other hand, it shares from the interviews made with key referents in the program selection of the Uruguayan Cinemateca and in the film world in the Uruguayan capital. Most importantly, it allows a panoramic view over the press reception of some of the films and of their directors. Finally, it tries to conclude over how this new cinema arrives and reaches these parts of the New World: how far is this travel and what does it lose on the way, how does it find resignification here and what stand as limits in the communication process.

**Author's bio:** Casandra Boldor holds a Philosophy Degree from the Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania (2016) and a Master's Degree in Theory and History of Theatre from the University of the Republic Uruguay (2021), with a thesis on the local *mise en scène* of one of Matei Visniec's plays in 2018. Currently she is a member of the audiovisual studies research group GEstA and she develops a two years research project titled *The dialog between Uruguay and Central-Eastern Europe in the theatre and cinematography field 1940-2020*, financed by the Sectoral Commission of Scientific Research, The Republic University of Uruguay.