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THE SCREEN OF LAUGHTER AND REMEMBERING

Collective Memory and Representations of State Socialism in Czech Cinematography

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Prohlašuji, že jsem disertační práci ***The Screen of Laughter and Remembering: Collective Memory and Representations of State Socialism in Czech Cinematography*** *vypracoval samostatně a s použitím uvedených pramenů a literatury.*

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…….

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Collective Memory and Representations of State Socialism in Czech Cinematography

1 Introduction

People are shown not what they were, but what they must remember having been.

Michel Foucault

This dissertation has very little to say about state socialism. Rather, it is a work about the memory of state socialism in the post-socialist Czech Republic, about the ways in which state socialism can be remembered in the present.[1] From the perspective of collective memory, "it is not only the ancien regime that produced revolution, but in some respect the revolution produced the ancient regime, giving it a shape, a sense of closure" (Boym 2001, xvi). And there are indeed many, often conflicted modes of remembering this particular past. Françoise Mayer, for example, has identified several distinct types of remembering the "communism" in Czech society (Mayer, 2009). And her list is by no means exhaustive. At the centre of this treatise is the Czech post-socialist cinema.

Cinematography is introduced here as a distinct mode of representing the past. In the first chapter, I explore how cinema represents the past in comparison to historiography. While historiography remains the most *authoritative* discourse on the past. However, the cinematic industry had soon discovered that the past makes a great resource for its story-telling as well. Although representing the past has never been an exclusive concern of cinematography, the genre of "history films" now stands as the most *popular* discourse on the past. The first chapter sets the terms for discussing the relationship between the past and the cinematic medium. The debate over what Hayden White suggested to call "historiophoty", the visual representation of history, has essentially centered on the

[1] Some of my previous publications on the subject include the following: (Hladík, 2009; Hladík, 2010) In several places, I have used portions of these texts in the current dissertation thesis.

problem of code: can the visual and written narrative be considered equal, or do they, at least, possess respective aptitudes that give one or the other a kind of comparative advantage for representing different types of events?

I propose to turn to the conceptual apparatus of what may be designated as memory studies for the purpose of keeping the mainstream historical drama as an object of critical analysis. I wish advocate a larger interdisciplinary project that would include sociological and anthropological concepts besides those of historiography and film studies and that would treat a significant portion of the cinematographic representation of the past as an integral part of collective and cultural memory. The chapter thus offers a possible resolution to the issues that have troubled the scholarship on filmic representation of the past and the next parts of the dissertation build on this theoretical discussion.

The first part of the second chapter attempts to work with an approach to the sociology of culture inspired by Pierre Bourdieu and his concept of the field of cultural production which has the advantage of holding together the creative and artistic substance of cultural artifacts without loosing the sight of the wider social and economic context that makes cultural production possible. In terms of public memory, its main carriers are considered to be intellectuals (Eyerman, 2001). This claim should hold particularly for Central Europe, where intellectuals have often been at odds with the ruling regimes. Intellectuals were the guardians of counter-memory (Eyal 2004; Esbenshade 1995).

In the next chapter, I deal with conscious attempts of filmmakers to represent the state socialist past. This step should provide an insight into the place of remembrance in Czech post-socialist cinematography. For the assessment of how Czech filmmakers express the remembering of state socialism (and commemorate it for their audiences), I initially chose the thematic approach and identified the historical feature films made after 1989 whose entire or substantial part of the plot takes place between the years 1948–1989.

On the basis of available data, I demonstrate that the importance of the corpus is based on legitimacy both internal and external to the field of cinematic production. The cinematic expressions of collective memory on the part of filmmakers have a discernible symbolic aspect. I trace then trace how the cinematic representations of state socialism have evolved over the two decades following 1989. In the description of individual films, I pay attention to their commemorative aspect and to how some film critics comment on the films' capacity to represent the state socialist past. There appears to be a tendency of filmmakers to create films in clusters pertinent to different post-socialist periods.

Since the category of the genre seems to be a crucial one for the corpus, I focus on it in a separate chapter. The concept of genre is actually very conducive to sociological inquiry into culture. It enables the analyst to make basic assumptions about the meanings of cultural objects, without requiring an in-depth interpretation which is the domain of the humanities. I then extend the question of the comedy genre from the collective to cultural memory and argue for a locally and historically specific understanding of genre hierarchy, in which the position of comedy is of particular importance. The contemporary status of the comedy genre in Czech cultural memory not only has roots in the country's pseudo-colonial history, but it is also a rather direct continuation of the field of state socialist cultural forms What I call the generic enigma of the post-socialist cinema – the dominance of the comedy genre in the representation of a potentially traumatic, state socialist past – turns out to be more of an irony, in which the past is renounced by the very forms that it has nurtured. Moreover, the irony is a double one, because the continuity of forms betrays the present as a failed renunciation of the past.

The last chapter shows representations of the past that may be considered as the most powerful counterparts of the collective memory of filmmakers and cultural producers. The chapter addresses strategies of history writing and legislative orders for remembering

and forgetting what may be considered as pivotal authorities on the past in the public sphere devoted to commemoration. While history and official memory seem to be very close to each other, they are distinct from cinematic memory. Nonetheless, the latest trends in cinematography suggest a possible rapprochement.

The interdisciplinary scope of my work implies the use of a diverse set of methods. The first chapter, theoretical in nature, relies on an extensive literature review and argumentation. The second chapter uses deduction to heuristically re-organize primary and secondary sources on Czech cinematography. The theoretical premises are based on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social fields. In the following chapter, I analyze several different types of quantitative data for descriptive purposes. I also employ rudimentary textual analysis in order to build-up and then describe a corpus of cinematic works. The last chapter is partly methodological, as it strives to establish the relevance of genre analysis for the sociology of culture. In the remainder of the work I use the genre analysis to reveal historical trajectory of the genre of comedy and highlight the historically specific way in which it connects cultural producers and consumers through symbolic objects – representations

2 The past on film: History or memory?

This chapter will explore how cinema represents the past in comparison to historiography. In the Western systems of thought, historiography remains the most *authoritative* discourse on the past. On the other hand, cinema functions primarily as an industry. Actually, it was a model for culture industry that has since become a major economic and – so the argument goes (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1988) – ideological force of the late capitalism. The cinematic industry had soon discovered that the past makes a great resource for its story-telling machinery. History films, such as David W. Griffith's ill-reputed, but classical narrative of *The Birth of a Nation*, or Sergei Eisenstein's more avant-garde *The Battleship Potemkin* were crucial works that helped to define cinematic language. Although representing the past has never been an exclusive concern of cinematography, the genre of "history films" now stands as the most *popular* discourse on the past.

2.1 Historiography and cinematography: an uneasy relationship

Not infrequently, historical films themselves express certain disdain for the work of historians. They pose as an alternative to history, which hereafter should be understood as the past insofar as it described by historiography. Thus, a spectator of historical films often gets to hear words such as those in the movie *Braveheart* in which the narratorial voice (presumably the character of Robert the Bruce, the king of Scotland) states in the opening: "I shall tell you of William Wallace. Historians from England will say I am a liar, but history is written by those who have hanged heroes." A historical film habitually claims to be a more authentic representation of the past than history made by historians. Such declarations scarcely amount to anything else but a justification for the departure from

known history. At one level, however, they can rely on an undisputable characteristic of most films – "the synchronization of senses" to which Stanley Aronowitz attributes the "film's power to produce a reality that never was and to represent the never-was as history". (Aronowitz 1979, 112)

At the same time, filmmakers collaborate with professional historians who serve as advisors for historical films. (Their involvement is even more pronounced in documentary films.) The film staff usually makes sure that props and costumes conform to historical knowledge. While, in the storyline, departure from historical accounts, or adherence to less plausible ones, falls under artistic license, the attention to detail constitutes a generic component of historical films. Philip Rosen considers "knowledge of the detail" to be "an implicit aspect of the experience of mainstream historical films", which, on the part of the audience, stimulates participation in what he dubs Everett's Game. The inspiration for the term was a letter of complaint written to a film studio by certain Mr. Everett, who wished to point out a historical inaccuracy that he had noticed in a movie. The rule of the Everett's Game requires "that every detail of the film be gotten 'right' or else he [Mr. Everett] can assert a victory, consisting in a claim of knowledge of the detail superior to that of the film". (Rosen, 2001, 156) Should filmmakers win this game, they must turn to historiography for support.

In what relationship, then, do these two discourses, historical and cinematic, on the past stand? Are they interchangeable, interdependent, do they contradict each other, can they be ranked hierarchically? Filmmakers have scarcely exhibited an interest for these questions. To the extent that cinema is considered here as an industry, the work of historians has only unwittingly supplied it with stories about the past. In contrast, many historians have raised concerns about the immensely popular cinematographic representations of the past. It was actually one of the best-reputed journals of the

discipline, *The American Historical Review*, that had in the late 1980s offered its pages to a debate among historians on the position of their discipline to cinematographic renditions of historical material. I now want recall the basic issues raised in this exchange on visual history.

2.1.1 The historiophoty debate

Robert A. Rosenstone, a historian who belongs among the most vocal advocates for history on film, stimulated the debate by the article “History in Images/History in Words”. According to him, historians have no other option but to take cinematographic representations of the past seriously, as this duty imposes itself upon them through the development of mass-media and visual culture, which creates “a world deluged with images, one in which people increasingly receive their ideas about the past from motion pictures and television, from feature films, docudramas, mini-series, and network documentaries”. (Rosenstone 1988, 1174) This process troubles historians, as it lies “almost wholly outside the control of those of us who devote our lives to history”. (Rosenstone 1988, 1174) In the view of metatheoretical criticisms and methodological developments in historiography, Rosenstone posits the representative claims of narrative discourse in both written and visual media as essentially equal with regard to their validity. On the one hand, history can never fully discard its fictitious elements, and on the other hand, historical films cannot be reduced to them. However, in order to be able to appreciate history on film, historians must stop using the written history as a yardstick and instead attempt to approach visual history “in terms of its own”. (Rosenstone, 1988 1181)

When seen in the context of seemingly rigid historiography that refuses to take into consideration the far-reaching changes of the media landscape, Rosenstone’s willingness to judge cinema by its own standards appears as commendable. However, I wish to contend

this shift of epistemological gear that stems from the influential McLuhanite conception of the medium as its own message. Rosenstone makes this obvious when he asserts: "The most serious problems the historian has with the past on the screen arise out of the nature of demands of the visual medium itself". (Rosenstone, 1988 1173) This version of technological determinism, however, fails to account for the discursive nature of historical knowledge.

Things look a bit different in Hayden White's sympathetic response to Rosenstone. (White 1988) White overlooks the deterministic cornerstone of Rosenstone's argumentation, which would in effect require two completely disparate sets of conceptual tools for written history on the one hand, and filmed history on the other.[2] White reformulates the difference between the two as a problem of code:

> "The representation of historical events, agents, and processes in visual images presupposes the mastery of a lexicon, grammar, and syntax – in other words, a language and a discursive mode – quite different from that conventionally used for their representation in verbal discourse alone." (White 1988, 1193)

White suggests to call "historiophoty" the discipline that would master the language and discursive modes of visual representation of the past. Yet while Rosenstone would like to validate such a discipline on the grounds of inapplicability of the standards of written history in the visual medium, White makes a contrasting move and subjects historiophoty

[2] In his later work, Rosenstone would still maintain this distinction: "The visual form of historical thinking should not and cannot be judged by the criteria we apply to the history that is produced on the page." (Rosenstone, 2006, 37) At the same time, he has begun to refer more often to White's theories, and as a consequence, make claims such as the following: "The written biography and the biographical film are less different than they may appear to be. The overall project of telling a life is similar in both media." (Robert A Rosenstone 2006:92) It is difficult not to see here an incongruence, if not an outright contradiction.

and historiography to the same underlying principle. In accordance with his previous works, this principle stands on the tropological nature of knowledge in human sciences:

> "Every written history is a product of processes of condensation, displacement, symbolization, and qualification exactly like those used in the production of a filmed representation. It is only the medium that differs, not the way in which messages are produced." (White 1988, 1194)

White had previously made an argument that historiography, as "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse" (White 1975, ix), does not substantially differ from fiction, inasmuch as it depends on "prefiguration" of its object – the past – in rhetorical terms. In the debate on historiophoty, he essentially extends the argument to cinematic representation. Thus the distinction between the media has only secondary importance in his theory.

In my view, both of the arguments and their developments by other authors fall short on two accounts. First, they do not engage the practice of human sciences and the operation of power therein. Technological determinism fails to see, so to speak, the technology of power; or it reduces its forms to a specific effect of the medium. In the notion of tropological discourse, White effaces the power from the production of knowledge by equating tropes with cognition. He does, no doubt, allow for thinking about the ideological dimension of historiographical work. However, in this perspective, the power enters historiography from outside, while its defining feature rests with its figurative character. Second, and ultimately this follows from the previous point, by focusing on either the medium or the code of representation, these arguments neglect other practices that make up historiography. The following remarks should elaborate on these criticisms of

how historiophoty has been hitherto advocated and offer an alternative perspective on its viability *within* historiography. In addition, another conceptual approach, one based on memory studies, will need to be proposed for the dealings with cinematographic representations of the past *outside* of historiography/historiophoty.

2.1.2 The demands of history on film

Perhaps the most important reason that has attracted the attention of academics to the possibility of historiophoty is the popular position occupied by mainstream history drama in public representations of the past. At the same time, it is precisely the genre of mainstream historical drama that makes it particularly burdensome for historiophoty to sustain its epistemological claims. I want to argue that the relationship of the so-called history feature film to historical discourse is oblique at the very least. That is to say that it might, for instance, inspire historiographical research, or thwart popularization of historical knowledge. Yet while the narrative form of history film approximates conventional historiographical narratives, this could be said of virtually any narration, from everyday anecdotal discourse to science-fiction. Pursuing this line of investigation thus contributes to our knowledge of narrative form, but such an abstraction does not advance the understanding of either historiographical or cinematic narratives as specific realizations of that form.

Drawing on Paul Ricoeur's philosophy of history should help us to better understand the possibilities of historiophoty as well as its limits. In so doing, the relationship of history film to historiophoty will also be elucidated. Firstly, lets sketch out some basic principles that Ricouer sees as constitutive of historiography. Historical discourse, he argues:

> "Would be better understood in terms of alternative models for which the referent, whatever it might be, constitutes a irreducible dimension of discourse addressed by someone to someone about something. It would remain to give an account of the specificity of referentiality in the historiographical domain. My thesis is that this cannot be discerned solely on the plane of the functioning that historical discourse assumes, but that it must pass through the documentary proof, the causal and teleological explanation, and the literary emplotment. This threefold frame remains the secret of historical knowledge." (Ricoeur 2004, 250)

The referent in question is the past. The cautious language (of "whatever it might be") alludes to the difficulties that we have with the ontology of the past. The problem is not, of course, that there would be nothing preceding the present. The difficulty lies with the access to it from the present. Can the past be an object of knowledge independently of its recollection? These are, no doubt, important questions for philosophers. For the purposes of this essay, however, it does not matter that much if such an object truly exists, or whether it comes to being only through discourse that refers to it. The salient feature here pertains to the very fiat of historical discourse to have a referent, regardless of its ontological status. We can extrapolate from this a critique of the conflation of historiography with literature. Historiography may or may not be able to shed the elements of fiction in the representations that it produces. It cannot, however, escape its own referentiality without ceasing to be historiography. Literature, in contrast, eschews the duty of reference without, for that reason, subverting itself.[3]

Furthermore, Ricoeur posits three stages of what he calls the "historiographical operation", which intervenes between the past as experience and the past as history. The

[3] Ricoeur and White had much mutual respect and both of them strongly asserted the role of rhetoric in the formation of knowledge. On the question of historiography, however, Ricoeur opposes his "critical realism" to what he perceives as White's ultimate relativism. (Ricoeur 2004:251-257)

order of the stages is epistemological rather than strictly sequential:[4] 1) documentary phase, 2) the phase of explanation/understanding, and 3) the phase of literary representation. The documentary phase concerns primarily the transformation of testimony, voluntary or involuntary, into a document that can be archived, examined, and studied. The explanation/understanding phase entails making sense of documents and constructing plausible causal claims. The phase of literary representation then uses a narrative to stand for the past as it was documented, understood, and explained. Let us emphasize from the outset that Ricoeur singles out literary representation as a distinct moment in historiographical operation, albeit this distinction only comes into sight for a "distantiated epistemological gaze".

The other important qualification that he puts forward regarding the phase of literary representation concerns its non-identity with interpretation. It might be customary to regard a history book as an interpretation of historical data. Even historians leaning more towards positivism are willing to accept this view, with the proviso that their methodology guides historiographical interpretation and thus assures its objectivity. Hayden White challenges the claim of objectivity and suggests that "'interpretation' in historical thought may very well consist of the projection, on the cognitive, aesthetic, and moral (or ideological) levels of conceptualization, of the various tropes authorizing prefigurations of the phenomenal field in natural languages in general"(White 1973, 312). In light of the epistemology proposed by Ricoeur, however, such a suggestion fails to see other operative moments in historiography, or rather, it unrightfully elevates the literary representation to a master mechanism. It obscures the elementary referentiality of historical discourse that requires a conceptualization of "the phenomenal field" in the creation of documentary proof. The latter process occurs through different type of writing, an

[4] "It is not a question of distinct chronological stages, but of methodological moments, interwoven with one another." (Ricoeur 2004:137)

inscription into archive, that does not immediately confound with the writing of historical representation. If there is any sense on epistemological grounds to speak of historiography outside of literature, the tension between the intended reference and the potentially self-referential representation must be maintained.[5] Thus, according to Ricoeur, interpretation is more precisely an activity that intervenes into all the stages of historian's work:

> "There is interpretation at all three levels of historical discourse: at the documentary level, at the level of explanation/understanding, and at the level of the literary representation of the past. In this sense, interpretation is a feature of the search for truth in history that runs across these three levels. Interpretation is a component of the very intending of truth in all the historiographical operations" (Ricoeur 2004, 185).

The importance of this comment for the consideration of historiophoty lies in the dissociation of most critical operations from the process of writing of the final text. From a standpoint inspired by Ricoeur, it becomes clear that most of the arguments in favor of historiophoty center on the third phase of historiographical operation, that of literary representation, which they strive to put on a par with visual representation. Even if the arguments were convincing on this level, however, it would remain to be shown that historiophoty and historiography coincide in other phases too and employ matching forms of interpretation.

Lets now address the main axis of written and visual discourse, around which most of the debate on historical film has revolved so far. For example, Ian C. Jarvie, a dedicated critic of history on film, resolutely asserts: "Writing is vastly superior as a discursive medium. Complex alternatives can be stated and argued concisely and delicately. Film

[5] Strictly speaking, this claim only opens a theoretical possibility for a historiography autonomous from literature. Below, I attempt to show that for this possibility to become effective, the epistemological domain thus delimitated needs be sustained by historiographical practice (which it also makes possible).

cannot do this." (Jarvie 1978, 377) Similarly, in the aforementioned intellectual exchange on the possibility of historiophoty that took place on the pages of *The American Historical Review*, historian David Herlihy argues:

> "Warnings of any sort, appeals to maintain critical detachment, cannot be easily photographed. Doubt is not visual. Warnings require a retreat from the visual to the verbal. […] Knowledge of the past is overwhelmingly conveyed in written words; can criticism of those words be aught but verbal too?" (Herlihy 1988, 1189)

It seems to me, firstly, that Herlihy confounds two moments of intellectual operation distinguished by Ricouer – representation and interpretation. Anyone who has ever gone to a cinema with a group of friends knows that nobody takes a film for its face value. Discussions that almost inevitably follow a screening simply prove this point. The suspension of disbelief, although necessary for a proper cinematic experience, is only temporary. Films do stimulate a critical discourse that typically uses lay terms but is critical nonetheless. In Ricoeur's terms, this means that interpretation follows representation even if the latter is visual. It is arguable that a reader of written representation also suspends her disbelief, although the time-lag between reading and criticism may be smaller. While criticism indeed does retreat to verbal means, in actuality, both visual and written representations can supply its object. This is not to say that representation stands fully apart from interpretation, that the latter does not produce the first, or that the first has no clues for the latter. The point is, instead, that interpretation and representation are distinct moments, although they operate through each other.

A second problem with Herlihy's argument is that it underestimates the signifying possibilities of visual discourse and the force of genre rules. Once again, this reveals the

ubiquity of thinking about the media in a manner of technological determinism. Only this time it is the written word to which Herlihy ascribes the very possibility of critical detachment. However, once with dispense with the idea that a medium produces effects independently of its culturally prescribed uses, we find that there are sufficient visual means for historiophoty to develop a set of signs that would convey doubt and warning. A footnote does not signify warning *per se*, rather, there are genre conventions on the basis of which both author and reader know that they should treat it as a warning. Similar techniques could be easily devised for cinema. The existing lack of training in reading visual discourse and the lack of rules for constructing it do not, in principle, prevent a future development of critical visual apparatus. Thus, Herlihy's argument should be taken as targeting the *status quo*, but not as a substantive refutation of the idea of visual history on theoretical plane.

Another wedge that some historians who feel uneasy about historiophoty may feel inclined to drive between cinema and history concerns the putative distinction between fact and fiction. Once again, influenced by post-structuralism, Hayden White has been keen on impugning the binary:

> "Many historians continue to treat their 'facts' as though they were 'given' and refuse to recognize, unlike most scientists, that they are not so much found as constructed by the kinds of questions which the investigator asks of the phenomena before him."(White 1978, 43)

Since the time that White had carried out his extensive assault on the presumed objectivity in historical science, the number of historians who would still think of their facts as "given" has undoubtedly shrunk. If White's criticism was correct, the case for

history films to count as history, would be fundamentally strengthened. Yet the previously encountered problem would reappear. With the collapse of distinction between fact and fiction, how could history still be talked about meaningfully, if it makes more sense to speak simply of literature (or by extension, of filmmaking rather than historiophoty). Ricoeur's position reminds us again of the need to think of historiography as a referential discourse. The facts may very well be constructed as interpretations of data (with the data themselves being interpretations of testimonies), yet the particularity of properly historiographical interpretation, as Ricoeur would put it, rests on the "intending of the truth". If facts are conceptualized as constructions that *intend* the truth, rather than givens that *express* the truth, much of the critique of objectivity in historical knowledge would still apply without the need of subsuming historiography fully under literature.

2.1.3 The boundaries of history

Thus far, I have relied on Ricoeur to sidestep the aporias that seem to have bogged down the dispute over historiophoty. His exposition of the epistemology of historical science has the capacity to accommodate many important critiques of the idea of transparent representation that have been put forward by many scholars since the linguistic turn in social theory. At the same time, Ricoeur's stance has the advantage of incorporating such insights without a must to renounce the historiographical project altogether. In one respect, however, I find his philosophy insufficient. Ricoeur's phenomenological background makes him attentive to the nuances of historiography, such as the identification of its three operative phases. Yet I want to raise an issue with his approach that, in the quest for the essence of historiography, tends to obscure the very history of historiography and its social conditioning. While White can only relate a genesis of historical sciences in terms of increasing reflexivity through the transformation of tropes

from metaphor to irony, Ricoeur seems to suggest a vision of increasing intellectual complexity that always needs to stop when it reaches its limits defined by referentiality and encouters the sphere of testimony and memory, from which it originally departed. To both of the thinkers, then, the development of historiography as a discipline amounts to varying levels of epistemological awareness. Neither of two provides means for understanding historiography as a discipline with its own historical trajectory that could include its institutional and organizational development.

Along with Pierre Bourdieu, I believe that an understanding of scientific fields cannot be exhausted by a report on epistemology and needs to include a consideration of their "*epistemic doxa*". The term[6] attempts to convey that epistemology rests on "set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit and self-conscious dogma". (Bourdieu 2000, 15) This set of beliefs, in turn, requires certain "conditions of possibility" as well as acquirement of a particular "disposition". Bourdieu thus provides a theory that serves as a middle ground between the outlined epistemological positions:

> "Social science endeavours to establish the genealogy of the objective structures of the scholastic fields […] and of the cognitive structures which are both the product and the condition of their functioning. […] Against relativistic reductionism, it shows that, while it does not differ in an absolute way from other fields in terms of the motivations engaged in it, the scientific field stands quite apart from them in terms of the constraints […] which an agent has to accept in order to secure the triumph of his passions or interests." (Bourdieu 2000, 115–116)

[6] "An oxymoron likely to awaken philosophers from their scholastic slumber." (Bourdieu 2000:15)

If we review the previously discussed epistemological stances in light of Bourdieu's proposition for the sociology of sciences, White's arguments suddenly appear as quite insufficient. The exclusive focus on tropes and language leaves out reflection on how historians undergo scholarly training, during which they learn, for example, how to write in a way that their senior colleagues accept. In other words, they acquire a disposition. They also rely on university departments, where such knowledge is transmitted. And their books and articles require a network of publishers, distributors, libraries and so on. That is to say, the profession of historian entails its own conditions of possibility. Ricoeur pays closer attention to the workings of historian's mind and thus matches better with Bourdieu. Nonetheless, in order to bring out the doxic elements of epistemology, one must still translate it from a cognitive ideal to a disposition acquired through a set of practices and embodiment of historically particular and malleable norms of the community of historians.

An objection could be raised that such propositions only apply to historiography as a discipline, but they fail to grasp that the textual historiographical representations depend, as such, less on the historians who write them and more on the general principles of language and tropes. If the fact is wrestled away from the foundation in reality, if its essentially rhetorical constitution is revealed, does not it follow that fiction and historiography collapse into each other with no possibility of drawing a line between the two? Yet propelling the fact into the realm of textuality should be accompanied by a second step, which is the recognition of the discursive rules that govern there. These rules might in effect uphold the distinction between fictional and factual discourse and affirm the referentiality of historiography. Peter Burke made a notice of these properly textual constraints:

> "It is an equal pity that White and his followers, not to mention the theorists of narrative, have not yet seriously engaged with the question whether history is a literary genre or cluster of genres of its own, whether it has its own forms of narrative and its own rhetoric, and whether the conventions include (as they surely do) rules about the relation of statements to evidence as well as rules of representation. Ranke, for example, was not writing pure fiction. Documents not only supported his narrative, but constrained the narrator not to make statements for which evidence was lacking." (Burke 1993, 129)

The notion of genre appears as crucial here. It requires us to consider the real world practices as inseparable from the textual level. Mikhail Bakthin once remarked about genres that they "are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language". (Bakhtin 1986, 65) Once we introduce the concept of genre into our thinking about historiographical representations, the manner in which the latter are produced and received cannot be omitted from consideration. Simultaneously, as classificatory schemes with cues distributed throughout writing, genres carve out the flow of discourse and set limits on and between text. Before one even begins to investigate the possibility of truthful portrayal of the past, the referentiality of historiographical representations first needs to be regarded as their generic feature.

Historiography's relationship to literature or cinema, or any other field of cultural production, cannot be safeguarded by any self-standing epistemology. Thomas Gieryn showed that every scientific discipline engages itself in "boundary-work", in other words, it produces its own ideology that ensures its demarcation from other domains of knowledge. (Gieryn 1983) Epistemological claims should be viewed as a functional element of such demarcation. The efforts spent by scientists on the boundary-work,

however, also reveal that "the boundaries of science are ambiguous, flexible, historically changing, contextually variable, internally inconsistent, and sometimes disputed." (Gieryn 1983, 792) White, for example, although to an extent negligent of the social implications of the problem, did manage, by the very fact of launching an attack against historiography, to at least partially erode the boundary that had separated it from literature. Similarly, if more and more historians are swayed by the propositions of Rosenstone, eventually written narrative will loose its capacity of demarcation and visual discourse will no longer be alien to historiographical practice. Such state of affairs, however, still needs to be established. That is why Ricoeur can still forcefully assert "history is writing through and through". (Ricoeur 2004, 234) For a fair assessment of the concept of historiophoty, the debate must be contained within the currently existing borders of historiography, although of all other scientific demarcations, these are probably the ones most subjected to tests and revisions.

2.1.4 Historical films as a social practice

The above review of literature identified a set of difficulties associated with a too hasty expansion of historiography's limits to encompass audiovisual discourse. It sought examples of theory that can in effect provide more constrained perspective on the relationship of history and cinema, without, however, yielding to positivist-like conceptions of transparent representations of facts. At a less abstract level, let us now turn our attention to feature history film, which, for historiophoty, is an equivalent of historical novel for historiography: the locus of a porous boundary.

Feature history film[7] in a style of mainstream drama is historiophoty's chief

[7] The relationship of history film to "historiophotical film" will be illuminated below. Here, I want to recall a distinction made on the other side of the spectrum by Rosenstone, who delimits the genre from properly fictional films set in the past, the so-called "costume dramas". History film crucially depends on a wider engagement with the discourses that had dominated the past in question. An example he gives are the films about the US Civil War and the racialized discourse of that era: "The costume drama […] ignores that discourse and uses the exotic locale of the past as no more than a setting for romance and adventure. A

inspiration. Its significance by no means restricts itself to Hollywood production but be prevails in many national cinemas. However, what brought it to the attention of historians were probably not its intrinsic qualities from the historiographical standpoint; rather, the interest was roused by the immense popular appeal of feature history film. By addressing visual media, historians nourish hope to engage significant audiences. Alas, the countless shortcomings of such films on the account of historical accuracy offer the more traditionally-oriented historians an easy retort to their colleagues who are more enthusiastic about the potential of visual media for history. Consequently, even Rosenstone admits that:

> "What we don't yet know is exactly where films sit with regard to historical thought, or understanding, or even what we might wish to call historical truth. Particularly the dramatic feature, which is obviously the most popular form of film in all parts of the world. In all our scholarship, we have not yet located the coordinates of such films, where they exist in space/time with regard to the history professionals write." (Rosenstone 2003, 11)

Hayden White actually did attempt to detect the coordinates of such films and suggested that the historical dramatic feature film is a visual equivalent of historical novel. In the wider context of White's theory of figurative nature of cognition in human sciences,

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history film, by contrast, engages that discourse by posing and attempting to answer the kind of questions that for a long time have surrounded a given topic." (R. A Rosenstone 1988:45) Rosen begins to speak similarly of a "historical spectacle": "From the perspective of the 'serious' historical film, historical spectacle unbalances the interplay between a 'true story' and a recognizably 'historical historical film, historical spectacle unbalances the interplay between a 'true story' and a recognizably 'historical' mise-en-scène by emphasizing the underlying ambivalences of the latter with respect to referentiality." However, Rosen consequently relinquishes the effort to disambiguate the genres: "As a general proposition concerning mainstream cinema, it may be that neither reality-effect nor spectacle is ever completely absent; there are only different degrees of their import and intensities in relation to one another." (Rosen 2001:187) While it could seem that the positions of the two authors are contradictory in terms of difference vs. degree, they in fact agree that the filmic text cannot decisively mark its genre by means of its own. Notice that Rosenstone, symptomatically posits the knowledge of the given discourse as a criterion external to film. We must assume, then, that the required pragmatic knowledge actually comes from historiography.

however, the line between historiographical monograph and historical novel turns out to be very fuzzy. He admits that two “may be shaped by different principles”, but to him what counts as important, is that both of them are constructed, that is to say, neither is a reflection of reality. The constructedness of fictional and historiographical narratives alike is an important insight, but if the analysis had stopped here, it would have obscured more than it would have revealed. Instead of dissolving the difference between historiographical work and historical fiction in the abstract realm of tropology, I argue that the said “different principles” need to be examined more closely as concrete practices, which are not only textual, but social as well. And as such, these different principles creates different type of knowledge and have different impact.

The problem with locating dramatic feature with regard to history has to do, I would like to suggest, with keeping the debate within its representational dimension. On this plane, it may indeed appear as if a popular film used very much the same techniques for representing the past as a highly specialized historian’s book would do. However, when Rosenstone mobilizes the insights of the cinema studies to show how various properly cinematographic “inventions”, such as compression or alterations of the referential events, (Rosenstone 2006, 39) serve to make a sense of the past in a specifically filmic way, he completely disregards the research that precedes the making of a film. It would be extremely difficult, probably impossible, to find a historical feature film that could measure up to the research standards of the documentary and explanation/understanding phases of the historiographical operation described by Ricoeur. Certainly, mainstream historical films rely on consultations of historians and employ a staff of their own researchers. These activities, however, dispense with any methodology and the kind of interpretation that they get involved in is guided by professional, technical, and artistic concerns. At the very best, from the viewpoint of historiography, they faithfully follow

existing historiographical texts in some kind of visual plagiarism of written discourse.

Even Robert Rosenstone, who served as a historical advisor on the production team of the films *Reds* and *The Good Fight*, based on his books, admits that these motion pictures, "despite their very real virtues, their evocations of the past through powerful images, colorful characters, and moving words, neither of these motion pictures can fulfill many of the basic demands for truth and verifiability used by all historians." (Rosenstone 1988, 1174) While As one of the main spokespersons for the case of historiophoty, Rosenstone seeks to salvage those "real virtues" of historical film by affirming the merits of visual representation. However, I want to contend this approach. Rosenstone himself once recommended the following:

> "Rather than focus on how film gets the past wrong […], or how it *should* construct history, we had better first study the way in which historical film makers have actually been working for the last century." (Rosenstone 2006, 36)

This call deserves to be heeded, but perhaps even more to the letter than it was intended. Consequently, the study of the actual work of the historical film makers will most likely reveal that it does not resemble historians' work in almost any fundamental aspect. History films do make claims of authenticity, or the accuracy of historical detail, as a part of the Everett's Game over the superior knowledge of film's referents. For this purpose, they mobilize researchers or hire consultants. Rosen affirms that "'research' has been a constant presence in mainstream screen production." (Rosen 2001, 154) He associates research with the entire history of cinema and describes the changes of "research protocols" – from bureaucratically rationalized tables of the studio era to contemporary outsourcing – employed by the film industry. The research encompasses all genres of

cinematic production and history films are not exceptional in this sense, perhaps only with regards to the extent of research which they require.

The evidence which Rosen discusses, however, shows just how much the research done for films differs from a historiographical application of methodology and treatment of primary and secondary sources. What the cinematographic research records resemble the most from the scholarly practice is perhaps a quiz test for undergraduate history students, although a fairly peculiar one:[8] a list of questions regarding the historical accuracy of various props, costumes, proper names and so on. More significantly, however, cinematographic research rarely ever creates new knowledge. Instead, it turns to historiography for answers. This means that before the actual work of representation, cinematography does not function autonomously from historiography and rather depends on it. In other words, as soon as we focus on what precedes the final representation, cinema no longer appears to present a challenge to history, nor an alternative. With this realization in mind, I believe that one should proceed cautiously in drawing conclusions from Rosen's final statement in his exposition of cinematographic research: "Hollywood research departments are, in their own way, another kind of professionalization of historical thinking, one that both assumes and may stand for a certain general cultural penetration of its ideals (if not all of its practices)." (Rosen 2001, 154) Firstly, cognitive "practices" deserve better treatment than being bracketed out in favor of "ideals", for the former rather than the latter maintain the doxa of the epistemological domain. Secondly, the statement actually evidences the previously mentioned dependence of cinematic production on historiography, instead of, as it was most likely intended, an emergence of historical thinking proper to the cinema.

Mainstream, feature history film should not be filled under the rubric of

[8] It is hard to imagine a professor who would test her students on the knowledge of, for example, the attire of Emperor Maxmilian I. of Mexico upon his landing at Vera Cruz; see Rosen (2001, 151) It is, however, important for a visual account of the event to include such kind of information.

historiophoty – not because it could not represent history, but because it is made differently from history. My argument, based on the distinctions made by Ricoeur, rests on the assumption that the adequacy of a representation of an event needs to be judged by what precedes it epistemologically and by the particular set of practices and rules which determine the encoding and decoding of a given representation. For a type of cinematography that could appropriately be labeled as historiophoty, it would remain to show that it equals historiography in the preceding phases of knowledge production as well.

2.1.5 A viable project for historiophoty

I have attempted to show that the theory of historiophoty that overly focuses on the issue of representation has some weak spots. These are revealed most openly when historiophoty tries to include the domain of mainstream historical film, for which it does not provide sufficient epistemological grounds. Perhaps more importantly, the closer scrutiny shows that makers of history films rely heavily on written history, which in effect puts the whole project of historiophoty to doubt. At the beginning, I have also considered the relative achievements of the theory of historiophoty in undermining some persistent hierarchically structured binaries of factual and fictional, respectively written and visual discourses. In order not to throw out the baby with the bath water, I now want consider the possibilities for historiophoty that would be congruent with the phenomenology of historiographical operation.

One of the oldest interventions on the relationship of film and history comes from the historian Richard C. Raack. Before even the term historiophoty was coined, Raack occupied himself with the idea of “historiography as cinematography”. He saw the relevance of cinema for history in several respects, ranging from the notion of source to a

pedagogical device for history classrooms. Unlike many of his followers, however, he does not contend himself with pondering over existing history films supplied by the cinema industry. He explicitly invites historians to become filmmakers themselves. And still unlike his followers, this author expects that "the historian working in film and sound meets the kin of initial methodological problems as the historian working in prose." (Raack 1983, 426) Viewed from this perspective, historiophoty should be identical to historiography in its epistemological endeavor. The only point of difference would be found at the phase of representation.

> "Perhaps most important, the historian who has gained some familiarity with film and sound sources and with the language of film and sound should take up the challenge of attempting to reconstruct history in the media. Every historian writing today ought to set aside his pen until he has at least considered alternative and potentially more expressive ways to representing the past." (Raack 1983, 425)

Raack's ideas are a very practical proposition for historiophoty. Current possibilities of digital technology dramatically increase the opportunities for such type of visual representations made by historians themselves. History, after all, is not really made on film, nor, for that matter, on paper. It is made at the relevant departments of universities and research institutions. If history can be said to be writing "trough and through", this is because of the way it has been made there. And should a viable project of historiophoty emerge, it must happen in a scholastic field.

The disparity between how historiophoty typically operates nowadays and what promises to be a better pathway to its development can be illustrated by two examples that I have encountered during my research visit in South Africa. There, historiophoty found a

handful of promoters among local historians. In 2003, the editors of the special issue of *South African Historical Journal* noted that historiophoty as an area of study has little autonomous existence nationwide, but at University of Cape Town "the teaching of 'film and history' has broadened substantially." (Smith and Mendelsohn 2003, 2). An edited volume *Black and White in Colour: African History on Screen* was published four years later and collected altogether seventeen essays on historical films from across the African continent and from diverse scholars. Yet the editors carefully remarked that

> "Whether or not a particular history film is seriously engaged with the discourses of African history, contributors have demonstrated that it can also be a rich resource of historical evidence about contemporary ideologies of the place or period that produced it." (Smith and Mendelsohn 2007, 9)

Indeed, the contributions are a captivating reading, but they are very cautious about acknowledging the merits of the scrutinized films from the perspective of historical discourse. Informed by the existing theory of historiophoty, the authors do not reproach filmmakers for every departure from what counts as established facts. Unlike their more judgmental colleagues of more traditional historiographical conviction, these historians patiently distinguish useful inventions from simple inaccuracies and justify the former at length However, although this kind of treatment appreciates films as visual representations of the past, it ultimately submits the visual discourse to written criticism and thus affirms the latter as superior. The elusive proclamation of the editors, which emphasizes the role of films for the study of the period of their production against the period they represent, has a similar effect, because by designating the films as a resource not of historical *knowledge*, but of historical *evidence*, it also recognizes the supremacy of historiography. Hence, one

would have to conclude that the position of historiophoty in South Africa is precarious at best.

An example to the contrary, however, can be witnessed at the Centre for Popular Memory at the University of Cape Town.[9] The Centre employs several oral historians and an audiovisual project manager. The disciplinary identity of the researchers rests with oral history. Yet while they conduct their field research, they often bring digital cameras with them besides merely notepads and recorders. In the process of organizing their archives, they use some of the audiovisual materials and produce, with the help of their visual technician, low-budget documentaries. I had the occasion to see one documentary feature film created there, which was called "Soweto Sneezed… and Then We Caught the Fever". As I was told, this film actually received attention from the media and was broadcasted nationally. This, to me, was a perfect example of historiophoty. Oral historians have their own battles to wage with the dominant historiographical approaches, thus it did not surprise me that the Centre did not claim to be engaged in historiophoty by making such films. Yet a phenomenological reflection of their activity suggests that they perform all stages of the historiographical operation – creating documents out of testimonies, attempting to understand and explain the data, and representing the conclusions – only sometimes the outcome is visual instead of written.

2.2 Memory as an alternative representation of the past

Delimiting the scope of historiophoty to an academic subdiscipline has the unfortunate consequence of wresting away the historical feature drama away from its legitimate domain of interest. There is but one aspect of the genre to which historians could

[9] Let us admit that the name of the research unit appears as a misnomer from the perspective of the argument that is advanced here and relies on the distinctions between history and memory as two conflicting modes of conceptualizing and representing the past.

and indeed should attend to a criticism of the most flagrant inaccuracies. The more popular a movie is, the more there is a need for such a criticism. While a critique of historical film on academic grounds already exists as a standard practice, the indisputable contribution of the historiophoty debate resides in the provision of conceptual means for rendering this type of criticism better attuned to the current use of the visual media. It is more appropriate and beneficial to historical knowledge to point out that besides simple inaccuracies there are also inventions whose ultimate function is to effectuate a more accurate representation. In this perspective, a historical film is reduced an object of a historiographical commentary. Here, however, the "historical" aspect of the film itself is lost. Yet despite my attempt to show the dissonance between mainstream film-making and historiography, I believe that historical feature films still do bear on the past in important ways.

If this assertion is correct, what is its implication for the study of historical films? Must we disregard the significance of the past as it subject matter and submit it only to the aesthetic and technical kind of criticism that cinema studies conduct? Yet history and its gaze that distances the past from the present is not the sole mode of relating to the past. The connection between the past and the historical film depicting it, however, needs to be framed differently, outside of the scholastic field of historiography/historiophoty. For understanding historical feature film, the concept of social memory offers a more adequate platform for fostering our understanding of how, in the contemporary media culture, we relate to the past visually. In order to elucidate this point, another debate needs to be revisited.

For the purpose of keeping the mainstream historical drama as an object of critical analysis, I propose to turn to the conceptual apparatus of what may be designated as memory studies. Even if scholars like Hayden White are correct to assert that historiophoty cannot claim some ultimate access to truthful discourse, once we think of epistemology as

a particular practice of producing knowledge, we can see that memory is also a specific way of knowing the past. Since Pierre Nora's work on the places of memory, the tensions between history and memory have been addressed almost in parallel development to the historiography and historiophoty controversy. Yet the overlaps between the two directions of inquiry have been rather sporadic and lacking in awareness of their mutual theoretical stakes. Therefore, while acknowledging a rightful place of historiophoty in historical humanities, I wish to advocate a larger interdisciplinary project that would include sociological and anthropological concepts besides those of historiography and film studies and that would treat a significant portion of the cinematographic representation of the past as an integral part of collective and cultural memory.

2.2.1 Memory studies: the key concepts

At roughly the same period when the capacity of cinema for historical representation begun to be more systematically explored by some historians, others, namely Jacques Le Goff and Pierre Nora in France (a country where historiophoty also found an important exponent in the person of Pierre Sorlin), started to examine another boundary of their field. Specifically, they questioned the historiography's monopoly on representing the past for the present and noted that social memory is another mode in which societies relate to the past. From the perspective of social memory, the past is not an object to be explicated and described, but primarily a resource for social action in the present that furnishes building blocks of identity.

The founding work in the discipline of memory studies was a treatise on the "frameworks" of collective memory by a French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. According to him, "social thought is essentially a memory" and people in society only remember through reliance on collective frameworks, such as the traditions of their groups,

rituals, and shared narratives. (Halbwachs 1992, [1925], 189) The resultant collective memory serves to create a social bond within a group.[10] In a posthumously published volume, *La mémoire collective* (Halbwachs 1950), Halbwachs focuses on the existence of society as the very precondition for the human ability to remember. Importantly, he also finds memory and history to be contradictory approaches to the past. History, he argues, classifies the past, whereas collective memory appropriates it as a continuous space. At the same time, collective memory itself fragments into various social groups that sustain it, whereas history ultimately exists as a single entity that subsumes all specialized histories. In effect, history provides "empty frameworks", whereas collective memory "saturates" them.

Halbwachs's notion of history obviously retains some traces of positivist paradigm. With the developments of historiography such as microhistory or oral history, the ideal of a universal history has undergone some revisions. On the one hand, the acceptance of multiple narratives in history and serious consideration of the experience of historical agents makes the barrier between history and memory more porous. On the other hand, this very approximation also reveals, how significantly history and memory still diverge as two distinct knowledge-producing practices, and in this sense the opposition postulated by Halbwachs holds true. The potentially more troublesome aspect of his theory pertains to his emphasis on the bonding character of collective memory. While it may indeed act as an integrating factor in one social it might also be a strong source of conflict. For example, two ethnic groups that share a (single) history of mutual strife in one state can have two discordant sets of recollections of the past events, that not only enhance the intragroup solidarity, but also feed intergroup conflict. Thus, as much as the concept of collective

[10] Halbwachs was obviously inspired by his teacher, Émile Durkheim, whose ideas about the social bonds had evolved from the notion of solidarity to the concept of collective representations. (Durkheim 1995) In this line of classical French sociology, collective memory should also be treated as a social fact, that is, a phenomenon irreducible to individual psychology.

memory proves to be productive for understanding the rootedness of social groups in traditions and institutions, its limits must also be interrogated.

Pierre Nora, an influential (also through his posts in academic publishing) French historian, picked up the topic of the opposition between history and memory and claimed that before the advent of modernity, memory and history were almost indistinguishable as the modes of relating to the past. He then attempted to show that especially since the 19th century history has increasingly monopolized the task relating the past and the present. "At the heart of history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to spontaneous memory," claims Nora (Nora 1989, 9), and the "acceleration of history" has augmented the rift into a gap. Memory as a lived daily experience, as environment – *les millieux*, has been abandoned and relegated to particular sites, *les lieux*, where people can continue to remember the past without having to follow the rules of the historiographical game.

Of course, any sharp distinction between memory and history made by the theoreticians of memory happens on the conceptual level. Empirically, memory and history constantly interact with each other. Let us note, however, that Nora's account of the increasing autonomy of history brings about a perspective that has quite different implications than White's description of history unable to disassociate itself from literature. Nora saw history as being endowed with more power, but if there is a hierarchy between the two, it is not always easily postulated which one has the upper hand. Jacques Le Goff remarked that where history flourishes, it actually "feeds" the memory. (Goff 1988, 177) Memory can indeed prove itself very resilient to all sorts of historiographical claims on what "really" happened in the past. It may also define the agenda for historiography. Pertinently, those arguments for historiophoty that see it as way to achieve increased public relevance of history might be also interpreted as a sign of faltering self-confidence of historiography vis-à-vis memory.

Another significant contribution to the theory of social memory derives from the work of German Egyptologists, Aleida and Jan Assman, who have elaborated the concept of cultural memory. With the aid of the new term, Jan Assman attempts to expand the horizon of memory studies beyond the most recent past to which, it seems, the notion of collective memory attaches itself. As Assman puts it:

> "Cultural memory, in contrast to communicative memory, encompasses the age-old, out-of-the-way, and discarded; and in contrast to collective, bonding memory, it includes the noninstrumentalizable, heretical, subversive, and disowned." (Assmann 2006, 27)

The importance of this contribution lies in the conceptualization of ancient past in terms of memory that is stored and made functional in the lived culture. It does not require historiography to make a centuries or even millennia distanced past accessible in the present. Religions provide a good example, as they typically cultivate their specific memory of events and narratives far-removed in time and they do not need submit this knowledge to historiographical scrutiny.

2.2.2 Historical films as memory narratives

I would like to propose that these two debates – between historiography and historiophoty on the one hand, and on the other hand, between historiography and social memory – should be brought into conversation with each other. This proposition certainly is not entirely novel. In an accommodating fashion, William Guynn deals with it in his book "Writing History in Film". There, he suggests that "film can be a place of memory insofar as it engages the public in a collective recollection that revivifies or creates a

meaningful link between a past event and the identity of the social group in the present." (Guynn 2006, 178) Guynn's monograph puts forward many well-elaborated arguments for historiophoty. Not a historian, but a film scholar who took up the case, he describes the many possibilities of cinematographic code to convey discourse on history. A chapter on memory, however, serves merely as supplement that he considers as special case for stimulating remembrance in existing social groups. Had he been familiar for example with the notion of cultural memory, chances are that he would better appreciate the vast time that memory can handle and the manifold ways in which cinema can activate stored memory. He would be less inclined to restricting film as a place of memory to the limiting role of bonding, collective memory.

With the recognition of social memory as a distinct way in which human collectives relate to the past, the conception of historical film as a place of memory should be retained. Nora defined the place of memory as consisting of material, functional, and symbolic dimensions (Nora 1989). Upon reflection, historical feature films can fit the definition. The cinema apparatus (Rosen 1986) has a specific material form, including the film stock and movie theatres. Film narratives are functional in that they engage viewers with the past which they reconstruct on the screen. The functional aspect has been long exploited by pedagogical uses of historical films (Metzger 2007; Marcus and Stoddard 2006). Symbolically, cinema draws on the importance of national cinemas in the overall culture (Vitali and Willemen 2006). In short, cinema has all the prerequisites to become one of the places of memory.

An American historian, Jay Winter, welcomes the introduction of mnemonic concepts into the study of historical films with much less enthusiasm, although he himself participated on the making of TV documentaries about World War I. In response to the works of several film scholars on films about the World War II, he finds extremely

problematic the “attempt to correlate the imagery of film with something called ‘collective memory’ and to relate both to political contestation about national identity is a program fraught with difficulties.” (Winter 2001, 862) To the extent in which he criticizes the insufficient theoretical elaboration of the concept of collective memory and its relationship with film, he addresses a truly problematic issue and his call for more conceptual rigor should be heeded. As he rightfully argues, one should not make easy shortcuts between a particular film and collective memory cast in national terms. “National memories,” Outhwaite and Ray concur, “are unstable and constructed as a hybrid of conflicting passions that are actively assembled into a narrative of nationhood” (Outhwaite and Ray 2005).

A plea for “liberating the film from the burden of carrying something called collective memory” (Winter 2006, 199) takes the whole issue to an entirely different level. Winter’s alternative proposition to treat film not as a carrier but as a mediator of memories disregards the main claim associated with the notion of collective memory that stems from Halbwachs’ training in Durkheimian sociology; there, the point is precisely that collective memory is a social fact and as such it is irreducible to any particular set of memories that a member of given group holds. A group carries its collective memory, but in doing so it draws on available repositories of shared narratives. Essentially, the social forms of memory are accessible to study only through the practices such as rituals and media such as film. Once we add the notion of cultural memory to the conceptual apparatus, we also become attentive to the convulsions of social memory that needs not always be an integrative factor or limit itself to living generations. In studying memory as a cultural and collective phenomenon, we study a particular object and not, as Winter seems to believe (Winter 2006, 185), make claims about the commonality of memories. From the standpoint of contemporary social theory, “the idea of a subject that ‘possesses’ memory has given

way to one in which memory inheres in texts and archives." (Outhwaite and Ra, 2005, 179)

Winter, however, makes an important point when he argues against equating memory represented in cinema with national memory. If we accept the idea of historical film as a place of memory, collective or cultural, it must be recognized that memory in historical films is primarily the memory of a specific social group, namely, the filmmakers. Any generalizations beyond the limits of this group requires an argument about the position of filmmakers in the overall field of cultural production, (Bourdieu 1993) and the embedding of that field in the fields of power and economics. Sometimes, there are good reasons to assume an essential homology across the fields and make a compelling case for a particular film as expressive of national memory. However, it may be equally probable that a given film or the oeuvre of certain filmmakers will be at odds with how other groups that make up a nation remember the past of the film's topic. The situation will undoubtedly differ in countries like the US, where the predominance of commercial production secures a level of independence from political pressures and by the same token ties the industry closely to economic interests. In Europe, the concept of national cinema still occupies an important position, while, at the same time, the subsidized filmmakers can often manage to create movies with high degree of autonomy. Such considerations should always be taken into account when one makes a claim about whose memory does a particular film promote.

From the standpoint of memory, some issues of mainstream historical drama that have troubled even the proponents of historiophoty, disappear. Or rather, they no longer need to be explained away and instead integrate themselves into the conceptual framework. I am thinking especially of two points that historians often raise. Firstly, historical film typically stages a romantic subplot, which is often the most fictionalized part of the film, against the more referentially adequate historical background. This genre convention disturbs the historical commentary of the film. When, however, we analyze the film as a

place of memory, this particular component, through the very ritualistic dimension of genre, introduces the elements of sacredness that attaches itself to memory. It is an auxiliary that relates the spectator to the past by suppressing its uncanny character. The appeal of the romance draws the historical background into the present, so that the spectator experiences the past instead of reflecting on it. For history this means failure, for memory this constitutes its essence.

Secondly, the problem of anachronisms and historical inaccuracies gains a different status for an analyst interested in memory rather than history. She feels no longer compelled to correct these elements although they still need to be traced and pointed out. Yet "bad" history might still be a good memory. Anachronisms, for memory, betray the incomplete grasp of history over the past. They are the point of osmosis between the past and the present. Similarly, inaccuracies, instead of being seen as either errors or useful inventions, become symptoms. Their identification per se is not the goal of analysis; rather, they are the points of entry for inquiry into forgetting. What is being forgotten and why; these are the questions that the inaccuracies raise. And forgetting, a quintessential component belonging to memory, is as important as remembrance itself.

As I have attempted to show above, the properly historiophotic projects are scarce. Most of the film production exhibits the attributes of memory rather than history. Under these circumstances, cinema is very prone to nostalgic renditions of the past. Fredric Jameson sees *nostalgia films* as emblematic of the period of late capitalism and as he puts it: "The nostalgia film was never a matter of some old-fashioned 'representation' of historical content, but instead approached the 'past' through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image." (Jameson 1991, 19) Linda Hutcheon has suggested that Jameson's critique of nostalgia film is a prime example of nostalgical theorizing. (Hutcheon 1998) However, she ignores that Jameson himself is not

unaware of this possible objection. In fact, he poses an explicit question in this respect: “Does this persistence – nostalgia for that ultimate moment of historical time in which difference was still present – rather betoken the incompleteness of the postmodern process, the survival within it of remnants of the past, which have not yet, as in some unimaginable fully realized postmodernism, been dissolved without a trace?” (Jameson 1992, 229) Jameson thus does recognize that there is a Utopian impulse operating even in nostalgic artifacts. The problem with nostalgia lies in its renunciation of history, which amounts to an effective enclosure of the Utopian impulse. This aporia of nostalgia – its inbuilt subversion of the very means for realizing its Utopian goal – is the reason why I remain skeptical of the critical capacity of such concepts as “reflective nostalgia” that Svetlana Boym sees as able to connect “historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past”. (Boym 2001, 49) The current state of film technology, with glossy images and saturated colors as well as artificial imperfections, is very conducive to nostalgia. Nonetheless, it still makes sense to continue asking the question posed by Michel Foucault: “How is this particular reality on film to be reactivated as an existing, historically important reality?” (Foucault 1989, 105) Just as there is a possibility of putting history on screen, although it has been done much less than some theoreticians would wish, there should also be a way of making films that would engage in critical remembrance. The ability to perform such type of memory work appears as a necessary condition if we are ever to be capable of reflecting on nostalgia and communicating across the memory-history divide

Historiophoty itself, however, remains a viable project of an academic subdiscipline. Rather than getting incessantly bogged down in the controversy about fact and fiction and visual and written discourse, the next step for historiophoty should be the development of its own standards for representing visually the results of historical

research. Historical film, as the genre is called by the filmmaking industry, ought to be instead conceptually studied as “mnemonic”, or commemorative film and serve as a focal point of wide interdisciplinary exchange.

3 Czech cinematography: The place of memory as a field

In the previous chapter, I have introduced an extensive theoretical argument for conceiving of most historical films, namely mainstream feature films, as mnemonic rather than historiographical representations. This implies that representations of the past in the so-called historical feature films should be susceptible to sociological inquiry in the form of cultural objects that serve as frames of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992; Irwin-Zarecka 1994). In the remainder of the dissertation, I will attempt to show that we can learn about historical features films as the *places* of memory by examining the *position* of memory in cinematography. To this purpose, I will delimit the sociological scope of my research on cinematic memory and proceed to an analysis of cinema as a field of cultural production, whose contemporary configuration will first require an excurse into its formative stages. My prevailing method will be an analysis of primary and secondary literature and its ensuing heuristic presentation in the sociological categories developed for the study of culture by Pierre Bourdieu.

My substantive concern throughout the rest of this work will be with the remembrance of the state socialist past in post-socialist Czech cinema. The focus on post-socialism highlights the importance of collective memory. As Outhwaite and Ray argue, the perception of state socialism as a "regime of oblivion" and the resurgence of nationalism it the wake of its fall made memory into a central social factor in post-socialist world. (Outhwaite and Ray 2005) Nonetheless, as was noted earlier, coherence of national narratives about the past is at best a result of hegemonic power. Since collective memory originates in social groups smaller than the nation, it makes better sense sociologically to study the former before the latter. Moreover, not all social groups hold the same stakes in a particular past. Establishing a relationship to the state socialist past will be of less

importance to members of a sport team than to trade unionists (of course, same person can be a member of both such groups). Formation and promotion of a representation of the past depends much on whether a social group has a claim to make:

> "The persons who compose collectivities broadcast symbolic representations – characterizations – of ongoing social events, past, present, and future. They broadcast these representations as members of a social group. These group representations can be seen as 'claims' about the shape of social reality, its causes, and the responsibilities for action such causes imply" (Alexander 2004, 11).

Jeffrey Alexander calls the groups that raise claims about the meaning of social events the "carrier groups" (a reference to Max Weber). The carrier groups, he elaborates "have both ideal and material interests, they are situated in particular places in the social structure, and they have particular discursive talents for articulating their claims" (Alexander 2004, 11).

To date, the most complex and compelling account of diverse carrier groups with claims about the state socialist past has been presented by a French social scientist, Françoise Mayer. In her work, *Češi a jejich komunismus [Czechs and Their Communism]*, (Mayer 2009) she shows that among Czechs there are in fact a number of distinct "registers" of the past, which can be traced to particular social groups. She documents the quick shift of official memory from the concept of national "integration" to "decommunization". Other discourses of remembrance competing for national significance include the narrative of "betrayal" among the members of the former ruling Communist Party; while the "memory for identity" dominates among the supporters of the CP's post-socialist successor. The political prisoners of the Stalinist era tend to remember the past in terms of "resistance"; the later dissidents of the Normalization era (1969–1989) prefer its legalistic condemnation; and

the informers of the secret police need to endure a discourse of “agents”. Critical registers of memory can be also identified among intellectuals and historians. Mayer, however, chooses to leave out one register from her analysis. The blind spot of her treatise is in fact quite significant and consists of the vast and ever-growing archive of memories of state socialism in the media. She only mentions the latter in passing, with disdain for the presumed triviality of the products of the cultural industry: “The enthusiastic reception [of mass culture artifacts that represent the state socialist past] can probably be best explained by the fact that they offer a nonpolitical view of history and thus return the past to all those people ‘without a story’.” (Mayer 2009, 258)

Studying the cinematic memory of state socialism henceforth necessitates the understanding cinematography as a social activity of a particular group, to which I shall refer as the “filmmakers”. Literature, typically in cinema studies, tends to speak of films as of works created by directors. Despite undisputable influence of directors on the shape of a film, I prefer a more general term that hints at the collective activity (Becker 1982) of many social actors that is indispensable to make cinematography exist in society. The following pages should therefore examine filmmakers in their capacity of a carrier group of collective memory and determine the intra- as well as extra-group relationships, which put filmmakers into a specific position in the social structure and endow them to make particular claims about the state socialist past. The claims will be then discussed in subsequent chapters.

3.1 Field of cinematic production under state socialism

I will describe Czech cinematography in terms of the “field of cinematic production”. The idea is derivative of Pierre Bourdieu’s general theory of action, with a special focus on the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu 1993; Bourdieu 1996). The motivation behind choosing the concept of the field of cultural production as the organizing theoretical framework for understanding Czech state socialist and post-socialist

cinema is the advantage of the concept in attending to the creative and artistic substance of cultural artifacts without loosing the sight of the wider social and economic context that makes cultural production possible. The relevance of that context within the field itself varies depending on the degree of autonomy of the field.

Relative autonomy, nonetheless, emerges and sustains itself through practices of social actors within and against the encompassing field of power. Although literature has been traditionally the main object of interest for the sociologists of culture, I find it that cinema lends itself to sociological analysis even more readily. Its development into an industry means that its autonomy from the field of power has been more precarious than that of other media, apart from television. Sub-fields around the media such as video, literature, or painting rely on more individualistic notion of authorship and their comparatively lower production costs allow them to maintain a higher degree of autonomy. Not surprisingly, some people would see the cinema's industrial status as incompatible with its artistic ambition. Such claims, however, in effect and against their own purpose, reveal the social constitution of the arts.

Making sense of the Czech post-socialist cinema as field requires positioning the entire field of cultural production vis-à-vis the fields of power and economy. The crucial moment for Czech cinematographic industry was its transformation following the regime change in 1989. Relatively to the size of the country, then Czechoslovakia, its population, geopolitical significance and economic output, the industry had rather long tradition, considerable scale of production, and strong position in national culture as well as internationally. Czech cinematography was pioneered as early as the end of the 19th century, by a filmmaker Jan Kříženecký. Between 1898–1930, 388 feature films were made in what used to be the Czech Lands of the Austria-Hungarian Empire and later on Czechoslovakia. In the next 15 years, 363 films were made, which amounts to almost a double output when compared to the previous period. (Hudec and Novobilská 2000, 268) The average annual

production of 24 films during this time was attained despite the dramatic restrictions of war economy on filmmaking, meaning that releasing about 30 films a year was easily possible. The increasing capacity of the industry may be also taken as an indirect evidence of the importance ascribed to it by Czech audiences, as well as by the businessmen, government officials, and even to a limited extent by the German occupation authorities. However, the golden era not only for the industry, but also for the artistic value of Czech cinematography was yet to come.

The fact that the four decades of the rule of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia have been extremely conducive to cinematographic work deserves a reflection. From the post-1989 perspective of many Czechs, the claim that a branch of cultural production could flourish better under state socialism would certainly become a target for objections. It is certainly a correct observation that a good number of state socialist films, perhaps even the majority, were either blatantly propagandistic or at the very least conformist with respect to the ruling regime. Aesthetic standards that would not follow the officially sanctioned style of "socialist realism" were routinely compromised, even suppressed. In addition, the resources were often spent ineffectively and even massive spectatorship would in many cases fail to offset the costs of some of the most expensive features. The Report on the State of Czech Cinematography from 1993 sums up this retrospective contempt quite unequivocally:

> "Till then [the] Czech Republic produced some 30 to 35 full-length films a year, of which only few had higher artistic value. A good part of the output was tributary to the 'period of normalisation' and some of the films could have sought entry in the Guinness Book of Records since more copies of them were made than they had viewers." (*Report* 1993, 1)

Such a view surely is not without a foundation or a merit. Nonetheless, it lacks in nuance that would allow for more in-depth analysis of Czech(oslovak) state socialist cinematography as a field of cultural production. First of all, the view applies to the cinema of the time criteria that were not its own. The curtailing of creative liberties and imposition of political goals onto cinematographic production must be seen as integral part of the field. Sociologically speaking, it is difficult to imagine a pristine artistic spirit of a filmmaker that expands or contracts depending on the level of political oppression. Political capital, which may be conceptualized as a special variation of social capital, was constitutive of the field of cultural production under state socialism, along with the more autonomously distributed cultural capital. Not only aesthetic failures, but also the most notable artistic achievements must be attributed to all the forces that structure the field in its entirety. Political control over cultural production in state socialist countries had the effect of actually increasing the autonomy of the field and the worth of cultural capital. I am not aware of a study of Czech cinema that would take these aspects, which may seem paradoxical in retrospect, into account. However, slowly but surely, new analyses appear that explore this unexpected source of cultural creativity in the midst of politically regimented art. This type of scholarship mostly focuses on Russia, for reasons that need not be stated, however, I believe that its insights are, *mutatis mutandis*, applicable to Czechoslovak realities as well. The Soviet organization of cinematic production, after all, was a model for the Czech one and the basic legislative framework of the latter, the President's Decree No. 50 of 1945, gives the impression of being "more-or-less a translation of Lenin's Decree of 1918". (*Report* 1993:2)

The cold-war era ensured that Eastern Europe would attract, for better or worse, world-wide attention not only as the realm of one of the two opposing superpowers. The spectacular races in armament and conquest of outer space easily eclipse the more subtle, but even more so pervasive cultural formation of institutions and knowledge beyond the

narrow concerns of industrial-military complex. Chari and Verdery speak of the "knowledge effects of the Cold War" (Chari and Verdery 2009, 19) in the effort to show that the organization of the geopolitics and its representations had deeply impacted the ways in which social sciences and the humanities developed. What they have in mind may be illustrated by what they consider "the most important Cold War knowledge effect of all: decades of censorship (including self-censorship) of a Marxist intellectual tradition in U.S. social science". (Chari and Verdery 2009, 23–24) For the purposes of the current study, we may add another "knowledge effect of the Cold War" to their list and dub it the "Kundera Effect" in a recognition of Andrew Wachtel's iconoclastic analysis of the relevance of Eastern European literary intelligentsia. As he puts is:

> "Writers do not become as renowned as Kundera merely because they are talented (although a considerable amount of literary talent is undoubtedly required), but also because local and international conditions allow and encourage their talent to be widely recognized and appreciated. […] The phenomenon 'Milan Kundera' is, therefore, as much sociocultural as literary." (Wachtel 2006, 1)

Culture, too, functioned as an arena in which the two competing camps would flaunt their respective achievements. The "Kundera Effect" would thus guarantee that the cultural production in Eastern Europe during the Cold War would reach otherwise unavailable audiences and material support, both domestic and foreign. However, the stakes that the state socialist countries put onto international appreciation of their cultural production had an unintended, or at least an unwanted consequence in the necessity to relinquish much of the control that the authorities wielded over the creative process. George Faraday observed about the Soviet filmmaking that it ended with a sense of "latent dependency on the West", since

> "the authorities regarded any successes won by Soviet films at Western film festivals as welcome recognition of the country's artistic prowess, while those films released abroad that challenged Western stereotypes regarding Soviet ideological conformity served as useful evidence of the Party's benevolent treatment of artists." (Faraday 2000, 136)

Concerns such as these provided filmmakers with a considerable leverage in their struggle for autonomy. However, the main structural underpinning of the autonomy stemmed not from their inclusion, at the symbolic level, in the geopolitical competition of two political systems, but rather from the monetary independence that they enjoyed both in terms of a perhaps modest, but steady personal revenue and generous budgets, once a project was approved. Along with what Faraday terms "the cultural economy of shortage", i.e. a condition of permanently undersupplied provision of symbolic goods, these financial policies combined to create of a high sense of autonomy among filmmakers and other creative intellectuals:

> "The cultural economy of shortage and the soft budget constraints meant that filmmakers were relatively free from the financial concerns that dog their Western counterparts. By the same token, they were under less pressure to consider the likely public demand for their work." (Faraday 2000, 58)

I believe that the success of the so-called Czech and Slovak New Wave, among both the local audiences and international critics, needs to be understood in the terms of the "cultural economy of shortage" and the Kundera Effect. While it is often admitted that the international acclaim of the New Wave in the 1960s was not simply due to its aesthetic

achievements and that the geopolitical situation helped the cultural producers in the Soviet block in gaining attention from abroad, it may be obscured that the New Wave filmmakers also enjoyed favorable conditions for production and reception in Czechoslovakia as well. The Slovak-made tragicomedy *Obchod na korze [The Shop on Main Street]* (Ján Kadár, Elmar Klos, 1965) and Jiří Menzel's *Ostře sledované vlaky [Closely Watched Trains]* (Jiří Menzel, 1966) are often noted for winning the Oscar awards for the Best Foreign Language Film. In the 1960s Czechoslovak cinematography, there were several other films that were no less important the previous two for domestic audiences, and also gathered quite a few film festival prizes. Among them, Miloš Forman's bitter comedies *Lásky jedné plavovlásky [Loves of a Blond]* (Miloš Forman, 1965) and *Hoří, má panenko [The Firemen's Ball]* (Miloš Forman, 1967), Věra Chytilová's *Sedmikrásky [Daisies]* (Věra Chytilová, 1966), Ivan Passer's *Intimní osvětlení [Intimate Lighting]* (Ivan Passer, 1965), or Jaromil Jireš' *Žert [The Joke]* (Jaromil Jireš, 1969) need to be mentioned. These films are typically included in the canon of Czechoslovak cinema by film historians, but there were also others that betrayed the influence of the New Wave aesthetic, and although they may not had been so critically acclaimed, their popularity secured them significant positions in the local cinematic field. Examples of the latter, more audience-oriented trend include *Limonádový Joe aneb Koňská opera [Lemonade Joe or Horse Opera]* (Oldřich Lipský, 1964) or *Ecce homo Homolka* (Jaroslav Papoušek, 1969).

It is tempting to see the New Wave as a result of the cultivated young talents that graduated from the Film and TV School of The Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU) and rebelled against the dictates of "socialist realism", the aesthetic dogma of the Stalinist years. However, the very fact that film scholars refer to the new generation of filmmakers in the 1960s as belonging to a "wave" begs the questions of how could it be that so many "extraordinary" artists emerged in such a short span of time. And one must not forget that similar breakthrough was experienced by writers as well. It thus appears as more

plausible, although perhaps more difficult to admit for staunch critics of all the facets of state socialism, that the conditions of possibility in the field of cinematography were truly conducive to creation of works with high degree of cultural capital. In other words, the goal of the legislature that framed filmmaking at the time – "to eliminate permanently from such cultural and economic activity any disturbing outside interference and any harmful unprofessional and, with respect to the interests of the people and the State, unreliable influences and factors" (Decree No. 50, 1945) – was achieved. Once the harsh political oppression of the 1950s was relaxed, especially after the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's renunciation of the cult of personality in 1956, cinematography in Czechoslovakia could proceed creatively without paying much heed to "disturbing outside interferences".

In the state socialist systems, the heteronomous principle operating in the field of cultural production was the political authority, which could be expressed as political capital that could be accumulated by actors namely through ideological conformity. However, as a specific form of social capital, the political capital necessary for taking certain position in the field could be acquired by other means as well. Especially in a country as small as Czechoslovakia, social connectedness and systems of personal favors (Konopásek and Kusá 2006) often served for achievement of distinction through bypassing the relatively egalitarian distribution of material wealth. As a consequence, the cultural producers had significant means at their disposal to negotiate with what Faraday calls the "non-Weberian" bureaucracy:

> "Although the state claimed absolute authority to direct the creative output of cultural producers, the bureaucratic disciplinary mechanisms it used to do so proved to be surprisingly weak once the threat of terror was lifted following the Thaw. […] The rigor and regularity of the cultural bureaucracy was undermined by the 'non-Weberian' nature of the Soviet administrative structures in general – that is, the

tendency for decision making to depend more personal relationships than on the formal hierarchy of office." (Faraday 2000, 61)

Moreover, the political elite depended to an extent on the legitimacy that it sought to obtain in the symbolic realm. While international prestige was a significant benchmark, in countries where intelligentsia had traditionally important role and cultural capital served to offset economic and political insecurities, the internal support of and from the field of cultural production was imperative. The incompetence of many political leaders and local authorities in relevant policy-making would scarcely become a source of dissatisfaction. And if criticism was mounted on these grounds, it would usually come from the more technocratic fractions of the elite itself. However, cultural incompetence in the ranks of the leadership would often became a target of jokes that would slowly but surely undermined the legitimacy of the state-apparatus. The state socialist authorities, however, were not as ignorant as the jokes would have it, and made sure that cultural production had sufficient support to flourish:

"State policies designed to support the compliant writers whom the state explicitly needed did not exclusively benefit those who 'sold out.' They also allowed for the financial well-being (albeit at a lower level) and self-esteem of a significant number of writers and would-be writers who did not accept state controls. These policies truly made the post-World War II communist world a writer's paradise. They meant that, with the exception of the most notorious dissidents, the majority of even nonofficial writers were able to live and work as writers with the help of the state." (Wachtel 2006, 34)

Wachtel obviously exaggerates with the metaphor of a “paradise”, which certainly could not be applied in the years of Stalinist dictatorships, nor in the more politically relaxed condition, when writers and all other cultural producers still had to deal with censorship and other repressive policies, which included imprisonment. In the material sense, however, the system of organizing cultural producers in various kinds of unions of which they were formally employees assured a standard of living in ways hardly realizable in competitive market environment. Such type of support was not limited to literature. Moreover, the “cultural economy of shortage” that resulted from the general disciplinary measures recruited disproportionately large audiences for the arts. Thus, although far from idyllic, the positions in the field of cultural production as it has developed within state socialist countries did come with considerable benefits. And Wachtel makes a valid point when he asserts that the system worked for everyone who knew how to work inside of it, even if on the margins.

Whereas Wachtel and Faraday use a Bourdieuan framework to describe the general conditions of possibilities in the field of cultural production under state socialism, Alexei Yurchak utilizes linguistically-informed theories to account for the shift in the authoritative discourse from the constative dimension to its performative dimension. (Yurchak 2006, 75) In other words, he brings attention to the process by which the ever more rigid ideology, a canon which had lost its last prophet and interpreter with the death of Stalin, had gradually become “hypernormalized” language without a substantive message. The incessant repetition of prescribed forms created a paradoxical situation, in which “making sense” was substituted by mere performance of the knowledge of the said forms. Paradoxically, then, the forms themselves could become vehicles for quite creative and even subversive messages. A standard practice in academic writing would involve formulaic introductions and conclusions that would affirm the superiority of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, while the gist of the argument would follow its own logic. Such practices could be exploited by

anyone, filmmakers included. If we attempt to translate these observations to Bourdieuan terminology, it means that the conditions of possibility had changed fundamentally for cultural producers after the demise of the most oppressive period. The loss of meaning in the hypernormalized language granted the actors in the field of cultural production a strategy for position-taking that had further undermined the heteronomous principle of politics in the field of cultural production. Paying lip service to the ruling ideas served to further evaluate the cultural capital against the political capital, for the political authorities had no grounds on which they could interfere in the field as long as the performative dimension of enunciations remained within official bounds.

The case of the dissidents complicates the picture in the sense that they, just like the ruling politicians, attempted to challenge the orthodoxy of the cultural field, although they did so by claiming more autonomy for the field, not less. If we accept Yurchak's arguments as insights into the structure of the field, the orthodoxy appears an empowering moment that could obtain more autonomy for the work in the field. The positions of dissents themselves were more precarious. Gil Eyal emphasizes the role of the incessant struggle, which did not concern only particular positions, but sought a realignment of the entire field around a heteronomous principle of "pastoral power": "In the case of the dissidents, who were 'outside' the official sphere, this meant a struggle against the orthodoxy of the cultural field, which during the years of "normalization" was composed mostly of the reform communist intellectuals." (Eyal 2003, 69) Nonetheless, even if the population at large was not deeply concerned about the dissent, as participants in the cultural field, they had considerable influence in it to the extent that they were able to wield significant cultural capital. In cinematography, this was less apparent, as the cinematic apparatus lent itself more easily to effective supervision than writing did. For this reason, it can be considered as more directly expressive of the orthodoxy in the field of cultural production. It was not really possible to produce some sort of cinematographic samizdat, although video could in part assume such

function. Still, especially since the Czech cultural field has always been relatively small and, in consequence, little differentiated in its respective sub-fields, the influence of the dissent cannot be entirely discounted even for filmmaking.

If cinematographers chose to challenge the ruling regime in ways other than reasserting universalistic values of humanism, as was emblematic of the Czech New Wave, they would still go about it obliquely, by raising rather particular issues that could, nonetheless, be interpreted as policy problems. During the period of reform communism, that culminated in the Prague Spring of 1968, and in the wake of New Wave cinema, films were made that dealt with the white spots of official historiography and suggested implicitly the desirability of redress. For example, Jiří Menzel directed *Skřivánci na niti* [*Larks on the String]* (Jiří Menzel, 1969), a film that followed the tragicomedy genre of his previous, Oscar-winning *Ostře sledované vlaky [Closely Watched Trains]* (Jiří Menzel, 1966), in which he hinted at the politically-motivated repression of the 1950s. It must be noted, however, that the movie's characters of political prisoners and forced laborers undergo hardly a fraction of the suffering that the victims of the most brutal period of the regime had to endure in actuality. Similarly, the film by Jindřich Polák, *Nebeští jezdci [Riders in the Sky]*(Jindřich Polák, 1968), revivified the memory of the Czech and Slovak pilots who served in the RAF during the Second World War, but remained silent on the persecution that they failed prey to after the Communist Party took the power in 1948. In the late 1980s, once under the influence of the glasnost policy of the Soviet Union the filmmakers felt the loosening grasp of the censorship, the criticism took the form of what we could call the "social problems" cinema. Among films that deliberately displayed some of the public secrets of the state socialist regime one could count such dramas as *Proč?[Why?]* (Karel Smyczek, 1987) about a destructive rage of the football hooligans, or *Bony a klid [Big Money]* (Vít Olmer, 1988) depicting roughness of the black market gangs. It is perhaps worthwhile at this place to recall also the student film of Jan Svěrák, who was later to

become one of the most significant post-socialist directors, named *Ropáci [Oil Gobblers]* (Jan Svěrák, 1988). It was a fictitious documentary about a discovery of the new species that proliferates in ecologically destroyed habitats, which resonated with the emerging anxieties about the environmentally reckless development of industry under state socialist economic policies.

Overall, cinema of the late 1980s engaged itself more often in a piecemeal approach to the critique of the ruling system. No single movie would, however, raise general questions about its desirability. As genre modifications and a summary body of works, such films represented a more complex claim on the necessity of progressive changes in the society under the Communist Party government. At the same time, even at this level, they remained entrenched in the orthodoxy of the field of cultural production, which revolved around the positions occupied by reform communists. The cinema's attachment to the orthodoxy helps to explain the relative stability of its structure of positions after the transformations of the general conditions of possibility following the 1989 fall of the regime, especially in comparison to positions that the dissidents held predominantly in writing and journalism. Wachtel's remark about the nature of the writing in the circles of dissidents helps to explain why the unorthodox cultural producer were affected differently:

> "Even a semipublic enunciation of 'the truth' was a kind of scandal, and audiences felt vicariously brave just by reading it. This dynamic helps explain why so few former underground writers were able to flourish after the fall of communism. They wrote against a given system, and when that system disappeared they were exposed as having had nothing to say except their protest." (Wachtel 2006, 41)

3.2 Post-socialist field of cinematic production

The end of the Cold War ultimately brought about the gradual evanescence of the Kundera Effect from the post-socialist culture. Although the whole issue of the Cold War knowledge effects has not disappeared. For the Czech Republic, the path-dependencies have begged the question of the end of post-socialism. The integration of the country among the societies of free-market capitalism might be well accomplished, but the repeated resurgences of the memory of state socialism evidences that the state socialist past continues to intervene in the present and imposes itself as an indispensable object of knowledge. While many dissidents evacuated their positions in the cultural field for political posts, the majority of cultural producers, not only writers, but filmmakers as well, had to address the Wachtel's question: How to remain relevant after communism? Not surprisingly, the easiest way to remain relevant is to speak of the past, to reconstruct in representation the times, when the intellectuals were "on the road to class power".

The so-called Velvet Revolution in November 1989 that toppled the state socialist regime soon began to affect Czech cinematography in fundamental ways. In January 1990, filmmakers helped to restore to functioning the Union of Czech [formerly also Czechoslovak] Film and Television Artists (FITES), which was one of the crucial organizations that had represented filmmakers throughout the 1960s, until it was dismantled in 1970 for its vocal support of the reform communist tendency. Since its inception, FITES focused on the rehabilitation of filmmakers who were on the blacklist of the state socialist regime. The Union also called for the abolishment of the Central Directorate of Czechoslovak Film that used to be the main institution for the control, supervision, and censorship of the cinematographic industry during the Normalization era. The retrospective Report on the State of Czech Cinematography from 1993 remarked about the efforts of filmmakers: "At that time none of the artists and producers had any notion that by this they had set free an avalanche, which not only wiped off the Central Directorate, but also

completely damaged the functioning of the film industry." (*Report* 1993, 1) Later on, FITES has become a standard voluntary association with no political leverage. In the early 1990s, however, it turned out to be anachronistic pressure group, which lingered on a no longer sustainable notion of the political dimension of cinematography. In the meantime, the entire cultural field was undergoing fundamental transformation that consisted of setting new conditions of possibility, which replaced the relevance of political capital with economic capital as the heteronomous principle of the field.

Very quickly after 1989, the country began to steer quite straightforwardly towards establishing itself as a free-market economy with pluralistic political representation. It was a process that not only immediately discarded any reform-communist tendencies, but soon overwhelmed also the former dissidents, who on a large scale left the cultural field and occupied ever more dispersed positions in the field of power. For cinematography, the transition period to new arrangements proved to be destructive. New legislative framework for filmmaking was not enacted until the late 1993,[11] and despite the legal continuity[12] with the previous regime and formal validity of the aforementioned Presidential Decree of 1945, no norms were strictly asserted and the state itself fundamentally severed its obligations to financially support filmmakers. The deep drop in production followed instantly. On the reception side there was also a steep downturn, although the foreign imports kept the attendance of theaterrs high in numbers for several more years.

[11] Act No. 273 Coll. of 15th of October 1993 on Some Conditions of Production, Dissemination and Filing of Audio-Visual Works.

[12] The principle of legal continuity is one of the crucial aspects of the Czechoslovak transition from the state socialist to private-capitalist society. It has far-reaching implications namely for the issues of justice and treatment of the past in public and official memory. See (Mayer 2009).

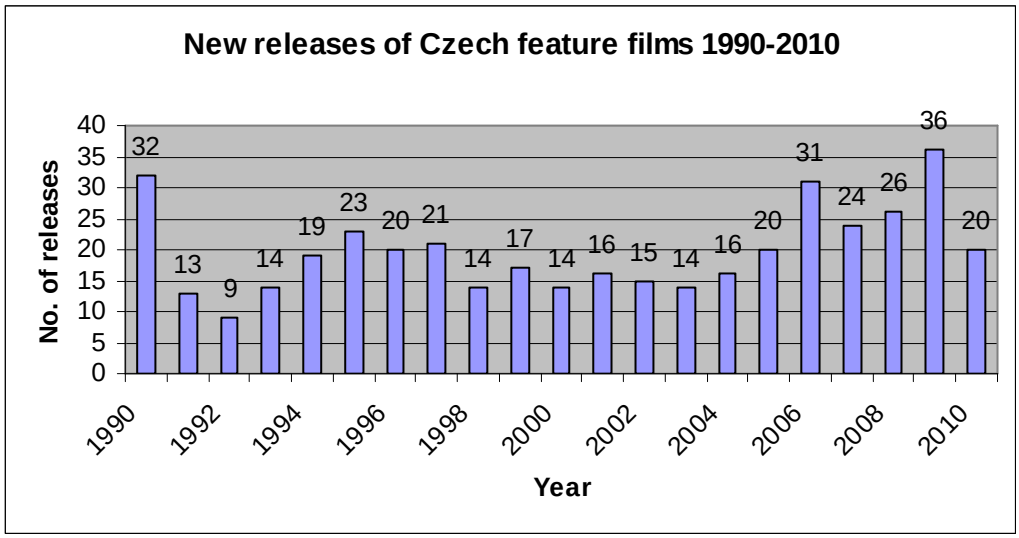

Chart 1 Source: *Report on the State of Czech Cinematography, 1993–2006; Czech Film Center http://filmcenter.cz/ [for 2006–2010]*

Basic data on the film market in the Czech Republic

Year	Shows	Admissions	Box office (CZK)	Average ticket price (CZK)
1989	540592	51452520	354404326	6,9
1990	494480	36361230	286212891	7,9
1991	362614	29897814	323186510	10,8
1992	353295	31239352	430162970	13,8
1993	301154	21898200	432904594	19,8
1994	248967	12870355	302851487	23,5
1995	187369	9253214	254206096	27,5
1996	169570	8846030	304004622	34,4
1997	168009	9815024	436960890	44,5
1998	163796	9246676	508896857	55
1999	181291	8370825	496062893	59,3
2000	197607	8718776	593019758	68
2001	252692	10363336	817681525	78,9
2002	306082	10692996	946005083	88,5
2003	341332	12139638	1084009955	89,3
2004	326646	12046139	1105869640	91,8
2005	318212	9478632	854485624	90,15
2006	345239	11508965	1043322604	90,65
2007	353801	12829513	1200004225	93,53
2008	386319	12897046	1220237088	94,61
2009	403198	12469365	1251065375	100,33
2010	399099	13536869	1497321770	110,61

Table 1 Source: *Unie filmových distributorů [Union of Film Distributors] Available at: http://www.ufd.cz/prehledy-statistiky*

By 1993, the industry that used to be completely nationalized became entirely privatized, with the only exception of the Czech Film Institute, which was reorganized and renamed to National Film Archives by the 1993 legislation. It remains the only institution in the film industry wholly funded by the state and its tasks are namely preservation, archiving and research of films. Its collections count among the largest and the oldest in the world. The Act No. 241/1992 Coll. also established a new organization, the State Fund of the Czech Republic to Assist and Promote Czech Cinematography that gets partial funding from the state. The purpose of the Fund was to provide financial assistance to production, distribution, or promotion of films that are deemed important to Czech cinematography. The state's contribution to the Fund has never reached the expected amounts and its main source of financing comes from the selling of rights for screening and broadcasting Czech films made before 1989. Some income flows also from the box offices, which are required to surcharge a minor amount to the tickets sold for the benefit of the Fund. In the cinematic field, then, the Fund functions as a limited counterweight to the market forces. The subsidies provided by the Fund make for a rather small portion of the films' budgets and thus its role is not decisive. To an extent, however, the attribution of support from the Fund has become accepted in the field as recognition of the cultural capital of the applicants and of their projects.

The indicators of the film industry since 1989 do reveal a slight clustering of trends in both production and reception that can be used for a heuristic periodization.[13] The period

[13] The sources of the data presented in the tables are not fully congruent. While the reports supplied by the theatres tend to be fairly accurate, the information about the production of feature films sometimes diverges even within a single source like the annual Report on the State of Czech Cinematography. This can be attributed mostly to the uncertainty regarding the criteria for counting a particular cinematic artifact as a feature film. Some statistics would include full-length animated films or documentary films disseminated through the main distributors. However, since this chapter does not treat the data statistically – which would be a dubious enterprise anyway, due to the relatively low numbers of films that we are dealing with – the incongruence hardly matters. The herein presented data should only be seen as illustrations that may perhaps suggest some trends and be of heuristical use, but they form no basis for statistical claims.

of 1990–1993 could be designated as the transition period during which the industry experienced some serious shocks. The scale of production and spectatorship was quickly dropping in comparison to the state socialist levels. Once the previously started projects were finished, the gains in political liberties proved to be insufficient for safeguarding or even boosting the creative work in Czech cinema. Filmmaking turned from a sphere of cultural policy into business almost instantly. The lack of enforced norms for audiovisual entrepreneurship and withdrawal of state funding crippled the autonomy of the field. It took several years for filmmakers to transform what Bourdieu calls the habitus – "an objective relationship between two objectives, [that] enables an intelligible and necessary relation to be established between practices and a situation" (Bourdieu 1984) – and learned to operate in the condition of market forces. A similar learning curve must had been followed also by the corporate and state personnel that held stakes in the cinematic field. The end of the period is marked by new legislation, but it also overlaps with the end of the first wave of privatization and the break-up of Czechoslovakia.

Once the production of films began to pick up and the attendance of movie theaters had somewhat stabilized, it may be justifiable to speak of the post-socialist cinema proper. During this time, the positions in the general cultural field had gradually regained firmer coordinates. This is to say that some individuals who were found too compromised by collaboration with the state socialist authorities were excluded from participation in the field. Most notably, this would affect Otakar Vávra, who remains acclaimed for some of the masterpieces of Czech cinema, such as *Kladivo na čarodějnice [The Witch Hunt]* (Otakar Vávra, 1969), but who, as a leftwing author, also willingly directed films that fully met the expectations of the Communist Party on the political films. Others, e.g. Věra Chytilová, simply have had difficulties in the new situation to work consistently with their previous trajectories and they were thus forced to occupy less central positions; she only made two

feature films in the 1990s compared to four in the previous decade.[14] On the other hand, especially the upcoming generation of filmmakers seized the opportunity to take up the vacant dominant positions. Jan Svěrák, for example, climbed high on the economic axis by being able to raise films budgets of considerable proportions and get mass attendance for his works; all of that without giving up on respected craftsmanship. Jan Hřebejk or David Ondříček followed along the same lines.

At the pole of the cinematic field governed by cultural capital, František A. Brabec managed to gain a significant position. The parts of the field saturated with economic capital were sometimes occupied by newcomers like Karel Janák (e.g. *Rafťáci [Rafters]* (Karel Janák, 2006)), who have sought commercial success, but at other times by previously more culturally minded (in the sense of "cultural capital") directors like Vít Olmer, whose mid-1990s films (e.g. *Playgirls* (Vít Olmer, 1995)) were purely commercialist as well. To the extent that the category of commercial films can be applied to the state socialist cinema, it is notable that the filmmakers who created movies with mass appeal during state socialism continued to do so without interruption also in the liberal market conditions. The prime example here is Jaroslav Soukoup, who even built up on the success of his pre-1989 blockbusters by producing their post-1989 sequels (cf. his *Discopříběh [Disco-Story]* (Jaroslav Soukup, 1987) and *Discopříběh 2 [Disco-Story 2]* (Jaroslav Soukup, 1991)). The agents holding positions on the culturally dominant pole of the field also, in their own way, exercised continuity; there, the autonomy of the field was so strong that the social transformation has mainly left it unaffected. Jan Švankmajer and his surrealist animated cinema exemplify the permanence of autonomous positions.

[14] The fact that a New Wave director, who claimed for her work to be critical of the state socialist establishment, had a chance to work with full capacity by the 1980s suggest an alignment with Gil Eyal's thesis on the "correction" of trajectories for the majority of people who were implicated with reform communism of the 1968. Her case may be illustrative, because after 1969, she had to wait for seven year till another of her movies came out. Afterwards, her production seems unhindered. The case of Jiří Menzel was very similar: after making a loyalist film *Kdo hledá zlaté dno? [Who Looks for Gold?]* (Jiří Menzel, 1974), he was able to resume full-fledged production in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. His absence in the cinematic field during the period of "post-socialist cinema" meant that he did not make a single full-length feature film between 1993 till 2006.

After the disruptions in the 1990s, the data on the first decade of the 21st century as well as the overall conditions in the social field suggest that cinema has gradually achieved stability. In terms of its capacity to produce films, Czech cinematography is by now almost back to pre-1989 levels. In this respect, it needs to be noted that the Czech Republic and namely, albeit not exclusively, the Barrandov Studios have become a sought after location for shooting foreign films and realization of co-productions. The ascension of the Czech Republic to European Union in 2004 symbolizes the integration of the market with the Western Europe and it made more resources available to the Czech film industry (for example, the above mentioned Barrandov Studios are, at present, a recipient of a grant from the European Social Fund). Since 1994, the Czech Republic has been a member in the Eurimages, the European Council's fund for stimulating co-productive works. Overall, the industry now has diversified financial basis that includes private investors. The current situation is therefore far more conducive to filmmaking than during the breakdown in the early 1990s, when a massive cinematographic apparatus fully dependent on the state for finances found itself suddenly stripped of those. Having more stakeholders, however, entails less autonomy and an extensive penetration of the field with heteronomous market forces.

An important moment for Czech post-socialist cinematography occurred in 2006 in the midst of debates about replacing the provisional and obsolete Act No. 241/1992 Coll. The purpose of the new law was a change in the financing the State Fund for the assistance to cinematography that would effectively more than triple the amount that gets distributed each year for the support of filmmaking and promotion and raise it from the range of typically 60–80 million crowns to well over 200 million. The President, Václav Klaus, however, decided to make use of his prerogative and vetoed the new legislation. As a proponent of the technocratic branch of the post-1989, he claimed that cinema is a

commercial enterprise and thus undeserving of public subsidies.[15] The veto roused a series of protests not only by filmmakers alone, but also by some distributors and various umbrella organizations in the cinema industry. The importance of the event did not lie in the creation of a longer-lasting social movement among cinematographers, but rather in the vocalization of their own perception of the cinema's role in Czech society.

The protest made it clear that filmmakers still see themselves as a part of national culture. Their stance was summed up in s brief declaration signed by the key film associations:

> "Czech cinema has, for a long time, represented Czech national culture and supported Czech national identity in Europe. It is a shame of our politicians that Czech film production remains as the sole cultural sphere without a direct support from the state that would be adequate to its significance." (*Osm filmových omylů*, 2006)

Insofar as the ambition of the film producers goes, the statement barely differs from the diction of the law that had overseen the period of state socialist cinema. It is a call for autonomy from market forces and a plea for the provision of financial means by the state. While many countries commonly subsidize their national cinematographies, often to offset the prevalence of Hollywood production, the post-socialist context makes the reliance on state policies for cinema noteworthy. The mechanisms of this support, however, differ in the sense that the income of the funds was expected to be set by the legislation and to remain independet of the state budget and the particular executive power. The grounds on which the cinematic producers justified this proposal for the increase of non-commercial resources

[15] "I disagree with treating the entrepreneurship in cinema industry, which is a standard branch of business, as a public asset that should be financed from public resources." Václav Klaus in a letter to the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies. (Prezident vetoval zákon, 2006)

stays, nonetheless, in line with the rhetoric of cinema as a bearer of national heritage and a cultural ambassador abroad. Hence also the type of protests that the filmmakers chose in response to the presidential veto: withdrawing films from festivals, including the shutting down of Czech representation in Cannes.

Among the stakeholders who sided with the President in the dispute over the funds for Czech cinema were the delegates of the television stations, including the Czech Television, a public service company modeled upon the British BBC status. The proposed legislation threatened to divert a fraction of their advertisement incomes into cinematography. Their arguments maintained that the TV broadcasters invest large amounts in film production as it were. Hames confirms, indeed, that the financial flow television companies had been irreplaceable resource for Czech cinema: "If the Barrandov studios had been responsible for 70% of production under Communism, then Czech Television can be seen to have been involved, as producer or co-producer, in a similar proportion under capitalism." (Hames 2000, 72–73) While such a strong influence of another medium on cinema further undermines the autonomy of the cinematic field, it must recognized that television stations also depend, in part, on the cinematographic production that supplies them with prime time entertainment. On the one hand, television as a medium had undeniable role in the great reduction in the number of moviegoers in the first half of 1990s. On the other hand, television broadcasting has increased the cinema's symbolic power. Thanks to the showing of films on TV, the filmic narratives reach, in fact, even larger audiences. An example of one of the early post-socialist comedies about the state socialist past illustrates this very clearly:

> "While only exceptionally does it happen that the most successful films are watch[ed] by more than 200,000 viewers in our cinemas, the same film may be watched by two, three or four million viewers at one time on television. An example

of this is *Díky za každé nové ráno* which 210,100 viewers saw in 15 months in cinemas, and 4 million viewers watched in the New Year's television showing." (*Report* 1995, 17)

In reviewing the overall transformation of the cinematic field after 1989, we must remark that as a space of possibles it has become more constrained, that is to say, less autonomous. Remarkably, some positions have barely shifted with the regime change. This would include especially those positions that were distributed at the extremities of cultural capital. Filmmakers as Jan Švankmajer continue to dominate the kind of cinema that earns the most appraisals from the critics. At the other pole, directors like Zdeněk Troška carry on with production of films that aim for popular appeal and employ formulaic methods. Such approach could be easily practiced under state socialism, because it did not interfere with political interests. If anything, such type of production has it easier under the market conditions. However, the positions with either low or high degree of political capital were shaken, because the market had replaced political ties as the main heteronomous principle in the organization of the field. Once dominant filmmakers were marginalized, and successful newcomers – Jan Hřebejk or Petr Zelenka – have often assumed the dominance. Yet along with the politically discredited directors, some of the formerly best-reputed filmmakers of the New Wave have lost their standing in the field. Their hardships evidence the best the demise of the Kundera Effect from Czech cinematography.

Finally, it appears that as the autonomy of the field has been weakened, new tensions develop over the dominant principle of the field:

"There is a certain state of schizophrenia governing the audiovisual sector. There are subjects not bothering about any cultural quality of contribution they only follow the market principles sometimes harvesting high profits. Next to them there are people

> in despair falling into debts […] to materialise their creative intentions. There is only a weak and ad hoc link between these two spheres in that the means earned in the commercial section flow into the cultural oriented neighbour. Commercial subjects are naturally protesting against a similar more systematic measure." (*Report* 2000, 3)

The analysis of the internal structure of cinematic field needs to be accompanied by a scrutiny of the position of the cinematic field itself with respect to other domains of cultural production and the encompassing field of power. Concerning the first issue, it is not surprising, given the objective limits of a small country, that František Daniel could point out that "yet another distinctive point about the Czech cinema concerns the close and clear relationship between film and other forms of art, especially the theatre." (Daniel 1983, 52) This is a not a new situation, but as we have seen in the case of television, the overlaps between cinema and other types of cultural production have increased. Previously, the close ties of filmmakers with writers and scenic artists actually served to valorize the cultural capital of Czech cinema, especially in comparison with the entertainment model of cinema of the Hollywood type. The protest of the filmmakers also made it clear that the notion of cinema as an art remains a part of their self-definition. The increase of interaction with other cultural forms and media after 1989, however, tends to devalorize cultural capital, as it is oriented mostly towards more commercial institutions, such as television and journalism.

3.3 Filmmakers as intellectuals: Czech national cinema

The perspective on the field of cinematic production would not be complete without a consideration of their symbolic position in the overall social field. The amount of prestige that filmmakers gain apart from their cultural or economic capital depends much on the relevance of the notion of "national cinema" in Czech society. We have observed previously that the cinema industry is inevitably international as soon as it gets involved in the global

system of festival evaluation of film works. Yet this does not necessarily undermine the status of cinematography as a national one. The effect may actually be reinforcing, to the extent that filmmakers are seen as representatives of national culture. As we noted previously, the Cold War mentality fed right into such national purpose for cinema. According to Philip Schlesinger, "contemporary analyses of 'national cinema' are entirely congruent with a well-established line of sociological thinking about the nation" (Schlesinger 2000, 29). Although the medium itself appeared after the rise of nationalisms in Central Europe, filmmakers can still – and in Czechoslovakia or the Czech Republic they arguably do – contribute to shared national imaginary, of which the representations of the state socialist past are part and parcel (Smith 2000).

Perhaps the most important change has to do with the shift of not only cinema, but the entire field of cultural production further towards the dominated sector of the field of power. This shift reflects the fundamental revision of the role of the strata of intelligentsia in Czech society. As a matter of fact, intelligentsia has been a major phenomenon in the entire Central and Eastern Europe since the late 19th century and it status has been challenged everywhere in the post-socialist world. Intelligentsia used to play a crucial role in the nation building in the countries that were latecomers in European modernization and as a surrogate representative of the nation, it created a rift between national and political bodies. The rift had carried over from monarchical states to socialist dictatorships.

Ladislav Holý noted that "the self-image of the Czechs, perpetually invoked in all possible contexts and marshalled to motivate practical action, is the image of a highly cultured and well-educated nation." (Holý 1993, 208) This self-image, he adds, stems from a national myth "of the nation lead and represented by intellectual figures." (Holý 1993, 210) The myth can be traced back to the so-called national revival in 19th century, when writers and journalists led the struggle against the Austrian empire which denied the then-forming Czech nation a political representation. Introduction of state socialism only

accentuated this myth. As Michael Kennedy remarked, “intellectuals, and their cultural products, could become even more consequential under communist rule than they were in precommunist times.” (Kennedy 2002, 58) Intellectuals were the guardians of counter-memory and in many instances also the leaders of struggle against the state socialist regime. And although they no longer represent the nation politically, it could be argued that they still represent it in their native field of culture. As intellectual figures, filmmakers also benefited from this “surplus value” of cultural capital and we able to take advantage of the previously discussed Kundera Effect.

All of these socio-cultural biases towards intellectual presence in the field of power began to disintegrate after 1989. Democratic regime closes the gap between the state and the nation as a cultural unit. Market has replaced the “cultural economy of shortage” with a cultural economy of abundance. The audiences are now empowered as consumers to make choices among cultural artifacts and intellectuals find it increasingly difficult to fill out the public space in the competition with entertainment. Roberts et al. (Roberts, Povall, and Tholen 2005) argue, on the basis of research conducted in some of the post-socialist countries, that the changes in the patterns of leisure consumption as well as emergence of a new occupational structure have undermined the very social footing of intelligentsia. The process, however, is rather slow and not straightforward. As I shall argue in more detail later, the cultural field, partially due to its degree of autonomy, operates through forms that display perhaps more longevity than political and economic institutions themselves. Another factor that must be taken into account has to do with the initially high value of cultural capital and its effortless convertibility into political capital in the aftermath of 1989. It is, therefore, essential to show not only the disintegration of the social conditions that used to sustain the power of intelligentsia, but also to recount the political defeat of intellectuals.

One of the most ambitious projects that attempts to give an account of the fate of intelligentsia and intellectuals in post-socialist politics is Michael D. Kennedy’s work on

"cultural formations of postcommunism". (Kennedy 2002) Kennedy criticizes the prevalent approaches in the studies of postcommunism. Transitology, according to him, presents a tacit affirmation of neoliberalism, and institutionalism "accept[s] more or less transition's metanarrative: that the problem is to figure out how capitalism and/or democracy can be built." (Kennedy 2002, 22). In both approaches, "culture and history are not recognized to be things that envelop the work of transition itself." (Kennedy 2002, 9) In order to offer a more complex picture, he adapts a notion of "cultural formations" from Raymond Williams. Williams is reputed for his arguments that culture makes an integral part of social and economic processes and, instead of being secondary to them, plays a constitutive role. (Williams 2005, 31–45)For Kennedy, cultural formations designate non-institutionalized movements and tendnecies that are nonetheless influential powers, namely in emergent postcommunist societies. In this perspective, the "transition" is not a fatal trajectory, but a type of culture that asserted itself against other formations. Kennedy suggests that the establishment of postcommunist societies was eventful and not devoid of alternatives.

The centrality of transition was not, as it could appear in retrospect, a matter of course. Nationalist movements were often a competing force and for the transition's success. In some places, most notably and tragically in the Balkans, nationalist mobilizations resulted in gruesome consequences when the war broke out. Elsewhere, nationalism has not resorted to such violent expressions and Czech and Slovak Republics parted in peace. For a success of transition culture, it was nonetheless necessary for it to be articulated within nationalism: "Transition culture and nationalism are mutually implicated, finally, because transition can be hegemonic only to the extent that it can be articulated as being in the interest of the nation." (Kennedy 2002, 58) On the occasion of the state socialism's collapse, other significant forces were also present in the competition for the control of political field. The former Communist Party remained a force to be reckoned with, as well as environmental movement. Last but not least, perhaps the most formidable

alternative to transition was mounted by intellectuals and former dissidents, who prioritized building of civil society against the pragmatic goals of transition. Despite the election for president of Václav Havel, the foremost representative of the intellectual strand, intellectuals' political ambitions were nonetheless thwarted by the electoral defeat of their party in 1992.

> "The emancipatory vision of civil society had a strong cultural and ethical theory underlying it, but it proved difficult to elaborate in institutional terms […] Those with another vision, with a simpler and congruous institutional theory, instead defined the terms of change." (Kennedy 2002, 92)

A phenomenon, common to all countries that emerged from state socialism in 1989, was the resurgence of nationalism. It, however, took on many different forms, depending largely on the distribution of resources and power relations prior to 1989. The framing of collective memory was a crucial factor in molding the new nationalisms. In some places, most notably and tragically in the Balkans, the mnemonic mobilization resulted in gruesome consequences when the war broke out. Elsewhere, nationalism has not resorted to such violent expressions. Czech and Slovak Republics parted in peace. But generally, each country undergoing profound change has to engage with its collective memory in order to allow for reinterpretation of the identity of its imaginary community.

The task of redefining the national identity begs above all the question of the access to public expressions of the past. In other words, who are the main actors of the public redefinition. In Czechoslovakia, and the Czech Republic respectively, the politics in the sense of policy making has been for long controlled by transition efforts that have encompassed the whole of the political spectrum regardless of its nuanced affiliations. By transition, I mean the exit from state socialism and creation of free market economy and multiparty political system.

It is therefore understandable to a certain extent that the most study devoted to the post-socialist social change has been carried out under the heading of transitology with the focus on economic development and policy making. However, the control of the state apparatus does not exhaust the subject of social change. It is arguably a myopic perspective for understanding the so-called totalitarian regimes and even more so for those that claim to be democratic. This becomes evident when we deal with the problematics of collective memory. Although collective memory may be, and in fact is used for political agenda, it is above all a constitutive element of the identities of social actors and it is itself shaped by narratives, meanings, texts, and archives that cannot be thought outside of the symbolic realm of culture. And indeed, in post-socialist culture, the power relations have been much more contested unlike in the domain of narrowly defined politics.

The cultural formation of transition, as Kennedy calls victorious post-socialist political tendency, has according to him promoted forgetting of the state socialist past. Although I do not disagree entirely with this attribution, I would like to suggest that we treat this cultural formation more subtly. While forgetting may be its strategic goal, tactically, remembering some aspects of the state socialism is also on its agenda. Specifically, the politicians of transition like to recall those traits of the past that were designated as criminal by the new legislative order, and by doing so, they obscure the difference between historian and judges. For this purpose, as many critics have observed, there is a tendency to draw a clear line between the guilty-parties and the victims.

The task of redefining the national identity through rewriting of history begs above all the question of who are the main actors of the public redefinition. In Czechoslovakia, and the Czech Republic respectively, this role is of immense importance to cultural producers – intellectuals, for whom the evoking of the state socialist past appears to be an attempt to maintain a possession of theirs that seems to have disappeared along with state socialism, namely, in Wachtel's words, the "relevance" of intellectuals in culture and politics. s.

In contrast to tactical use or abuse of memory, the cultural formation of intellectuals prefers much more extensive engagement with collective memory. Indeed, it is for the intellectuals and former dissidents that post-socialism remains still a much palpable condition. Gil Eyal, (Eyal 2004) among others, has associated this profound interrogation of the past with the will to the memory of trauma. In this perspective, commemoration is seen as a therapeutic approach to the past that should heal the society and foster its normalcy through a catharsis of confession. One reason why we should be interested in the cinema is the fact that in the Czech Republic at least it is the medium to which intellectuals have a privileged access. In comparison to other mass media such as television, radio broadcast, or press, where intellectuals have to compete with politicians and other actors for public expression, feature films are almost exclusively products of various intellectuals, more or less respected as such. The notion of national cinema underscores the prestige of the medium for national culture. The conflict between filmmakers and Václav Klaus about the system of financing of Czech cinematography only illustrates this, since the President Klaus' attempt to subject cinematography to more unrestricted market mechanisms can in indicate the permanence of the latent conflict between the politicians of transition and the intellectuals.

4 Post-socialist films about state socialism

4.1 Films about state socialism and their specific position in Czech cinematography

Previous section sketched out the contours of the field of cinematic production. The purpose of the inquiry was to get a basic idea of the struggles among filmmakers and between them and other cultural and political actors. For the sociological account of collective memory, this amounts to a description of the subject of cinematic remembering. Despite many institutional changes and the imposition of economic principles on the organization of cinematography, the diagnosis pointed out much fundamental continuity with the cinema of the state socialist era. The type of continuity that was conceptualized in Bourdieusian terms as hysteresis of the field, however, does not inform social action of filmmakers in immediately conscious ways. Rather, the continuity concerns the embodied methods of position-taking strategies that survive despite the changing conditions of possibility. In the current section, I will instead deal with conscious attempts of filmmakers to represent the state socialist past. This step should provide an insight into the place of remembrance in Czech post-socialist cinematography.

For the assessment of how Czech filmmakers express the remembering of state socialism (and commemorate it for their audiences), I initially chose the thematic approach and identified the historical feature films made after 1989 whose entire or substantial part of the plot takes place between the years 1948–1989. The research was limited by the theoretical considerations outlined in the first chapter and included only full-length feature films. As was argued above, this category of historical films reaches the widest audiences and therefore has the most important ramifications for collective and cultural memory on the national scale. Full-length feature films in general are produced in the dominant sectors of the cinematic field, as they require considerable amounts of cultural and economic

capital from their makers. In the restricted sector of the field, however, art films and video often receive higher cultural valuation. Similarly, animation also maintains criteria relatively autonomous from those of feature production. An exhaustive description of the cinematic remembrance of state socialism would thus require taking into account these categories of audiovisual production. Although such delimitation of research is of considerable extent, the selection of feature films should ensure that the socially most relevant representations of state socialism will be covered. Moreover, as will be shown on the effects of generic classification of the films, the criteria of restricted sector of the field also inevitably enter into the analysis.

Another limitation that I decided to apply pertains to the time frame of a more detailed scrutiny. The dissertation addresses the film production beginning only with the selected 1991 releases. The reasons for this decision are several. First, as was observed in the previous section, the feature films distributed in 1990 were on the whole a fulfillment of the production plans approved a year before. Only on rare occasions can a film be produced and distributed within the time of a single year; the entire process usually takes up to two, even three years. On this account, these films cannot really be designated as post-socialist. Second, the films hardly meet the criteria for a historical film: although the circumstances of their production meant that their content would essentially represent that which swiftly became the past in the period of rapid political change (and a few directors still managed to add post-1989 material into their works), the retrospective dimension of these films is too weak to establish their subject matter as “recognizably historical”, as the definition of historical film requires. Third, since the films had become obsolete before even appearing on screens, their long-term impact on collective memory or cinematic tradition (especially of historical films) can be safely assumed to be close to null. On the other hand, I have strived to include 2010 production into the analysis, although it had to

be done on a rolling basis. The effort proved worthwhile, as the most recent films seem to indicate a possible change of trends, which will be discussed below.

The corpus of films was compiled on the basis of study of the survey materials of film production in the Czech Republic (respectively, Czechoslovakia up to 1993). Since I needed to select films along a thematic line, I used primarily the synopses provided in *Filmový přehled [Film Overview]*, a monthly periodical published by National Film Archive for cinema distributors and interested public. Along with the list of films premiering in cinemas (divided into Czech and foreign films section), the publication also provides their basic production details as well as brief plot descriptions. Similar data can also be found in *Filmová ročenka [Film Yearbook]* (first published for the year 1992, also by the National Film Archive) and bilingual *České filmy / Czech Films* catalogues issued by the Audiovisual Producers' Association for films from 1991 onwards. I have also consulted Jan Čulík's comprehensive monograph *Jací jsme: Česká společnost v hraném filmu devadesátých a nultých let [What We Are Like: Czech Society in Feature Film of the 1990s and 2000s]* (Čulík 2007). Čulík's book is organized according to themes and in two sections (on Normalization and Stalinism), it discusses the same category of movies that are the object of the current study. Unfortunately, Čulík does little more than simply presenting extended plot synopses. The book has all the merits and deficiencies of the narrow thematic approach: it does a good job in cataloguing film production, but apart from aesthetic judgments and occasional considerations of metaphorical meanings, it only states "what the movies are about". Čulík's work had therefore negligible utility beyond the initial stage of compiling the film corpus, but at least it highlights the traditional belief that movies can be understood out of their context and merely on the basis of their content.

Eventually, I arrived at a corpus of 39 films that were, at least in substantial part, thematically relevant as full-length cinematic representations of the state socialist past. The

list is organized chronologically and includes a rough specification of the period that a film represents. Coming up with an objective assessment of the importance of the given theme – the state socialist past – in Czech cinematography proves to be difficult if this list is simply assessed against the summary number for all the films produced between 1991 and 2010. In other words, it is hard to say whether 39 films – or, for that matter, any number of similar range – constitute a significant fraction of the total of 382 releases (the total for 1991–2010 period). Likewise, defining and counting other thematic clusters on a comparable level of abstraction would be an especially cumbersome task. Still, it should be remarked that once other historical periods are added to the list (with the World War II being another major historical theme), historical films would comprise about one fifth or fourth of the entire production. At such scale, the proportion may be safely assumed to be indicative of undeniable importance, even numerical, of historical themes in Czech post-socialist cinematography.

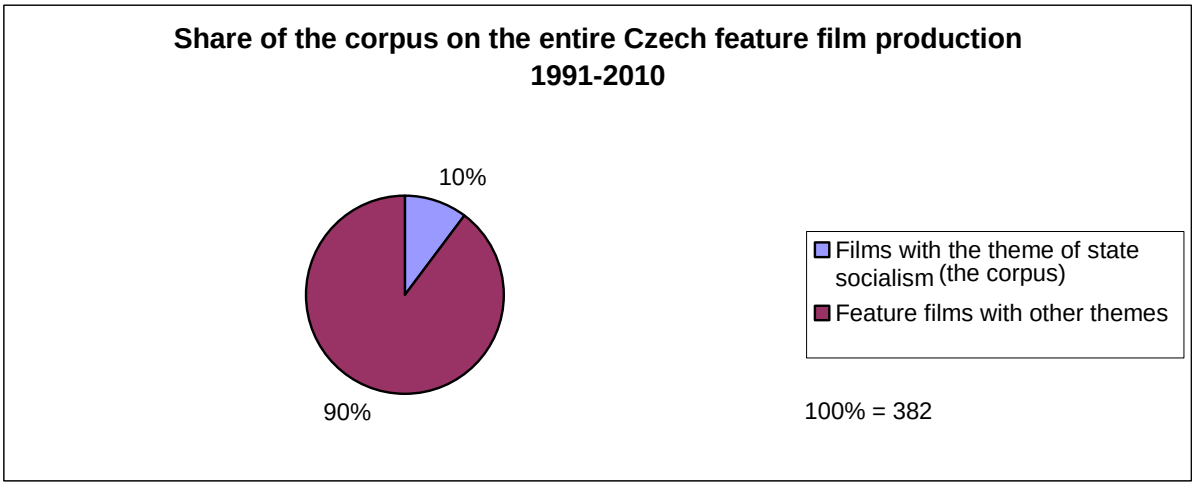

Chart 2
Source: *Report on the State of Czech Cinematography, 1993–2006; Czech Film Center [for 2006–2010]*
Available at: http://filmcenter.cz/

The films commemorative of state socialism make up 10,5% of feature production in the examined period. In order to evaluate the strength of their position in Czech cinematography, they must, however, be considered from the perspective of criteria other than mere production numbers. Thus, for an index of critical reception, we may observe that Czech Lion awards disproportionately favor state socialist themes. Of the 220 prizes (discounting those for foreign films with Czech co-production) awarded since 1993, the films included in the corpus have received 51 Czech Lions, i.e. recognizably more than is their share in the overall production output.

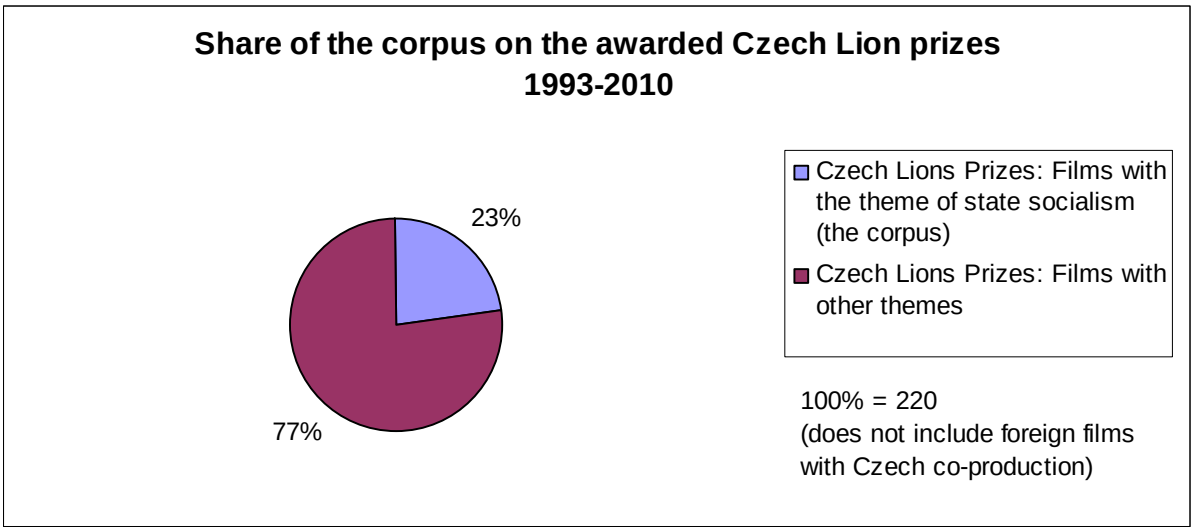

Chart 3
Source: *Nejúspěšnější filmy – statistika; Český lev [The most successful films – statistics; Czech Lion] Available at: http://www.kinobox.cz/ceskylev/statistiky?stat=nej_film*

Yet the criterion of popularity operationalized through admission numbers shows their cultural dominance even more pointedly. Report on the State of Czech cinematography published in 2008 provided admission statistics for the most successful films of the 1992–2007 period, with the result of 6 905 779 admissions out of the 17 594 908 total acquired by films about state socialism, i.e. those included in the corpus. As a

matter of fact, the highest admissions – 2 430 276 viewers – in the whole of Czech post-socialist cinematography were achieved by the film *Tankový prapor [Tank Battalion]* (Vít Olmer, 1991) about a young writer's experience of military service in the 1950s. Similarly unique was the only Oscar for Czech post-socialist cinema won by *Kolja [Kolya]* (Jan Svěrák, 1996). Although the numbers are not adjusted for the exact same time period, their significance in terms of percentages should be evident enough: 10,5% of produced films – those about the state socialist past – win 23,2% of (Czech Lion) awards and attract 39,2% of spectators (of newly released Czech movies). A movie with such theme is thus roughly two times more likely to win a prize and to have four times more viewers than a differently themed film. The exponential trend of the data also demonstrates that as a position-taking strategy, making these films works two times more efficiently for accumulating economic (popularity) rather than cultural (critical appreciation) capital, while maintaining a comparative advantage against other films in both respects. The importance of the corpus is therefore based on legitimacy both internal and external to the field of cinematic production.

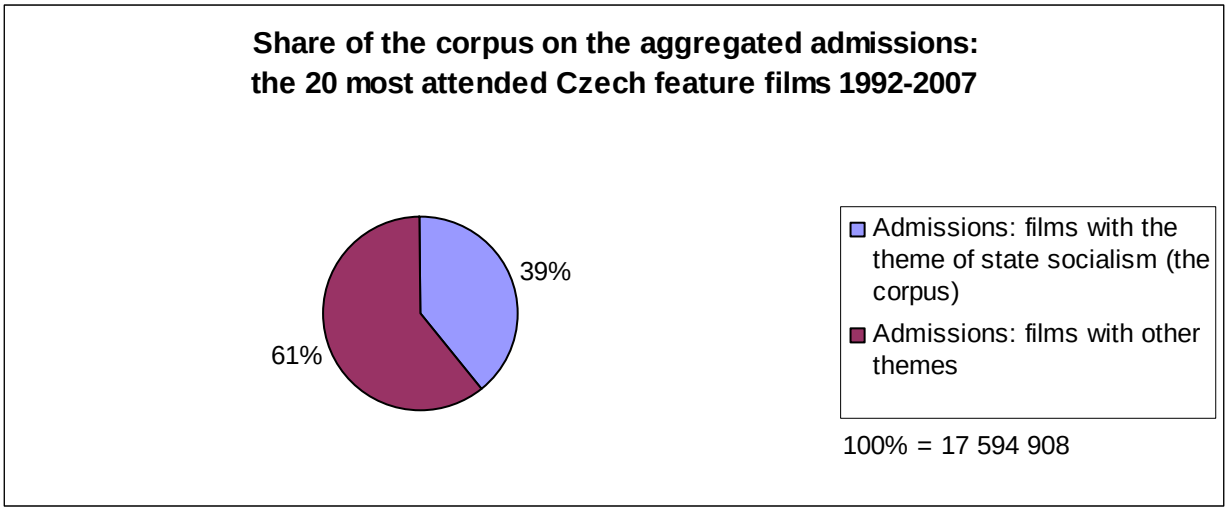

Chart 4
Source: *Report on the State of Czech Cinematography 2008*

In some cases, the inclusion of a film into the corpus may seem debatable, for instance if the plot reaches further into the past and only a part of the film represents the post-1948 period (e.g. *Tmavomodrý svět [Dark Blue World]* (Jan Svěrák, 2001)). Such occasions, however, are rare and the narrative emphasis on the state socialist past is always strong enough to justify their inclusion and consideration from the viewpoint of collective memory of state socialism that they project. Also, as was discussed above, the early years were affected by the relatively long process of filmmaking, with some releases of 1991 still relying on modified pre-1989 scripts (e.g. *Kouř [The Smoke]* (Tomáš Vorel, 1991)). Nonetheless, since the core of the corpus is unambiguous and my theses rely on the presupposition of cultural dominance rather than numerical strength, the few fuzzy cases should not affect arguments about the corpus as such. The following section will be an opportunity to discuss selected individual films in more detail. The films about the state socialist past seem to cluster alongside the production curve of the entire Czech cinematic industry and I will describe their prevailing characteristics in four corresponding and chronologically organized steps.

4.2 Re-setting the stage: 1991–1994

In 1991, as was discussed previously, there was a sharp decline in the number of new Czech films. Most of the 13 feature films that still appeared in movie theatres only made it there thanks to being in production during the previous year. By the mid-1990s, the industry had achieved higher output, at least temporarily, although it still could not reach pre-1989 levels. The thematic return to what was then the most recent past turned out to be quite a common practice among filmmakers. Fifteen out of forty films included in the corpus were made over the period 1991–1994.

By and large, the cinematic remembrance became a domain of upcoming or even debuting directors. The older generations, including the filmmakers associated with the New Wave, preferred other subjects. Nonetheless, if a director, who was an established filmmaker by the 1980s or earlier, made a film that deals with the previous political regime, the initial and convoluted phase of Czech post-socialist cinematography was the time when she or he was most likely to do so. The only notable exception to the tendency seems to be Vladimír Drha, a director who was active already by the early 1980s and only began to work on films representing the state socialist past in the first decade of the 21st century. In his case, the belated – in comparison with the rest of his cohort – attempts to commemorate the past on film seem to be linked to his efforts to return to feature production after long periods spent by work for television. The theme itself seems to be providing a certain kind of legitimacy for such aspirations.

To an extent this phenomenon could be explained simply by a reference to the age of these filmmakers, many of whom retired from feature production in the 1990s and migrated into creatively less demanding employment in television; some left audiovisual work altogether, others even passed away during the decade. However, this explanation is only applicable in some cases. Věra Chytilová, for example, remained active during the decade. Her 1992 film *Dědictví aneb Kurvahošigutntág [The Inheritance or Fuckoffguysgoodday]* (Věra Chytilová, 1992) enjoyed quite a popular response, although it had little to none traces of the New Wave aesthetics and less enthusiastic critical appreciation. As a commentary on the contemporary developments (rise of private capitalism and its manifestation in everyday life), it did mark a sort of continuity with some of her previous works.

Recourse to making more popular works was a viable strategy for many directors, although it equaled to a withdrawal from the dominant positions in the field (those

relatively strong on both economic and cultural capital). Others, however, could not simply maintain their position under the new conditions. Eva Zaoralová, an art director of Karlovy Vary International Film Festival, noted that some previously successful techniques no longer worked: "Some of those films [made in the early 1990s] suffered from the fact that those filmmakers, who were used to express themselves obliquely, that is, by means of allegories – I have in mind, for instance, Antonín Máša – once he could make a film freely, […] it ended up as a total failure" (Petr Vachler and Jan Stehlík, *Rozmarná léta českého filmu*, Czech Televison, 11. 1. 2011). A counterexample was the film *Vracenky* (Jan Schmidt, 1990) in which the director Jan Schmidt (born 1934) represented the early 1950s through a narrative of a little boy's childhood – the film maintained reasonably high artistic standards and yet remained easily accessible to popular public. A story told from the perspective of a child protagonist as a figure of memory has been reused several times since this film. Its pseudo-autobiographical mode of remembering mimics the workings of collective memory in primary social groups, namely family narratives; hence its presumable strength. On the other hand, the representations of a progressively disillusioned, yet sincere communist (the mother of the main character) and the allusions to show trials directed by the Communist Party against its own members bear marks of a reconciliatory stance on the communist ideas that was soon to disappear not only from the cinematic remembrance of state socialism, but from Czech public life altogether.

Even with the symptomatic absence of a wider input from the already accomplished filmmakers, the period 1991–1994 was clearly constitutive of the discourse of remembrance of state socialism, a part of which cinema had become. There was a relatively large variety of genres and thematic lines. One obvious cluster of films formed around plots taking place in the military of the 1950s. Three films were made on the topic: *Tichá bolest [Silent Pain]* (Martin Hollý, 1991), *Tankový prapor [Tank Battalion]* (Vít

Olmer, 1991), and *Černí baroni [The Black Barons]* (Zdeněk Sirový, 1992). Both *Tichá bolest* and *Černí baroni* addressed the very same topic of the so-called Auxiliary Technical Battalions – an army unit assigned to hard labor which, apart from young men physically unsuitable for regular military service, recruited from criminal convicts or politically disloyal individuals, including those with unfavorable class profile (sons of former industrialists or big landowners). Another obvious commonality, this time between *Černí baroni* and *Tankový prapor*, was that they were both based on books prohibited by the previous regime: the author of *Tankový prapor*, Josef Škvorecký, became one of the prominent Czech émigré writers and publishers; *Černí baroni*, written by Miloslav Švandrlík, were first published in 1969 and despite being hopelessly sold out, a re-edition was forbidden until 1989. A quality that all three films share is that they were exceptional works in terms of the involvement of older generation of directors (Hollý was born in 1931, Sirový in 1932, and Olmer in 1942). The generational aspect may help to understand why these filmmakers chose to make films about the 1950s, the first decade of the Communist Party rule. The cluster also distinctively contributes to the fact that in the first phase of post-socialist cinematography the 1950s would be represented as frequently as the period of Normalization (roughly 1968–1989); in later years, it is the 1960s or the two decades of Normalization that unmistakably preponderate.

Tichá bolest was a film without much success among either movie-goers or critics. The plot depicts a life of a boy, son of a man executed for political reason, who lives with his grandfather in the countryside and who, after graduating high school, has to serve in a unit of "black barons". The film has the dubious merit of establishing the stereotype of military officers – unwittingly hilarious and stupid, fanatic but essentially harmless characters. The plot constantly alternates scenes from the military with flashbacks to the protagonist's childhood and teenage years. Comedic and tragic moods faithfully follow

these alternations. This disharmony may be at the root of the film's lack of success; as a critic points out: "The creators thus ended up with two extremes within a single work. They confront comicality of military figures […] without emphasizing their dangerousness, and the metaphor of eternal search for truth and love, without relieving this level of superficiality" (Jarošová 1991, 118) On the other hand, *Tankový prapor* became the most attended Czech post-socialist film to date. The story focuses on Danny Smiřický, a character of a poetic dreamer who longs for a romantic – or sexual – connection with women, yet he is trapped in the absurdities of military service, where the rigid military slang accentuates grotesquely insipid political phraseology of the communist officers. Despite lacking legislation that would allow private financing of film production, the movie also has the primacy of being the first declaredly privately funded work. Olmer's subsequent projects proved that he would turn to a more economic form of cinematic production, generating more external acknowledgment while losing internal acknowledgment from many of his peers. *Black Barons* could be said to combine the qualities of the other two films. The central hero is Kefalín, former assistant film director, who spends his military service maneuvering between preposterously politicized officers and his gnarly friends and peers. Similarly to *Tankový prapor*, the film was a box-office success and its popularity can be witnessed in the adoption of some of the characters' verbal expression into Czech vernacular. As far as the representation of the past is considered, it decidedly reaffirmed the stereotype of inept army officers that would continue to resonate in many later depictions of army or police personnel. While filmmakers have insisted on this type of remembrance, some film critics and other intellectuals have slowly but surely began to feel irritated by such unthreatening and ironic types: "The film *Černí baroni* finds itself in the proximity of a dubious, yet successful at

the box-office, line of contemporary Czech comedy […] However, Sirový kept certain modesty and did not fall below the limits of taste" (Voráč 1992, 181).

Another identifiable cluster of films depends on aestheticized representation of the state socialist past. With feature films included in main distribution channels, pursuing a strategy of "pure" art or experimental approaches is a rare occurrence under conditions of limited economic resources. Yet the tradition of relatively autonomous cinema has to an extent carried over into the new structures of transition to private capitalism. Feature films that bear traces of artistic motivation cannot be equated with the restricted sphere of cinematic production, which takes place mostly by means of short films and video. Still, in mainstream cinema the following works may be said to rely more on the evaluation by other cinema producers instead of film-going public. Notably, their intermedial links lead to music rather than literature.

One film with experimental overlaps was *Žiletky [Blades]* (Zdeněk Týc, 1994). It was Zdeněk Týc's second work on a full-length film and betrayed some inspiration by the New Wave rough aesthetics, but aspired to surreal scenes. The story of a Prague intellectual who pursues his femme fatale alternates between the 1984 and 1994 time line. The 1980s are depicted in cold black and white, the contemporary scenes are in color. Several scenes take place in a military training camp. The main character is played by a non-professional actor, Filip Topol, a front-man of Psí vojáci band, which belonged to the pre-1989 underground subculture (the band also composed the soundtrack). Another collaboration between a filmmaker and a rock musician from the 1980s was a fictitious, musical documentary *Pražákům, těm je hej [The Pragers Are in Clover]* (Karel Smyczek & Michal Kocáb, 1991) about an actual band, *Pražský výběr*, whose personal, political, and musical affairs are followed from 1984 until 1989. To date, both films benefit from the fan

base of the bands, but did not enjoy much popular interest. Critical reception was also lukewarm, with some recognition granted to Týc's film.

The principal film in this cluster was made by Tomáš Vorel. His musical (according to the director, "rhythmical") film *Kouř [The Smoke]* (Tomáš Vorel, 1991) can be considered a model for films that aim to represent the state socialist past and seek internal appreciation of the field. Vorel's previous debuting feature *Pražská 5 [Prague 5]* (Tomáš Vorel, 1988), in which he transposed the style of five theatrical companies from Prague onto screen, gained much critical acclaim, as well as reasonable success among viewers. *Kouř* followed similar trajectory. Vorel wrote the screenplay already before 1989, but later modifications did not take much advantage of the possibility of free expression. The uniforms of workers' militia and perhaps also the notorious factory bulletin boards are among the few artifacts that make it possible for a viewer to recognize historical framing of the movie. Most of the content remains metaphorical – a young, newly employed engineer is given a task to clean up the "suffocating atmosphere". After he discovers that a solution already exists, but its designer was demoted to a boiler room technician due to schemes of a sneaky shopfloor manager, the situation eventually escalates into a revolt. In a symbolic move thenceforth unrepeated in Czech cinematic remembrance, the boiler room technician – a dissident figure – gets promoted into a managerial post, despite his own initial refusal to join the revolt, claiming that if the boss were removed "another asshole will take his place". Critical reception was more than welcoming: "With *The Smoke*, despite all its shortcomings, Vorel proved again his exceptionality. […] The fire of our filmmaking merely smolders. Tomáš Vorel is lighting a cigar, disappears in the sky and waits for Godot." (Ševčíková 1991, 58) Since its release, the film has attained somewhat of a cult status and the representations and stereotypes it contains should therefore be of interest as components of collective memory.

Besides Týc and Vorel, who can be considered upcoming directors accumulating primarily cultural capital, there were two other personalities who made their debuts towards the end of the 1980s and in the first post-socialist phase of Czech cinema confirmed their positions in the field. With her second feature film, *Corpus delicti* (Irena Pavlásková, 1991), Irena Pavlásková definitely became known as a director concerned with women's point of view and the coarse style of her movies sought appreciation from both audiences and critics. The story focuses on the fate of three couples and it remains unclear whether their painful lives owe to the political regimes or more simply express more universal difficulties in human relationships. For when, towards the end of the film, the Velvet Revolution comes, nothing really changes, even the secret police agent who murdered his wife earlier remains a respectable gentleman in the eyes of unknowing folk. The reception was less enthusiastic than with her debut, *Čas sluhů [Time of the Servants]* (Irena Pavlásková, 1989), but still acknowledging of her position, if not of her latest work at the time: "It seems that the author who proclaims her aversion for didactics and schematics had succumbed to them herself. […] A director with high ambitions and undeniable talent." (Prokopová 1992, 53)

Professionally a part of the same generation, Milan Šteindler' second feature film (the first one, *Vrať se do hrobu! [Ready for the Grave]* (Milan Šteindler, 1989) actually had a sociologist etnographer for the main character) scored high on popularity as well as on recognition from peers. The film, *Díky za každé nové ráno [Thanks for Every New Morning]* (Milan Šteindler, 1994), was advertised as a "bitter comedy" and as one of the concluding films of the "re-setting phase" of Czech cinema, it also presaged the next era of comedy. A renowned critic, Jaromír Blažejovský, evaluated the film in the best possible terms: "*Thanks for Every New Morning* deserves all the honors, which the film has received, and perhaps even a few more." (Blažejovský 1995, 48) The motion picture traces

the life of girl from her childhood years in late sixties to adulthood. Politics sporadically affects her everyday life, for example when she is prevented from getting into her chosen school, or when Soviet soldiers park a tank in the backyard of her apartment building, but her main concern remains to find herself a good husband and to make happy her closest relatives, especially her father of Ukrainian origins. His death also signals the end of the film. The reconciliatory, even revering depiction of Eastern Europe was a new element of collective remembrance – and rarely repeated one.

While for some younger directors the early post-1989 period presented an occasion to claim positions vacated by the ageing and previously accomplished generations, for others an attempt to reflect on the recent past seems to mark the end of their careers in feature filmmaking. For example, the film *Vekslák aneb stare zlaté časy [Money Changer or the Good Old Days]* (Jan Prokop, 1994) by Jan Prokop was a complete failure. The rationale for success had a sound logic: the film sought to build upon the triumph of 1980s films that were revealing the underside of life in state socialism – in this particular case the inspiration was Vít Olmer's *Bony a klid [Tuzex Coupons and Peace of Mind]* (Vít Olmer, 1988), a story about black marketing in Prague. Prokop's new take on the theme was designed for a commercial hit and although its cheap production could disregard the evaluations of critics, the lack of interest on the part of the audience happens to be fatal in such circumstances. Prokop has not directed a feature film since then. Similarly, Václav Křístek, a director active already in Normalization era, abandoned cinematic field and focused on television business soon after his first post-1989 film *Vyžilý Boudník* (Václav Křístek, 1991), which did not meet expectation of its viewers. The film follows lives of the two eponymous comedians since the 1970s until the Velvet Revolution of 1989. The protagonists have several opportunities to become professionally successful (e.g. continuing their popular TV show), but these aspirations to fame are thwarted either by a

ban from the authorities, or by Boudník's and Vyžilý's unwillingness to further compromise their beliefs.

In retrospect, the cinematic turmoil of the early 1990s, turned out to be most conducive to the efforts of debuting directors. Although the thematic return to the past did not offer the only way for position-taking, to several directors it provided an effective launch into feature filmmaking. From generational perspective, it is indeed surprising how many members of the upcoming and debuting cohorts chose to engage with cinematic remembrance. In fact, even Jan Svěrák, who became one of the most important personalities of Czech post-socialist cinema, set the story of his first – and Oscar nominated – feature film, *Obecná škola [The Elementary School]* (Jan Svěrák, 1991) in the past; since it deals with the interim democratic period of 1945–1948, however, it does not constitute a part of the corpus defined by state socialism.

Ondřej Trojan (born in 1959, but graduated in directing from FAMU only in 1990) had the idea for his first film, *Pějme píseň dohola [Let's All Sing Around]* (Ondřej Trojan, 1991) already before 1989. The production, however, started only in 1990 and the film was released in 1991. Although the assemblage of amusing as well as agitating stories from a summer camp of a socialist youth organization did not succeed in the box-office, a DVD release in 2006 made the film better known. Trojan has since been active mostly in film production, but his occasional – and successful – returns to directing expose a continuous interest in historical topics, thus confirming that the debut was not exceptional in this respect.

A debut that largely impressed both audiences and critics came from the director Filip Renč. The film *Requiem pro panenku [Requiem for a Maiden]* (Filip Renč, 1993), based on real events, loosely refers in its style to Miloš Forman famous *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Miloš Forman, 1975): in 1984, a sane teenage girl is sent to an asylum for

mentally handicapped patients and witnesses the brutal treatment of inmates, to which she becomes subject herself. With no possibility of convincing responsible authorities to move her elsewhere, she sets the asylum on fire, in which many inmates perish. In terms of the construction of the film's memorial aspect, unlike his numerous peers, Renč dispensed with stereotyped indexes of the past. Apart from a scene in which one of the sadistic nurses vituperates an inmate for misspelling the name "Lenin" on a bulletin board, there are very few objects and situations that would help to determine the period of the story. Hence, the film takes on more universal, metaphorical meanings. Audiences and critics welcomed Renč's opus with enthusiasm: "On the first try, Renč managed (unlike many other Czech debutants in recent years) to lucidly master the syuzhet of full-length feature film." (Blažejovský 1991, 59) By his debut, Renč accomplished to raise noteworthy cultural capital. He converted much of it into economic capital and during following years, he frequently worked on production of commercials and music videos. The concern with state socialism nonetheless influenced some of his later work as well.

Another strong directorial debut of this period belongs to Jan Hřebejk (who already worked as a screenwriter for the aforementioned Trojan's movie). *Šakalí léta [Big Beat]* (Jan Hřebejk, 1993) used the 1950s as a backdrop to a musical, in which a mysterious character, nicknamed Bejby, brings rock and roll music to a dull borough of Prague, to much dismay of the authorities. The politics of the era does not intervene in the story as such, yet the villains are clearly tied to the regime. Still, one of the main likeable characters is a "good cop"; the distinction between character's political and moral standing has since become a trademark of Hřebejk's approach to memory. As we shall see, Hřebejk has later become a leading artist in the domain of remembrance of the state socialist past. The film critique accorded him a favorable starting position: "Hřebejk and Jarchovský grasped a genre of such difficulty, which the musical is, with unexpected elegance and, despite all

the beginners' clumsiness, created a very original and agile film. The credit is especially due to Hřebejk, whose previous (albeit interesting) production did not quite warrant anticipation of a debut so unambiguously mastered." (Prokopová 1994, 46)

In its entirety, Czech post-socialist cinema of 1991–1994, regardless of its grave problems with the loss of autonomy from economic constraints, emerged as a period with a significant bias for films commemorating the then most recent past. However, the filmmakers of older generation, i.e. those who could be assumed to have the biggest stakes in expressing, under new conditions of no censorship, their memories of the bygone era, for the most part resigned from such efforts. On the contrary, for quite a few– although by no means all – members of the upcoming generation, the motif of state socialism became crucial in the process of position-taking in the field of cinematic production. It is as if the amounts of cultural capital gained in the past could also be accumulated by representing it.

In the situation when the resources for filmmaking became extremely scarce, the number of full-length feature films that represented the state socialist past was considerable and constituted significant part of the overall production. (The proportion would steadily diminish ever since.) In the endeavor, there was detectable a large variety of genres, styles, and individuals. All these indices suggest that filmmakers, as a social group, distinctively participated on a wider socio-political process of laying the foundations for remembrance of the demised regime. We must not overlook the fact that in approximately the same time-frame, the official memory was a matter of contested construction in the state apparatus. The specific form and content of officially sanctioned memory fed directly into constituent procedures of transitional justice. The cinematic expressions of collective memory on the part of filmmakers, therefore, have a discernible symbolic aspect. In this regard, the heightened preoccupation of filmmakers with remembrance cannot be simply seen as a conscious, calculating strategy for asserting their own claims for positions in the cinematic

field. The reason why putting the past on screen worked as successful strategy needs to be sought in the existence of a more encompassing discourse of remembrance, in which the filmmakers participated. The responsiveness of movie-goers as well as of critics stemmed from the same engagement with the negotiations over the meaning of the state socialist past.

4.3 The triumphs of cinematic memory: 1995–1999

By the mid-1960s, the production side of the film industry began to pick up a pace and although it was not able to reach pre-1989 levels. Stabilization of privatized Barrandov studios and increasing involvement of Czech Television along with some private producers in feature films production signaled that, as a whole, Czech cinematography managed to survive the transition to market capitalism. At the same time, on the distribution side, the levels of box-office admissions were reaching critical levels and sunk well below 20% of the pre-1989 figures, especially toward the end of the decade in the wake of general economic recession. However, the bleak situation in the distribution at the time only highlights the stunning success of cinematic remembrance of state socialism, which dominated in Czech cinemas namely with two films: *Kolja [Kolya]* (Jan Svěrák, 1996) and *Pelíšky [Cosy Dens]* (Jan Hřebejk, 1999). These two movies became almost synonymous with the representation of the state socialist past on screen.

As was previously noted, Jan Svěrák debuted strongly in feature filmmaking. As an emerging *auterist* figure, he was the first mainstream director who became his own producer. The film *Kolja* has only increased his reputation. In 1997, Svěrák received an Oscar – the US Academy Award – for the best foreign language film. This was in addition to numerous other prizes, including festival audience prizes as well as then existing Czech Critics Award. The film also dominated box-office and remains, with over 1.3 million

viewers (the figure presumably includes many screenings for school pupils), the second most successful film of Czech cinema of the past two decades. The story is set in the 1980s, when a violoncello player and mature bachelor Louka looses a job in the philharmonic orchestra because of an upsetting remark addressed to the authorities. In a dire financial situation, he agrees to a feigned marriage with a Russian woman, who uses her newly gained Czechoslovak passport to emigrate to Germany. She leaves behind her son, a little boy named Kolya, who ends up in Louka's unwilling care. As the two become increasingly bonded, Louka needs to shelter the boy and himself from the police and manipulative social care personnel, until the 1989 revolution unexpectedly solves their problems – and forces them to part ways.

As the awards evidence, the critical reception was extremely approving. "Kolja evades convulsive experimenting as well as dogmatic moralizing and offers a transparent mosaic surrounded by invisible moral axioms. The newest project of Svěrák has no competition, also because it tells a true story about the times, which all adults remember very well and which invites so many deliberate simplifications" (Foll 1996, 71). However, the success of the film inevitably violated the norms of the restricted part of the cinematic field, and thus some critics – notably those oriented solely on cultural capital – reproached *Kolja* for surrendering its narrative to popular – and international – tastes in a calculated drive to win an Oscar, admittedly one of the most spectacular film prizes.[16] "*Kolja* […] quite newly establishes in our cinema a tradition of entrepreneurial success. It is not a celebration of humble courage, but of self-excusing settling down. […] *Kolja* annoys one completely nonessential target group (but still!) by its all-encompassing servility and anxious fear of risk" (Coufalová 1997, 3).

[16] Jiří Menzel remarked: "A film that wins Oscar is not necessarily the best one. There are other film prizes awarded around the world and I would not give the preference to Oscars" Quoted in (Křivánková, 2001, 6). Obviously, as an Oscar winner himself, he is in the best position to demonstrate his symbolic capital through the expression of a noncommittal attitude to the award.

Jan Hřebejk's second feature film, *Pelíšky [Cosy Dens]* (Jan Hřebejk, 1999), was also a box-office blockbuster: with over 1 million spectators, it captured more than one tenth of movie-goers at the time when the admission rates of 8.3 million hit the lowest annual point of post-socialist cinema. Rather than having a clear story line, it consists of snapshots of everyday life in the times immediately preceding the 1968 occupation. The central focus is on one house shared by two families headed by patriarchal figures: one is an overzealous government supporting army officer (who nonetheless experiences a political epiphany and tries to commit suicide after the invasion) and the other a staunch anticommunist and traditionalist. In between the bickering of the two, their teenage offspring have little sympathy for the politics of their parents and instead live for romance and Western pop-culture. The occupation of Czechoslovakia changes the mood of the film and slows down the chain of comic situations. The film's formula worked perfectly with audiences, and although the film was not as efficient awards winner like *Kolja,* the majority of critics were approving of the film. Daily press reviews were plainly excited and professional critics were appreciative of the film's craftsmanship and adherence to the genre of "retro-comedy", which in their eyes excused the idyllic representation of daily life in state socialism: "If we accept *Pelíšky* as a retro and give up on 'profiling,' moralizing and comparing to reality, we can be satisfied. Dangerous? Perhaps… but very satisfying" (Prokopová 1999, 96) Frequently a part of television programming for seasonal prime-times, the influence of *Pelíšky* has spilled over into the 2000s and with members of younger generation, it is a narrative about the past that they probably know better than *Kolja*.

Yet another fairly successful comedy – although with some 330 thousand in admissions it fell short of the two major ones – was a debut by Petr Nikolaev, a former student of FAMU, who emigrated after graduation and only returned to Czechoslovakia in

the early 1990s. *Báječná léta pod psa [Wonderful Years That Sucked]* (Petr Nikolaev, 1997), based on a novel by Michal Viewegh, one of the best-selling, although critically less acclaimed, post-socialist writers, is a fictitious life-story recounted by a young man. Soon after he was born, the promising career of his father was intercepted by the 1968 events and the family had to move to countryside, where the father slowly learns to make compromises and rises up the corporate ladder again. However, caught at a visit of a dissident dramatist by the secret police, he is demoted again and has a nervous breakdown, from which only the 1989 revolution cures him. With this film, Nikolaev joined the ranks of directors who debuted strongly with a state socialist theme.

A dark comedy *Ceremoniář [Master of Ceremony]* (Jiří Verčák, 1996) deals with a story of a waiter, who is able to infiltrate the political and state security elites and thus paradoxically expose, at least temporarily, their inaptness. In the context of our discussion, it is only noteworthy as an example of how putting the past on screen can be challenged as proper remembrance: "As an unforgettable oversight, I must point out the imprecise grounding of the story. The confusion of costumes and props cannot be considered an artistic license" (Jiří Kříž 1996, 72).

The film *Zapomenuté světlo [Forgotten Light]* (Vladimír Michálek, 1996), unlike the previously discussed films, tells a story from everyday life but does so in a rather tragic mode. The story focuses on a priest who tries to organize a village community and to get his church repaired against the hindrances set up by hostile bureaucrats. His worldly affairs, which get him arrested at one point, however, are surmounted by his inability to save his platonic love from death. The latter also mars the eventual accomplishment of church affairs. "The absence of a tempting possibility to finish the story by a self-motivated fall of the dull socialist system […], in that I also see the contribution of *Zapomenuté světlo*, the conflict of a 'simple human fate' with the march of history enters

all the life stories" (Klusák 1997, 196) The film won several festival prizes and helped Michalek to become a much respected director.

Bumerang (Hynek Bočan, 1997) by Hynek Bočan was a result of his cooperation with Jan Stránský, a former political prisoner. The film is set in a forced labor camp in the late 1950s, when a former CP official becomes a prisoner himself in the wake of post-Stalinist purges. Despite the majority of inmates who want to take a revenge on him, the main protagonist, Svoboda, protects him in the belief that each human being deserves compassion. In an accident in the uranium mine, indirectly caused by the new uncalled-for protégé of Svoboda, the latter's best friend dies. The film however did not deliver its message to either film critics or audiences very convincingly – its bleak representation of the past was pro perceived as too simplistic. The narrative actually reveals that Svoboda was not a self-proclaimed enemy of the regime, but an innocent victim of an arbitrary judgment. Bočan actually had another film released the same year: *Zdivočelá země [A Country Gone Wild]* (Hynek Bočan, 1997) was a successful TV series mainly set in the late 1940s and cut into a feature length film. It was also a collaborative project with Stránský.

4.4 Lack of focus: 2000–2006

In 2001 Filip Renč released a new film after working in other branches of audiovisual industry for several years. The musical *Rebelové [Rebels]* (Filip Renč, 2001) uses the most popular songs and fashion of the 1960s to create a happy image of the era. Nonetheless, the narrative itself is less optimistic as it concerns three army deserters who are attempting to emigrate to the West. One of them ends up in prison at the same time when his lover leaves the country suddenly occupied by the Soviets. The film did very well

at box-office, but critical success could not possibly compare to Renč's debut. After this popular work, Renč has returned to feature filmmaking.

Another box-office hit was made by Hřebejk again. *Pupendo* (Jan Hřebejk, 2003) depicts the life of two families – one of fairly good life standard and one enduring hardships, because the father is a sculptor unwilling to compromise with the authorities. Eventually, even the latter has some luck, after the father's work earns respect in the West, which is something not even the authorities can ignore. The film continued in Hřebejk well-tried formula and although it did not achieve quite the same recognition as his previous *Pelíšky*, it did confirm the relevance of the model for representation of the state socialist past that dominated in the late 1990s.

Unlike Hřebejk, Nikolaev attempted to change the approach of his earlier film and in *Kousek nebe [A Little Piece of Heaven]* (Petr Nikolaev, 2005), he represented the past through a prism of a romance between prisoners. The film seems to be inspired by Menzel's vault film *Skřivánci na niti [Larks on a String]* (Jiří Menzel, 1969 [1990]) with a similar plot, but Nikolaev's film contains far more violent scenes that are juxtaposed with the romantic scenes. However, the new film did not resonate particularly well with either lay of critical audiences.

Two films from this period were included in the corpus only after some deliberation, because they only comply with the criterion of state socialist thematic in a rather small part. Both of them were made by Oscar-awarded directors. In 2001, Jan Svěrák released *Tmavomodrý svět [Dark Blue World]*, a film whose plot takes place mostly in Great Britain during the World War II and intertextually refers to the 1968 film *Nebeští jezdci [Riders in the Sky]* (Jindřich Polák, 1968) with the same topic. Svěrák, however, follows the story of his hero backwards – as memory flashbacks of an imprisoned and maltreated fighter pilot Sláma. As if Svěrák would want to defend himself

from making a too neat representation of the past in *Kolja*, the war life seems as more bearable than state socialism. Another film with similar approach is *Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále [I Served the King of England]* (Jiří Menzel, 2006). The film's hero, a waiter who became a millionaire, recounts his past after being released from a prison, where the People's Militia put him after the coup in 1948. In comparison to Svěrák's pathos, this Menzel's film is lighter and more reconciliatory. Since both films are historical and include the representations of the state socialist past as an important, meaning-making element, their consideration in the corpus should be warranted. They also show that since Bočan's *Bumerang*, the state socialist prisons have become a stable part of the cinematic collective memory.

Although the first half of 2000s were a domain of filmmakers who were returning to the subject (Hřebejk, Svěrák, Nikolaev, Renč), there were a few who chose to comment on the past for the first time in a feature film form. Notably, this was the case of older directors. But their bet on the subject did not work as well as it did for the debutants of the 1990s. Vladimír Drha's film *Početí mého mladšího bratra [The Conception of My Younger Brother]* (Vladimír Drha, 2000), similarly to *Vracenky*, showed the past as if from the perspective of a little boy. The work *Milenci a vrazi [Lovers and Murders]* (Viktor Polesný, 2004) was more of an adult topic showing the decadence of both workplace and romantic relationships. Political motifs are backgrounded, or hinted at only subtly. According to a critic, the film "quite against the spirit of its dark and after all quite frustrating syuzhet joins the ranks of guilt appeasing comedies about the 1960s, or the Normalization years" (Blažejovský 2004, 241) Neither of these films was very popular or acclaimed. Nonetheless, they are noteworthy as markers of the fact that the older generation of filmmakers would continue to bring its perspectives on the state socialist past

to cinemas – and with generally less success than the debutants and up-and-comers of the 1990s.

4.5 Time to get serious: 2007–2010

In a way, the lack of clearly discernible patterns in the previous period could be interpreted as a search for new modes of cinematic expression of post-socialist memory and challenge the hegemonic form of the late 1990s. Most recently such novel ways of representing the past seem to be appearing not as unique, idiosyncratic works, but instead in a cluster – in which the films share similar orientation toward audiences and critics. The clustering of historical films – or it absence, we could add – is, according to Rosenstone, itself a noteworthy:

> "Films which grapple with […] significant historical questions have been made all over the world, though they are not always in fashion everywhere. Instead, they tend to appear in clusters of two sorts: as either several works by a single director who seems haunted by the past […] or as several films in a single country in a brief period of time […]. Such clusters seem to appear when nations are undergoing some kind of cultural or political stress, change or upheaval" (Rosenstone 2003, 20).

The defining characteristics of the new mode of cinematic remembrance consist of using darker genres, more reflective and seemingly individualized styles. Thus, although the films appear as distinct, as position-taking strategies they employ similar techniques within the space of possibilities and with the symbolic means at their disposal. These general remarks should become clearer over the course of the films' descriptions. What

deserves a special attention is how the overall configuration of this most recent cluster stands in an almost contradictory aesthetic relationship to the dominant comedies of the 1990s. Also, it is impossible to ignore the fact that this change in cinematic representation of state socialism happened in conjunction with the 20th anniversary of 1989.

The new approach to cinematic remembrance was signaled in 2007 by the film *…a bude hůř [It Is Only Gonna Get Worse]* (Petr Nikolaev, 2007). It is already a third film by Nikolaev, which appears in our corpus. Along with Hřebejk, Nikolaev thus belongs among the most prolific proponents of putting the state socialist past on film. (Hřebejk actually released yet another movie tangential to the subject in 2009, *Kawasakiho růže [Kawasaki's Rose]* (Jan Hřebejk, 2009), which is not discussed here because it does not represent the past but rather the process of its current remembrance.) The low budget film is shot in black and white and portrays the underground youth subculture – as well as its repression. Many of the actors are amateurs, as if Nikolaev was inspired by the New Wave aesthetics. Significantly, the film's distribution circumvented mainstream channels and in this sense, it is indeed a rare occurrence in the corpus. It deliberately seeks internal valuation of the field, although the results turned out ambivalent: "Despite 'independent', 'alternative' masking we see an exemplar of contemporary film academism" (Horák 2007, 48) says one critic in disdain, whereas another appreciates the film in opposite terms, "the director cares more about the sincerity of expression rather than novelties of any kind" (Bernard 2007, 116).

After almost two decades, Irena Pavlásková also returned to the state socialist past as a topic for her film *Zemský ráj to na pohled [An Earthly Paradise for the Eyes]* (Irena Pavlásková, 2009). The story shows the origins of the post-1968 dissent from the perspective of a divorced woman and her two daughters, who become involved in it through their relationships with men. Curiously, this was the first film to focus on the

subject of the dissent in such a scope, yet the feminist perspective ensures that the film does not glorify it (the unwillingness to do so is characteristic of Czech cinematic memory in general). The film did appeal to some critics as the prizes won by it testify, but did not perform well enough at the box-office.

Even less successful was the film *Anglické jahody [English Strawberries]* (Jan Drha, 2008), also a second attempt to represent state socialism, in this case by Jan Drha. From the standpoint of collective memory, it is nonetheless interesting in that it centers the narrative on the 1968 events, which typically used to be marginalized as a topic of its own. Jan Němec, apart from Menzel the only director associated with the 1960s boom of Czech(oslovak) cinema who eventually try to represent the state socialist era, focused on the same topic with his 2009 film *Holka Ferrari Dino [The Ferrari Dino Girl]* (Jan Němec, 2009), in which he uses his own, authentic actuality footage framed by a staged plot of trying to smuggle them abroad in 1968. Němec has evolved into a director fully integrated with the restricted section of the field of cinematic production and does not seek out wide viewership.

The early years of the state socialist regime (more precisely, it "peoples' democracy" phase) were a topic of two films released in 2009. A debut film was made by Tomáš Mašín, *3 sezóny v pekle [3 Seasons in Hell]* (Tomáš Mašín, 2009). Mašín has been for a long time a well-established figure in audiovisual industry as a very successful director of commercials and his historical feature film debut boosted almost 80 mil. CZK budget. In the story, a young, left-wing poet lives through the 1948 coup and find himself actually in opposition to the regime. Only a former acquaintance, who joined the ranks of the post-1948 police, saves him from imprisonment. The center stage, however, is taken by a romantic plot of a destructive relationship of the poet to his femme fatale. The performance of the film was average in theatres. Regarding its dimension of remembrance,

a critic evaluates it up as mediocre as well: “As a debut, 3 Seasons in Hell is actually quite a good film, although it stays half-way between an effort to say something substantial about the people and their times […] and an attempt to reveal something new, all the same while carefully staying in the sphere of convention” (Bernard 2009, 221) Yet another film dealing with roughly similar period was *Klíček [The Little Key]* (Ján Novák, 2009) by a debuting director Ján Novák. The movie was an utter failure, presumably in part because of a time-travel narrative device, which does not seem appropriate to convincingly communicate collective memory. The film’s poor craftsmanship could not possibly be balanced out by its unambiguously negative representation of the 1950s prison in the eyes of the critics. In fact, they simply ignored the film, whose debacle is nonetheless noteworthy for a sociological perspective.

The film *Pouta [Walking Too Fast]* (Radim Špaček 2009) illustrates well some of the tendencies that we have already identified. As a feature debut, in this case by Radim Spacek, it confirms that the theme of the state socialist past can guarantee a receptive attitude of critics. *Pouta* won several Czech Lion awards and in cultural press it was also welcomed as a new way of representing the Normalization. However, in movie theatres it fared very poorly with less than 30 thousand viewers. After much press coverage in the wake of its cultural recognition, the distributor actually re-released it in hopes for a better total result. The story is about a secret police agent, who starts to use the power of his office to pursue his personal passion – a girlfriend of a man whom he is assigned to monitor. Although it is apparently the police regime itself that allows one man to get so uncontrollably intoxicated by power, “the biggest merit of Špaček’s poetics is the strength of allusion and the incompleteness of expression, nowhere do we see self-motivated communist attributes” (Jirousek 2010, 56).

Občanský průkaz [Identity Card] (Ondřej Trojan, 2010) was a second film by Ondřej Trojan to deal with the topic of teenagers growing up in the Normalization era. Its success in admissions (0,4 mil.) suggests that the appeal of comedies is still strong. At the same time, the increased presence of tragic and violent moments in the narrative testifies to the influence of critical environment, which is turning away from the 1990s formulas. Although Občanský průkaz contains many comic elements, to which many portrayals of the everyday life of teenagers tend, there are also harsh scenes of beatings by the police, a collapse of one of the character's father in the course of a questioning, and the death of one of the youngsters that is a result of his attempt to avoid military service. I will show below that this was not enough to satisfy all critics, who have clearly begun to advocate more serious genres in the representation of state socialism.

5 Genres of memory and memory of genres

For sociologists, literary categories were something that the discipline needs to avoid if it should count as a social science (Lepenies 1988). Here, I wish to show that one such category – the genre – is actually very conducive to sociological inquiry into culture. It enables the analyst to make basic assumptions about the meanings of cultural objects, without requiring an in-depth interpretation which is the domain of the humanities. The relevance of genres for sociology has a parsimonious justification: "Genres only exist in so far as a social group declares them and enforces the rules that constitute them" (Hodge and Kress 1998). Some sociologists work routinely with the concept of genre and use it to study cultural hierarchies (DiMaggio 1987; Peterson and Kern 1996; Bryson 1996). However, such usage treats genres as stable categories, which is a notion that the humanities have long abandoned (Fowler 1982; Frow 2006) I will therefore briefly describe a dynamic and social conception of genre that allows for a study of the social meaning of genres. Then I will proceed to the analysis of comedy and treat it as the major "memory genre" (Olick 1999) of Czech post-socialist cinematography.

5.1 The relevance of genre analysis to sociology of culture

For many centuries of the Western literary and theatre tradition, genres have functioned as authoritative guidelines and their stability made it seem as if genres were cognitive schemata of a Kantian type rather than classifications with history and social sustenance. Since the Renaissance, genres have begun to show more flexibility and creativity. The rise of modernity and the dominance of the novel have finally led to a move from purely prescriptive genre theory to descriptive and analytical approaches. The rapid development of cinematography since the early 20th century and the search for a filmic

language demonstrated how genres come to being in a new medium. (Altman 1999) However, as the part and parcel of the social distinction between high-brow and low-brow cultures, the prescriptive heritage of genre theory has not disappeared completely, as the complaints about Czech cinema's preference for comedies testify.

The importance of genre as a normative ideal of literary work became one of the targets of Derrida's critique of Western philosophy. His influential essay "The Law of Genre" (Derrida 1980) challenged the possibility of classifying texts in terms of their presupposed quality or a lack of thereof. Derrida defines genre in terms of authority: "As soon as the word 'genre' is sounded, as soon as it is heard, as soon as one attempts to conceive it, a limit is drawn. And when a limit is established, norms and interdictions are not far behind." (Derrida 1980, 56) The law demands, according to him, that genres do not mix and remain pure. However, the very law calls into existence a transgressive counter-law of contamination that is always-already present in genres. An attribute of a text that assigns it to a genre can never belong to genre itself. Ultimately, this dooms any serious attempt to create taxonomies of texts. Since the texts are members of a genre through "a participation without belonging" (Derrida 1980, 59), it is impossible to close off any taxonomy. Insofar as Derrida undermines the ahistorical notion of genres and their prescriptive authority, he does open new interpretative and analytical possibilities. However, in this essay as much as in other works, he does not historicize that which he had stripped of metaphysical properties. Similarly to previously discussed Hayden White, Derrida fails to see the importance of social practices in the constitution and maintenance of genres.

In the wake of post-structuralist attacks, the concept of genre had lost its standing in cultural criticism. In the article "History and Genre", Ralph Cohen, partially in response to

Derrida, attempts to restore the analytical potential of the concept of genre by endowing it with history, while affirming the untenable notion of a fixed category:

> "Each genre is composed of texts that accrue, the grouping is a process, not a determinate category. Genres are open categories. Each member alters the genre by adding, contradicting, or changing constituents, especially those of members most closely related to it. The process by which genres are established always involves the human need for distinction and interrelation." (Cohen 1986, 203)

Cohen addresses other objections against the usefulness of genre as an analytical tool. Thus, he counteracts the idea that texts within a designated genre cannot possibly share common characteristics by noting that grouping of texts with the same characteristics is not the only way through which genres are constituted. The other, no less important manner consists of the repositioning of genres themselves in their mutual relations. Finally, he attempts to amend the claim that the attributes of a class cannot be used to interpret its members. While the claim itself is correct, it misses the point of what genres really do: they are not ready-made interpretations, rather, they define the expectations and conventions for interpretations.

> "Classifications are empirical, not logical. They are historical assumptions constructed by authors, audiences, and critics in order to serve communicative and aesthetic purpose. Such groupings are always in terms of distinctions and interrelations, and they form a system of community of genres. The purposes they serve are social and aesthetic. Groupings arise at particular historical moments, and

> as they include more and more members, they are subject to repeated redefinitions or abandonment." (Cohen 1986, 210)

Cohen effectively offers a theory of genres that is profoundly sociological. Many other scholars of genre have also opened up a social perspective on genre as a way to avoid Scylla of essentialism and Charybdis of unbound textuality. Marxist theoreticians were among the first to argue that genres mediate between social and textual worlds. Mikhail Bakhtin, for example, maintained that "utterances and their types, that is, speech genres, are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language." (Bakhtin 1986, 65) For Fredric Jameson, genre is a social institution, but – unlike Cohen – for Jameson it is not always a process, but he also stresses its ideological, conservative role:

> "In its emergent, strong form a genre is essentially a socio-symbolic message, or in other terms, that form is immanently and intrinsically an ideology in its own right. When such forms are reappropriated and refashioned in quite different social and cultural contexts, this message persists and must be functionally reckoned into the new form. […] The ideology of the form itself, thus sedimented, persists into the later, more complex structure as a generic message which coexists – either as a contradiction or, on the other hand, as a mediatory or harmonizing mechanism – with elements from the later stage." (Jameson 1982, 140–141)

5.2 Comedy: The enigma of cinematic memory

5.2.1 Struggle over comedy

I have shown above the importance of films commemorating state socialism and argued that, for their sociological assessment, a relevant analysis should rely on the concept of genre as a socially sustained system of cultural classification. As a subgenre, historical films about the state socialist past share some recurring characteristics that provide the content of collective memory that Czech filmmakers communicate to their national audiences. To complete the analysis, the genres of the corpus now need to be examined not in terms of their thematics, but from the perspective of the mode of narration. I will limit this aspect of the analysis to one genre: the comedy. Films marketed as comedies seem to have a pivotal role in the corpus, since they become an object which epitomizes a conflict between audiences and critics. The conflicted position of comedy can be inferred from the fact that they obtain the highest external valuation in commercial success, but critics often make them a target of disavowal.

We have seen that since 1991, some 382 original feature films of local provenience have been released in the Czech Republic. About 40 of them have the state socialist past as their theme. As Petra Dominková notes (Dominková 2008, 218), the five most successful ones were all comedies. The comedy thus appears, at least when judging by popular taste, to be the most externally acknowledged genre mode for representing the state socialist past. The situation, however, differs markedly in the reception by some critics, as the following examples (from a social scientist, two film scholars, and a cultural journalist) testify:

> "In films of the 1990s, such as *Kolja*, *Pelíšky*, or *Rebelové*, the socialist regime is banalized or ridiculed. […] The enthusiastic reception of these films, similarly to

the novels of the author [Michal] Viewegh, can probably be best explained by the fact that they offer a nonpolitical view of history and thus return the past to all those people 'without a story'." (Mayer 2009, 258)

"Czech contemporary films have a tendency to overlook grave historical truths, and national psychological traumas are often trivialized. Film directors frequently downplay the theme of opportunistic loyalty to the communist regime. We are still waiting for a drama that will portray the past regime truthfully; at the moment, laughter seems to be the only "weapon" that Czech cinema has to offer for dealing with the past." (Dominková 2008, 242)

"Humourization of trauma and chronic moral complexes of Czech historical consciousness works as efficient collective therapy in Svěrák's and Hřebejk's films. [… The film] Pelíšky indirectly celebrates the beloved stale Czech nature in its encoded overcautious mediocricity, provincial hung up, and timid opportunism. The welcoming reaction of the public does not change anything about this fact, on the contrary, the public verifies it when it subconsciously identifies with this unflattering portrait of the nation." (Přádná,2004, 152 and 153)

"Where has greyness, hopelessness, desperation of the Normalization been lost [in the film *Občanský průkaz*]? One unrealistic scene with a queue for meat or a boyish loss of illusions cannot make present the cancer of society of the time. Pressing forward the humour line contributes to its even further removal away from the reality." (Rynda 2010, 8)

5.2.2 The genre enigma

The aforementioned examples of lamentation over the dominance of the comedy genre in the films which represent the state socialist past constitute what I call the "genre enigma" of cinematic memory. The social location, in which the enigma tends to arise, centers on the critics and filmmakers close to the most autonomous section of the field. Substantially, the enigma betrays an antiquated presupposition that cinema is able to, indeed that it should transparently reflect a historical reality. However, at the very best, the genre can only be evaluated in terms of its "truthfulness" not to reality, but to another genre, that of historiographical text. Hayden White (1978) demonstrated that historiographical narratives also take on genre forms and the choice of genre may actually cognitively precede historian's treatment of data. If the discourse of history assumes tragic mode, as it appears to be the case with Czech historiography of state socialism, then the comedy genre of films deviates from the scholastically sanctioned narrative. I deem the expectation of correspondence between historiographical and cinematic genres to be misplaced because, as I previously argued, cinematographers represent the past as memory and not as history. A transplantation of epistemogical criteria to a doxical enterprise, which the memory is, yields little benefit to sociology. Since the purpose of collective memory is to provide the basis for identity formation in the present, not to represent the past truthfully, it makes more sense, sociologically, to ask not if a genre is relevant to a particular topic, but how it can be relevant to a particular social group in its relation to the topic.

There is hardly anything "essential" about the (in)adequacy of comedy genre to representation of any event, real or imaginary. The suggested inadequacy results rather from the valuation that is assigned to the genre by field-specific criteria. Bourdieu pointed out that, historically, the inversion of genre hierarchies between peer judgment and

commercial success marks an increase of autonomy of French literary field (Bourdieu 1996, 114). If we are to understand the position-taking potential of bitter comedies in Czech cinema, we cannot simply accept the value assigned to it in the restricted economy of the most autonomous critics, film scholars, and filmmakers. We must reflect on the genre of comedy and its place in the hierarchy of genres relationally, as a site of contestation between autonomous and heteronomous principles of hierarchization of the cinematic field as a whole. In short, the genre has to be examined as a historical and social category. It is necessary, however, to first reflect on the problem of assigning films to particular genre – such as comedy.

5.2.3 Social contingencies of genre determination

I argued previously for a historical and social understanding of genre. Such concept, however, implies that cultural texts – in the broad sense of the term – cannot themselves warrant their belonging to a genre. Not only do the genres change, but the practice of genre classification itself becomes problematized and audiences, producers, as well as critics hold stakes in the process. In cinema studies, the practice of genre categorization often remains unquestioned and genre analysis takes for granted whatever genre labels a scholar assigns to films in his or her scrutiny. This approach can be relatively appropriate for a standardized cinematic production that is associated with Hollywood, but it falls short of recognizing genres as ubiquitous dimension of cultural communication Although the notion of "genre hybridity" has been employed to complicate genre analysis, the recognition of presence of multiple genres in a single cultural artifact still does not teach us about the historicity and social grounding of the genres in question.

In cinema, the first and foremost definition of genre to which a film belongs comes from the producers and filmmakers. Their understanding bears on the entire production,

from a screenplay to a finished, edited film. The role of cinematic producers functions as the key element in the pairing of films and genres (Neale 2000). The definition then carries over to distributors who may adjust it to their needs. Next, the critics can either reinforce or dilute the initial genre designation. Last but not least, the members of movie-going public interpret the viewing experience with their own definitions of genre.

Since categorization of artworks includes many actors – most importantly cultural producers, but also distributors and critical as well as lay publics – a prospective consensual agreement of all of them on genre classification is therefore always subject to contestation. Thus if a film intended by its creators as propaganda meets with ridicule of the audience, the latter then uses the rules of comedy for interpretation. There will, however, still be a difference depending on whether the audience is cognizant of the authorial intention or not; if not, then the communication was objectively a failure, because the producers and the consumers did not share enough common cultural knowledge.

A disagreement on part of the audience over a genre definition pertaining to our corpus may be illustrated by a case of the film *Klíček*. The example is drawn from a discussion board of the internet server Czecho-Slovak Film Database (www.csfd.cz), which similarly to the internationally renowned The Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com), allows its users to comment on individual films and to provide their own rating. While the distribution materials of *Klíček* refer to the film as "horror sci-fi", one of the disappointed viewers comments: "The ultimate expression of amateurism, which does not work as thriller, sci-fi, parody, and above all not as a reflection on the past [user: FosaCZ]." Another user concurs: "*Klíček* is not a thriller and especially not a horror [user: liborek_]." These spectators are obviously aware of the genre definition provided by the producers, but refuse to accept it. Yet one other user has quite a different complaint about the genre of the movie – according to him (presumably), the definition of the producers

holds valid, but he sees it as inappropriate with regard to the content: "If I go see a movie about political prisoners from the communist era, I usually do not think that I am going to see something which could be compared to a sci-fi horror combined with fantasy [user: Playman]."[17] While these accounts of a viewer's experience operate with a genre label offered by producers and thus testify to its importance, they also demonstrate the empowerment of the audience to contest, on various grounds, the definitions of the industry.

The social contingency of genre determination, however, is mitigated by the properties which cultural artifacts embody. This dimension of genre is precisely the one that articulates sociological and textual approaches to analysis of cultural products. The ability to recognize and assign genres is a learned skill and although genres cannot have an objective existence, they are intersubjective nonetheless. At any given time, the definition of genres can be expected to be approximately similar for all members of a given social group. This commonsensical understanding of genre informs many literary and film studies and is not completely unreasonable to the extent that it relies on the features of a text to justify its genre categorization. From such point of view, genre can be conceived of as the "'repertoire of elements' which mainly consists of characters, setting, iconography, narrative and style of a text" (Lacey 2000, 133) Therefore each cultural text, although it requires for genre determination a common stock of knowledge among producers as well as recipients, elicits its own categorization by means of its own constituent elements. In consequence, no particular social agent can fully control the genre and textual analysis thus feeds into sociological interest.

5.2.4 The fallacy of economic motivation in the explanation of comedy genre

[17] *Quotes are taken from the profile of Klíček* in Czecho-Slovak Film Databáze, available at <http://www.csfd.cz/film/262816-klicek/> [accessed on April 23, 2010].

As I indicated above, the prevalence of comedies – that is both the determination of films as comedies by genre and the subsequent complaints about their dominance – originates as a problem mainly among critics, especially those whose positions are in the vicinity of the restricted part of the cinematic field. The most common explanation for the bias of cinematic representations of state socialism towards comedy genre asserts that filmmakers fear less interest on the part of audience and the concomitant financial losses if they would choose a more serious mode for their narratives. This argument explains the enigma away. As an additional example, I provide a statement of a filmmaker that typifies the problematization of comedy as well as the blaming of heterogenous – financial – influences in cinematic production (Irena Hejdová is young a screenwriter, who has, over the short course of her career, already won several prizes):

> "[Journalist:] Alright, but why has no one shot a raw drama about the Normalization so far? It that a problem of a lack of courage on the part of screenwriters, producers, directors? Or the society does not want to see such a story yet?
>
> [IH:] It is not about screenwriters. I know of good screenplays written by my fellow students; at FAMU, such stories appear. I have a feeling that in Czech cinematography, the lighter or more relaxing genres are cultivated due to the pressure from the producers. In the Czech Republic, there are about five production companies that are willing to take risks. Everyone else goes for a sure shot. Every producer tells you something along these lines: 'People would not have a laugh with this one. We won't make it.'" (Nezbeda and Gregor 2008, 42)

For the sake of brevity, I shall call this and similar explanation the "box-office thesis". The thesis assumes that 1) comedy genre obtains larger audiences; 2) filmmakers (producers) are purely rational economic actors. The first assumption may be regarded as generally valid, although when coupled with the second assumption and taken *ad absurdum*, it would predict that cinematographers produce nothing but comedies. This is obviously not true and the pitfalls of such logic highlight the utility of Bourdieusian theory to sociology of culture, because it emphasizes that cultural actors do not orient their action solely with regards to economic capital. On the contrary, much of their efforts seek to establish a degree of autonomy from economic principles and to gain cultural capital instead. Feature filmmaking undoubtedly constitutes a part of cinematic field that comes under more direct economic influence, yet still the genres of feature films remain manifold.

The "box-office thesis" not only fails to account for the empirical variety of genres in general, it also offers no explication for the thematic concern with the state socialist past in our specific case. Again, this is due to inapplicability of economic rationale for action of cultural producers. I have demonstrated earlier that the topic of state socialism acquires disproportionate share of overall admissions. However, this observation only tells us that the theme is more likely to bring more movie-goers into theaters; it does not automatically follow that the difference makes the relevant films more profitable.

Consider the following example. With artworks, in their capacity of unique artifacts, it is problematic to compare them. Nevertheless, for heuristic and illustrative purposes, I will still attempt to do so on the example of two Jan Svěrák's movies: *Kolja* and *Vratné lahve [Empties]* (Jan Svěrák, 2007). The director is the same, so is the screenwriter; the genre and casting are quite alike, and admissions were also at similar levels. *Mutatis mutandis*, these are two films that can be regarded as equal for our purposes. Except, of course, one difference that stands out: the time setting of the story:

While the plot of *Kolja* takes place in the state socialist past, in *Vratné lahve* it is the present instead. This ostensible detail has important ramifications. The budget of *Kolja* was reportedly 28 million CZK in 1996, when it was released. When adjusted for inflation, the amount would be approximately 44.5 million CZK against the 34 million CZK budget of *Vratné lahve*, i.e. some 30% more, in 2007 when the latter film was released. With these two films, the major cause of the 10.5 million CZK discrepancy cannot but be attributed to the historical setting of *Kolja* and the corresponding higher costs of props. If the budgets are measured against the admissions, *Kolja* invested 33 CZK into each spectator (1 346 669 total admissions), whereas *Vratné lahve* only 28 CZK (1 222 890 total admissions). As a business enterprise, *Vratné lahve* was a film which was 18% more efficient in attracting Czech audiences. Creating *Kolja* could therefore be regarded as economically irrational on Svěrák's part.

The bottom-line is that historical feature films are quite simply more expensive to produce (unless they are treated experimentally), and in the conditions of Czech cinema industry they do not go above a threshold of admissions that would offset the higher costs. If the "box-office thesis" cannot satisfactorily explain the genre preferences of filmmakers, it is even weaker in accounting for the preference of historical theme that is the state socialist past. The box-office potential of comedies cannot be completely discounted as a motivation of filmmakers, namely of those who seek external acknowledgement in terms of mass audiences. However, the specific case of Czech cinematic memory of state socialism requires a more complex explanation. The key to understanding of the success of comedy genre in this particular case lies, I believe, in precisely that blind spot of the "box-office thesis", which is the space of other possible gains of filmmakers. The specificity of the corpus is not determined solely by its likelihood of attracting more viewers than other films, but also by a propensity to win cinematic prizes. The former effect could be

interpreted as raising filmmaker's symbolic capital – general prestige and recognition – and the latter as increasing cultural capital – recognition from the peers. These two capitals are also coveted by filmmakers and can balance out the economic inefficiencies of historical film in Czech post-socialist cinema.

5.2.5 Comedy as a social activity

General qualities of comedy genre must form the point of departure for a diagnosis of its role in specific national circumstances. Andrew Stott defines comedy in fortuitously sociological terms:

> "Comedy is certainly a social activity first and foremost, conceived of always with some kind of audience in mind, and everywhere produced from the matter of dominant cultural assumptions and commonplaces. The question of how or why things come to be funny is similarly determined by culture. Even though comedy often seems to be suspending, inverting, or abandoning dominant norms, these inversions are produced in relation to the cultural orthodoxies from which they must always begin." (Stott 2005, 7)

Such understanding fits into the general knowledge of genres explicated earlier. If comedy is indeed a speech act, a socially symbolic act, i.e. "social activity" carried out by symbolic means, what is its peculiar pragmatics? Comedy uses humour for "suspending, inverting, or abandoning dominant norms", but even in its most satirical exemplars it does not oppose them directly nor challenges them with alternatives. Even the "carnivalesque" variation of comedy (Bakhtin 1984), despite its radical inversion of social hierarchies, cannot, or so I believe, build a tenable political opposition in itself. Thus, Stott admits, in

commenting on comedy's political dimension: "Parody and satire are good for demolishing dogma but not for constructively offering alternatives to it. […] Perhaps it is true that comedy has nothing to offer politics when the project requires something more than simple derision" (Stott 2005, 126)

One could convincingly argue that by creating a space relieved of dominance, comedy at least provides a platform on which a critical stance can begin to take shape. The merit of such view is that it finds a location of political claims in a seemingly idle low- or mid-brow entertainment of popular culture. However, unless we want to succumb to an essentialist conception of the comedy genre, a qualification of this political perspective is necessary; else, comedy would act as a mechanical trigger of political meanings. A place for skepticism – which the lamenting critics apparently express – must be maintained in the theory of comedy. Politically conservative effects of comedy were summed up, for example, by Arthur Schopenhauer:

> "It is true that the comedy, like every representation of human life, without exception, must bring before our eyes suffering and adversity; but it presents it to us as passing, resolving itself into joy, in general mingled with success, victory, and hopes, which in the end preponderate. […] Thus it declares, in the result, that life as a whole is thoroughly good, and especially is always amusing." (Schopenhauer 1964, 371)

Since there are conflicting assumptions about the social function of comedy, deducing its specific role in Czech cinema requires further consideration of the genre's national variations and histories. The purpose of this exposition is to offer a viable understanding of how comedy genre can furnish filmmakers with additional cultural and

symbolic capital. The general qualities of comedy are too abstract and ambiguous to allow achievement of such understanding. Therefore, knowledge of the structural possibilities of comedy needs to be coupled with a recognition of its working in a particular social configuration. As Jerry Palmer argues, in the account of social function of humour, the goal

> "is not to make a claim for a total explanation of humour, it is to ascribe a place for humour in a particular process, by bringing it into relationship with another piece of the social structure […]; such a description says something meaningful about humour by locating it in a place, showing how it is a part of some wider process and makes a particular contribution to it." (Palmer 1994, 67)

In our case, I argue that the other "piece of the social structure" that operates in conjunction with comedy is, in the Czech case, a nationalist tradition rooted in culture, rather than in state politics.

5.2.6 Comedy as a semi-public protocol of Czech national imaginary

It seems to me as not a mere anecdotal accident that Czech national anthem originated in a comedic theatrical play, as one of its musical numbers. The farcical play *Fidlovačka aneb žádný hněv a žádná rvačka [Fidlovačka, or No Anger and No Brawl]* (1834) by Josef Kajetán Tyl, a prominent author of nascent Czech nationalism, was also made into one of the first Czech sound films, *Fidlovačka* (Svatopluk Innemann, 1930). The thesis that I advance here states that the genre of comedy, namely in its kind of bitter comedy and its related specimen, has a specific cultural and politically charged position in comparison to other genres. The explanation for the specific position of the genre needs to

be sought beyond cinema in the wider context of the genealogy of Czech nationalism and in the mythical qualities of the nation, such as its reputed good sense of humour.

In accordance with the theory of Benedict Anderson, who defines nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign", (Anderson 1991, 7) the Czech nation can be conceived of as a community that was created by the means of imagination of linguistic exclusivity and political tradition that has been continually sustained by nationalist discourse since about the first half of the 19th century. For the rest of the 19th century and for much of the 20th century, Czech nationalism was forced to develop under conditions of confrontation with the ruling political regimes. In this respect, Czech nationalism is not too different from colonial nationalistic movements, although it scarcely had to face a comparable repression. The discord between a national idea of sovereignty and the actual political regimes that is not played out in complete subjugation of the former is typical of the Central and Eastern Europe. In this region, the particular nationalism had to struggle with Austrian, later on Austrian-Hungarian, and Russian, later on Soviet, empires. In these inland domains the absence of clear boundaries between an imperial metropolis and colonial periphery did not allow for national demarcation strictly by the means of political geography. Hence, languages became the main instruments of demarcation in these nationalist movements. Unlike elsewhere, the Central and Eastern European empires allowed for what Anderson calls the "pilgrimages" of elites back and forth between the center and the periphery. Czech nationalism, in particular, had much to loose economically should it risk an open confrontation, e.g. in a form of uprising, for securing its sovereignty. For the lack of properly national political field, the task of representing the nation fell to the elites of intelligentsia, intellectuals and cultural producers in general.

Once we think of political ambitions of an emergent nation – which lacks a proper public arena for fostering of its imagination – transposed onto the field of cultural production, we can continue to trace how comedy has mixed with the history of Czech nation building. Here, the apparent deficiency of the concept of genre – its lack of uniform delimitation – turns into an advantage that highlights the credentials of genre analysis. As a genre, comedy traverses media, periods, and political regimes. Thus, the genealogy of comedy in cinema needs to be traced back at least as far as the beginning of the 19th century when Czech nationalist intellectuals began to use low genres in order to relate to popular public. In a parallel process, folk art has been integrated into national heritage from the very onset of Czech national revival. Although high genres and pathos had been cultivated as well – also for the sake of demonstrating the expressive equality of Czech language with German elite culture – the genre of comedy was also a part of the canon in formation. The plebeian character of Czech tradition marked it off from many of its Western counterparts.

The original tinting of comedy with folklore elements and satirical elements – targeted against inner or outer adversaries of Czech nationhood – shaped the specific tradition of humour, in which profound knowledge of local culture is required if one wants to get the "inside joke". Allegory and irony identifiable only to "insiders" and couched in the less prominent genre of comedy have effectively great for circumventing censorship under all political regimes and for strengthening a sense of community among their recipients. Even during the Second World War, humour was used as a safer way to communicate resistance to occupation (Obrdlik 1942). "Czech jokes and joke-tellers might have been doing many things: expressing opposition to the regime, uniting the Czech nation through language and humour and stoking a hatred of all things German."(Bryant 2006)The literary invention of Jaroslav Hašek, the figure of Švejk – a Czech soldier whose

presumably well-intentioned but absurd actions subvert the imperial Austrian army – has become the archetypical expression of this tradition. Several filmmakers have in fact strived to bring Švejk's humour onto screens and the resulting comedies testify to the participation of Czech filmmakers on the national appropriation of the genre (Hames 2000a). Even During the Second World War, humor was used as a safer way to communicate resistance to occupation. (Obrdlik 1942; Bryant 2006)

Czech filmmakers are no exception to the trend which has encompassed many Czech cultural producers and their publics. "Comedy is a genre that is prominent in most national cinemas and Czechoslovakia has been no exception," says Hames, but quickly adds, "in all cinemas, comedy takes on specifically national forms and references in addition to its more universal characteristics" (Hames 2009, 32). According to him, the specific national form of Czech film comedy resides in its capacity of "a kind of social cement in the face of adversity" (Hames 2009, 53) The cinematic genre of bitter comedy has found its most principled formula in the course of the 1960s and the Czech New Wave cinema. In the 1980s, popular bitter comedies such *Vesničko má středisková [My Sweet Little Village]* (Jiří Menzel, 1985) again sought an escape from the official ideological themes in topics of the everyday life and family issues, while still maintaining a subtle critical edge: "Satire was […] used where possible by film-makers in Eastern Europe during the years of state communist rule" (King 2005, 97).

The grounding of Czech filmmakers in a wider national tradition of comedy can be also evidenced from one valuable document: *Česká filmová komedie po znárodnění 1946–1966 [Czech Film Comedy After Nationalization 1946–1966]* (Kadár and Taussig 1983) It was written up in 1983 as an internal document of the Czechoslovak Film Institute and it was intended as a part of a larger project on Czechoslovak film history. The study was co-authored by a film historian Pavel Taussig and a director Elmar Klos – both authors

partook in Oscar-winning comedy projects. As a member of the directorial duo with Ján Kadár, Klos won an Oscar for the 1965 film *Obchod na korze [The Shop on Main Street]* (Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965) while Taussig wrote the story-line for *Kolja*. Their study can thus be also considered as a document representative of the dominant tradition of Czech comedy. Rather than a mere detached scholarly reflection, it provides an insight into the genre's history from a perspective of filmmakers themselves.

The authors view the nationalization as a fundamental step for Czech cinema in general and indeed a crucial one for the comedy genre as well. The nationalization marks a departure from the prewar comedy dominated by the genre's commercial orientation. From the study, we can infer that with the comedy's liberation from its business tasks, the genre began to construct national specificity. Film comedy became more firmly integrated with older theatrical and literary traditions. Klos and Taussig, for example, repeatedly affirm the legacy of the interwar progressive comedy theatre of Jiří Voskovec and Jan Werich. Similarly, they recall the literary adaptations of works by Jaroslav Hašek or Karel Poláček. They also point at the more distant past of Czech national revival (Karel Havlíček Borovský, Jan Neruda). In short, the document reveals that Czech filmmakers are well aware of their lineage in comedy, both political and artistic.

Besides their embedment in the larger tradition of humour, Charles Eidsvik takes notice of another important aspect: "Eastern European film comedies often share the sensibility of […] jokes from their region, but unlike privately told jokes, the films are made and get shown through state-run studious and distribution networks. Their comic malice must therefore be masked" (Eidsvik 1991, 92) In fact, the argument, although quite appropriate to films, could be extended to other mass media as well, including public theatrical performances. And the reason why comedy has achieved its peculiar status in Czech history, I believe, is that the genre itself already provides a kind of a mask – and

Czech nationalist intellectuals have used the cloak of comedy to reach large audience despite the supervision by Austrian, German, or Communist-Party authorities.

A useful way to think of the role of comedy as a political commentary can be extrapolated from James Scott's influential theory of "hidden transcripts", which he developed in order to better account for grievances of dominated peoples. The definition goes as follows:

> "If subordinate discourse in the presence of the dominant is a public transcript, I shall use the term *hidden transcript* to characterize discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders. The hidden transcript is thus derivative in the sense that it consists of those offstage speeches, gestures, and practices that confirm, contradict, or inflect what appears in the public transcript." (Scott 1990, 4–5)

As I argued earlier, Czechs, as a nation, have had a complicated relationship with the ruling elites when the latter denied a political sovereignty to the national body. With the exception of Nazi occupation, they – as a group – have not been persecuted in extreme ways, such as slaves or colonial subjects studied by Scott. At the same time, they have lacked a proper national arena during much of the existence of Czech nationalism (arguably, this includes the rule of the ethnically Czech Communist Party, which nonetheless contradicted the national imaginary). In such peculiar constellation of power relations, culture provided a limited, but publicly accessible space for articulating national identity and moderate forms of protests. The genre of comedy, with its lower rank in established artistic hierarchies, was a discursive vehicle perfectly suited for this strategy. Due to this socio-political framing of comedy, I argue that the genre in its nationally

specific forms is a manifestation of what can be called “semi-public transcript”. Unlike hidden transcript, it takes place not off- but onstage; it is not shielded from the view of power, yet the genre blurs the contours of the discourse.

If my argument is correct, then this political relevance of comedy, perceptible by audiences rooted in national tradition, elevates it above the low rank to which it belongs in standard aesthetic taxonomies. Once the bitter comedy is analyzed from the perspective of the history of nation building, the position of cultural production within that process, and the trajectory of the genre within the cinematic field itself, it no longer presents a more or less arbitrary outcome of low taste. For a sociological account, it needs to be measured against the elevated status that it had acquired as a specific genre of veiled public expression of nationalist intellectuals and not according to its rank in scholastic classification.

The usage of comedy as a semi-public transcript in Czech history is what I consider to be the source of supplementary cultural and symbolic capital. Although disapproved by filmmakers and critics who support further autonomy of the field, the genre can rely on positive evaluation from other cultural producers as well as consumers. In this manner, additional benefits can be gained that compensate for economic disadvantage of films set in the state socialist past. The latter aspect is no less crucial. As Gil Eyal (2003) demonstrated, collective memories of the recent past have been formative of the post-socialist political allegiances. And only when comedy is coupled with political significance it assumes features that signal its belonging to the tradition of semi-public transcript.

The approach of genre analysis has been indispensable for the arguments that I am putting forth: a focus on individual films or even on the cinematographic medium could not possibly reveal the wider cultural and historical context, in which Czech filmmakers have operated. Post-socialist historical bitter comedies follow many of older patterns that

are not solely of cinematographic origins. As Hames observes: “One of the interesting facts, despite revolution, structural change, and privatisation, is the way in which films of the 1990s have actually marked a continuation of the 1980s” (Hames 2000b, 75). The narratives of the state socialist past that filmmakers produce, at least the most successful ones, seem to be ultimately more constrained by the traditions of national cinema epitomized by the genre of comedy than by a political program of a particular collective memory. However, as we have seen, genres are also reliant on communities of memory, and thus the genre commemorates not only the state socialist past, but each new work continually contributes to the remembrance of the genre’s own past as well. Through this kind of sedimentation, the genre form opens the existence of a profound rupture between the past and the present to questioning.

6 The socialism(s) in post-socialism

6.1 Memory of the state

Collective memory is fundamental to states – and nations (Anderson 1991). However, the memory of the state cannot be simply equated with national memory. The state is but one – albeit immensely powerful – group among many others that remember the past in their respective ways. The degree of alignment of the state memory with national memory thus always refers to the balance of forces in society. Czech state, like many others, acknowledges heritage and patrimony and proclaims in its basic law:

> "citizens of the Czech Republic in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, at this time of the reconstitution of an independent Czech State, [to be] true to all the sound traditions of the ancient statehood of the Lands of the Crown of Bohemia as well as of Czechoslovak statehood, […] resolute to protect and develop their natural, cultural, material and spiritual heritage" (Act No. 1/1993).

Yet this sole allusion to the past appears to disregard its immediate, state socialist episode. Only the wording, "at this time of reconstitution", suggests existence of a troubled past. This past remains unnamed and its troubles unspecified As far as the explicit text of the constitution is concerned, state socialism never existed, unless one would foolishly suppose it to be a part of the "heritage" that the lawmakers deemed as important to "protect and develop". Hence, to identify other crucial aspects of the official remembrance, we need to give heed to the specific legislation and institutions that the state introduced in order to deal with the past under discussion. In the broadest sense, these special laws and institutions constitute the methods of transitional justice (Přibáň 2001). Here, the brief examination of transitional justice focuses not so much on legal dilemmas and

ramifications, rather, the methods stand out as mnemonic practices by the means of which states engage with their past. They may assume, for example, the following forms that Barbara Misztal identified in Central and Eastern Europe:

> "Among policies which have been implemented in Eastern European countries to deal with their communist past, the most common are: policies of lustration (screening the past of candidates for important positions with the aim of eliminating them from important public office), decommunization (excluding former Communist Party officials from high public positions), restitution of property, recompensation and rehabilitation of victims" (Misztal 2003, 151).

Although restitutions in the Czech Republic stirred from time to time an opinionated debate in the media, this has not affected their status as an administrative and judicial problem that requires no special attention of the state other than legislation of its principles. Measures such as restitutions, while being an important symbolic motion by the state in the renunciation of past injustices, fall short of the complete dimension of justice that requires, in the words of Judith Skhlar, to "take the victim's view into full account and give her voice its full weight" (Shklar 1990, 126). This aspect of official memory seriously disadvantages it against profoundly narrative remembrance such as cinematography can offer. Although this is not a general rule, as some states emerging from authoritarian rule have strived to provide an arena for public storytelling. The most important example in this respect was the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Coombes 2003; Posel 2008) Czechs have witnessed an exercise of transitional justice that, however, eschewed an establishment of what Teitel calls "successor trials". In her vocabulary, the Czech state opted for "criminal" and "retroactive" justice (Teitel 2000). The basis for

Czech retroactive justice was laid down above all by the two laws: the Act of 13 November 1991 about the period of the lack of freedom (Act No. 480/1991) and the Act of 9 July 1993 about the unlawful character of the communist regime and about the opposition to it (Act No. 198/1993). Both of them defined the immediate past as a legally precarious period that had not allowed for proper functioning of prosecution and judicial system. The retroactive application of legality intends to compensate for the malfunction.

From the perspective of post-socialist states, "to forget but not to forgive was the more common strategy in Central and East European countries leaving Communism behind" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 127). Czech legislation declared that the negative prescription on politically motivated offences committed in the past cannot count in the duration of the state socialist regime, implying that there would be more punishment, not less. Secondly, the prosecution of such formerly unpunished offences should be carried out in standard courts. Thus, no special, transitional, status would be conferred upon those crimes. The "truth" about the past as it has been pursued in the Czech Republic serves primarily as grounds for judicially controlled retribution, not as a cathartic tool that could potentially effectuate forgiveness on national level. The relevant courts are standard ones and thus no distinction is made between crimes committed under the old and the new regime. Victims and perpetrators appear before the court as individuals implicated in concrete cases, not as representatives of the two camps into which the society had been presumably divided.

In the Czech Republic, restoration of the authority of everyday legality thus achieved primacy in its post-socialist organization. In this manner, the state repudiates personal testimony as a necessary precondition in the pursuit of "truth" about the past. The state apparatus gets fully credited with the capability of unveiling the said "truth". When we collate this mnemonic strategy with alternatives such as the South African one, two

distinct modes of remembering begin to unfold. One builds up from the bottom, while the other one imposes itself from the top down. Wojciech Sadurski , in a passage that is in opportune concurrence with this paper's approach, skilfully explicates:

> "the difference between these truth commissions and the Czech declaration [about the unlawful character of the communist regime] is that the former – such as the Commission on Historical Clarification in Guatemala or Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa – typically work their way from detailed, single-case accounts to generalised characterisations of the regime. […] But the Czech statutory declaration is nothing but interpretation, and – at best – a "generalised account". […] As such, it is not the basis for a consensus-seeking establishment of the facts about the past, but rather a dissensus-provoking state orthodoxy about the ideological lenses through which the past should be viewed" (Sadurski 2005, 231).

If TRC became a sort of international trademark of the South African approach to the apartheid, then perhaps the most salient feature of the Czech state's political management of the state socialist past was the policy of "lustrations", which informed many similar policies adopted in other post-socialist countries. Lustrations, as the etymology of the word implies, provide the means for "purging" the state apparatus of the individuals who were deemed responsible for the maintenance of the state socialist regime. The principle of lustrations required that important positions in e.g. state administration or the army could not be taken up by people who either used to hold analogous posts in the previous regime or collaborated with its secret services. The relevant legislation (Act No. 451/1991; Act No. 279/1992) was a result of many disputes in the Parliament and reflected, above all, contemporaneous political moods that favored pronouncements of

collective guilt and has been subsequently used in political strives.(Mayer 2009, 64–65) Nonetheless, lustrations did have an important component oriented to the past: the criteria that were used to established a person's complicity with the state socialist government relied on the archives produced by the government. Ruti Teitel alerts us to the implicit paradox of such policy: "So it is that the old state archives were still being used to control politics in East Europe." (Teitel 2000, 99) The confidence placed – and as many would argue, misplaced – in the archives of the old regime would not stop there and, as we are about to see, resonated strongly in the academia, as the official memory permeated historiographical epistemology.

6.2 Histories of the historians

It may come across as inappropriate to open a summary overview of the post-socialist and post-apartheid historiographies with a reference to yet another statutory instrument, but the Act of the Czech Parliament on the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes and the Security Services Archive (Act No. 181/2007) represents a major effort of the state to promote research specialized on the history of the state socialist past. By virtue of its status as an "institute", the organization founded in 2007 enjoys research status and employs qualified historians. The academic benefits and potential for critical investigations of the past on the part of the Institute are somewhat doubtful, since it entails a prescription of its research focus. The act's preamble narrows the field of inquiry to "[investigation and recall of] the consequences of the activity of criminal organizations based on the Communist and Nazi ideologies advocating suppression of human rights and rejecting the principles of a democratic state in the years 1938–1945 and 1948–1989". (Act No. 181/2007) While there is no doubt about "suppression of human rights" in the said periods, the accentuation of the "criminal organizations" and conflation of Communist

ideology with the Communist regime betray an insinuation of the kind of conclusions that the state expects from history produced at the Institute. It is here, not in the constitution, that the Czech state legislates a duty to remember and passes it, albeit in an ambiguous manner, on to historians. (Vašíček and Mayer 2008, 146)

Whereas in the case of South African constitution we could imagine the lawmakers as historians, in the Czech case the historians play a role of judges and police-like investigators. This "forensic" flavor, which in effect sees the past generations through a prism of victims and victimizers, was the main reason for a controversy that surrounded the passing of the act in 2007. Criticism came predictably from the M.P.s of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, a successor to the formerly ruling Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, but also from other left-wing parties and from an important segment of the community of historians. A peculiar forerunner of this institute is the Office for the Documentation and the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism, an organization that is actually a part of the Police of the Czech Republic, although it has, since 1995, carried out a lot of historiographical and archival type of work.

"[The] imperative of our epoch is not only to keep everything, to preserve every indicator of memory – even when we are not sure which memory is being indicated – but also to produce archives." (Nora 1989, 14) These are the words of Pierre Nora from his famous article on the realms of memory that attempted to account for the changes in the social forms of remembering in modern societies, divested of their living memory. In this sense, the "imperative" to archive is a universalizing process that reflects the monopolizing drive of historiography as a discipline on to representation of the past. Yet as such it is also defined by "indiscriminate production of archives", (Nora 1989, 14) and thus the process does not account for the very deliberate and discriminatory efforts to archive the traces of state socialism. A salient feature of the Czech post-socialist historiography of the

immediate past is its obsession with the archives of the state socialist governments and security forces. The urge is less to construct, but above all, to declassify and make public the archives of the previous regime. The latter now serve by the purpose of revealing the identities of individuals who were either members of the secret police or who collaborated with them. Another detective trend in historiography would examine the previously unknown documents of political nature in order to discover the backstage maneuvers of communist politicians. Ruti Teitel correctly asserts that under such conditions "the question of how to treat archival historical knowledge has become deeply enmeshed in the politics of transition. […] Historical inquiry quickly gives way to the politics of exposure." (Teitel 2000, 96) The problem, however, does not stop there. The history that can be written trough the prism of the archives of power cannot but adopt the power's perspective. The top down approach to remembering that we described in the previous section finds its mirror image in a perspective of the top down history.

The fringe history that proliferates in intimate connection with the state's objectives represents, of course, only a fragment in the overall historiographical discipline. Yet, in the debates on the immediate past, it is a fragment of considerable importance. The standard historiography offers little counterweight to the former tendency and could hardly claim a similar public significance. The output of the research is extensive enough in a number of publications, but the research's scope is very narrow regarding the perspectives employed. Resembling the history of "great men", the history of the previous regime becomes a stage where the impersonal "Party" is the main actor. In a curious consequence, the state socialist and the post-socialist historians seem to share a similar vision of history, where the Communist Party is the true leader of the masses, only now the normative statements differ. The marginalized remains on the margins, while the rulers and policemen of the past

now appear perhaps stronger that they have ever been. Young historians from the post-socialist generation describe the situation of the discipline in the following critical manner:

> "[The historiography of the Communist dictatorship] heavily relies on the theory of totalitarianism, in which the power structures of the state and the Party are in sharp opposition to society. […] Not only the new social history approaches but the traditional structural social and economic history of the Communist period as well are seriously lagging behind research on power politics" (Kolář and Kopeček 2007, 223).

To be sure, after 1989, it is not only the state socialist past that Czech historian need to explore. Apart from it, "much effort has been spent filling in "blank spots" ignored by Communist-era historiography. These blanks include not only periods such as the immediate postwar era, but also understudied topics such as the Holocaust, the transfer/expulsion of the Sudeten Germans and the events of 1968" (Bryant 2000, 48–49). The burden of historian's own social as well as disciplinary history under state socialism is immense. Moreover, it consists also of epistemological and methodological preferences. Thus, on the one hand, Chad Bryant may observe in the Czech historiography a persisting tendency to emphasize the "'factographical' standards" and trace the tendency back to the state socialist era, when the espousal of positivism served as a tactic that "allowed historians to employ the correct ideological language in order to present their findings, playing a sort of game which allowed them to avoid censorship (and repression) while still having their works published" (Bryant 2000, 49 and 40).

Historians, after all, make up a social group themselves and the persistence of state socialist trajectories affects them no less than it impinges on filmmakers. Contemporary

historiography is itself a product of the past which it sets forth to study. The real problem of Czech historiography from epistemological perspective centers on a peculiar erosion of borders between the state's memorial politics, historical science, and standard criminal and judicial apparatus. Paul Ricoeur rightfully alerts us to the danger of having the distinction between historian and judge blurred:

> "The judge has to pass a judgment – this is the function of a judge. Judges must come to a conclusion. They must decide. They must set at an appropriate distance the guilty party and the victim, in accordance with an imperiously binary topology. All this, historians do not do, cannot do, do not want to do; and if they were to attempt it, at the risk of setting themselves up as the sole tribunal of history, this would be at the cost of acknowledging the precariousness of a judgment whose partiality, even militancy, is recognized" (Ricoeur 2004, 320).

The fact that some historians would see it as their task to critique what they perceive as a dominant approach in their discipline, shows that the dominance is not – and cannot be – complete. Likewise, the victorious state's policies conceal the plurality of views that had been legislated away. Yet the emphasis that I have placed on the dominance and contrasts should, or such was the intention, draw attention to the main principles that shape knowledge of the past in the post-socialist Czech state and historiography. These two fields can be considered as a background against which filmmakers put forward their own representations of the past. All these collective actors share to some extent dependence on the trajectories constituted in their fields during the state socialist era – and their past alliances and divergences ensure that today their respective representations of state socialism will also differ.

7 Conclusion

My dissertation thesis was prompted by the question of how cinematic representations bear on the collective memory of state socialism in the Czech Republic. In my work, it is evident that Czech cinema does not follow the epistemological criterion of referentiality that binds historians. A more important observation – and one that does not automatically follow from the former – about the relationship between historical and cinematic representations of the state socialist past shows that the two do not even converge in terms of dominant genres.

This is in part due to the different status of the past as an object of knowledge in historiography and cinematography. I began my inquiry by a theoretical assessment of how historiography and cinematography differ in how they produce knowledge and representations of the past. The difference in the medium of representation – writing in print versus writing in moving images – is not fundamental. In this respect, I agree with some of the propositions of the growing number of scholars who study historical films as works of history. Yet my own research does not align fully with this approach which, in my view, underestimates the socially and textually specific ways in which the two fields produce knowledge. Therefore, I argue for a limited notion of "historiophoty" and suggest that in most cases, the past will be subjected to distinct registers of knowledge in historiography and cinematography respectively: it figures as an object of history for one and as an object of memory for the other.

The different discursive position of the state socialist past is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the divergence in its representations on the whole to occur. Memory of the state, the official memory expressed in legislation and administrative measures and proclamations, does approximate the history of state socialism much more

closely than the collective cinematic memory. Indeed, history can exert much influence upon memory – and vice-versa. The extent of the interaction, however will depend on social determinations. Whereas history is a kind of knowledge produced by a fairly limited and well defined social group, memory is a type of knowledge produced in countless social locations.

The impossibility of speaking of a particular content of collective memory without taking into account the social characteristics of the group that creates, preserves, and disseminates it, required me to consider at least some basic attributes of Czech filmmakers as a group. Bourdieu's theory of social fields and of the field of cultural production proved to be outstandingly useful for my task in that it allowed me to think of essentially aesthetic and economic factors in sociological terms. Thanks to this perspective, I could trace not only the defining tension of cinematography – the art vs. industry conflict – of which the filmmakers are well aware, but also how it affects the multiple positions in cinematic field and leads the cultural producers to adopt different strategies for takings of those positions as well as to legitimize themselves through various claims to either aesthetic authenticity or popularity. The forces active in the field of cinematic production, however, cannot be fully understood without a recourse of the analysis to the developments of Czech cinematography over the course of its own state socialist past. Especially the strong sense of cinema as an integral part of national culture cannot be explicated without the experience of the nationalized industry, which imposed political significance filmmaking. Cinematic producers thus could not but assume a role of intellectuals that has in some ways carried over to post-socialist cinema as well.

The next concern of the dissertation thesis addressed the post-socialist cinematic representations of the state socialist past. The approach was decidedly sociological and avoided in-depth interpretations of the films. The corpus was assembled on the basis of

thematic content and included only full-length feature films. Such choice may have not been warranted by the criteria of filmmakers, film scholars and critics, historians, or audiences; but it proved to be a very useful corpus for a sociologically motivated analysis, because it gathered together influences from distinct sub-fields of Czech cinematography.

The most striking feature of the corpus as a whole was its undeniable importance for the post-socialist cinema. Although it constitutes only a fraction of the entire production or feature films, it is disproportionately successful in gaining critical appraisal as well as large number of movie-goers, i.e. it achieves high orthodox as well heterodox recognition. This type of legitimizing conjuncture would be difficult to comprehend without taking into account the symbolic status of filmmakers as intellectuals and the political heteronomy in the cinematic field which was established in it during the state socialist organization of cultural production.

The closer description of the corpus and its changing composition over the past two decades, however, showed that the collective post-socialist memory of filmmakers has developed relatively autonomously from the political field. The heightened symbolic and cultural capital that the filmic remembrance seems to be yielding stems from within the field itself. Again, this may be attributable to the status of public intellectuals which, for better or worse, Czech filmmakers attained under the previous regime.

The thesis that the cinematic memory of state socialism depends on socio-historical characteristics of filmmakers in their capacity of social group thus appears to be valid, although the latest films hint at new trends that could be resemble the official memory in their unequivocal condemnation of the past. Indeed, it is as if the filmmakers would attempt to cut off all the continuities that link their field to the state socialist past only toward the end of the second post-socialist decade. Now the primary purpose of remembrance is to remind the viewers of the need to forget. However, the permanence of

this new trend can only be ascertained in the future developments of cinematic memory.

The new trend of emphasis on drama, tragedy, and even thriller as genres of remembrance replaces the previous unchallenged dominance of comedy as the main genre in which the narratives of the past used to be told. Genre as a category of analysis, I argued, is particularly suited to the needs of a sociologist for research of how people make sense of the social world and of the past. Once genre is apprehended not as a static literary category, but as a historically changing set of rules that serve to control the production and consumption of cultural texts, then it can be examined a symptom of wider social forces. The analysis of comedy genre and of its specific position in the cinematic collective memory of state socialism reveals in the context of Czech nationalism, the genre has achieved symbolic and political relevance. I suggest that comedy has a function of "semi-public" transcript and in this capacity it creates a community of consumers almost coterminous with the nation. The lower status comedy in genre hierarchies enforced by highbrow critics, producers, and consumers shields the genre from severe oversight, and yet it still allows a communication of messages critical of the powers that be across large audiences. By ostensibly aligning themselves with this tradition – indeed a collective memory of its own – the filmmakers (many of whom were debutans or members of the up-and-coming generation) were insisting on a sense of continuity with the state socialist past. We must underscore the paradox that representations of the past in Czech cinema take on forms – i.e. genres – that flourished under the state socialist regime. The cinematic remembrance does indeed appear to be self-referential in many aspects and relatively autonomous – just as the field itself – from other forms of collective memory. It cannot be equated with national memory, but it should be considered as a serious contender, due to the popularity of its most successful narratives as well as due to the symbolic capital of cinematic producers.

Speaking of memory automatically begs the question of forgetting. The latter, however, should not be regarded as an opposite of memory. As Marc Augé (1998) argued, forgetting makes an integral part of memory, which can never be complete. Remembrance thus always implies a determination of what is important for a given social group. Nonetheless, at least in concluding remarks, one significant omission should be noted. Over the two decades of post-socialist cinema, no movie has dealt with formative political issue of the late 1960s, known as "socialism with human face". The concept indeed seems to be discarded not only on the proverbial scrapheap of history, but also into the forgotten past – a place with absent memory. Eyal (2003) showed how the 1989 transition in Czech politics dispensed with the reformist communists; I cannot do quite the same for cinematic memory, except pointing out that representations of these actors are absent.

If we accept the idea that the studies of post-socialism can benefit from an interdisciplinary exchange with post-colonial studies, since the experience of living in a "post-" society share some fundamental characteristics (Moore, 2001; Popescu, 2003; Stenning and Hörschelmann; 2008), then we may indeed expect for the state socialist experience to remain a relevant factor in contemporary identities and culture. The permanent presence of collective memory, however, does not mean that it is static. On the contrary, we have seen that is a dynamic process that will surely continue to evolve.

Appendix

Corpus of Czech post-socialist films about state socialism

Czech title	English title	Director	Year of release	Thematic past
Vracenky	Rebounds	Jan Schmidt	1991	1950s
Requiem pro panenku	Requiem for a Maiden	Filip Renč	1991	1984
Corpus delicti	Corpus Delicti	Irena Pavlásková	1991	1980s
Pražákům, těm je hej	The Pragers Are in Clover	Karel Smyczek	1991	1980s
Tichá bolest	Silent Pain	Martin Hollý	1991	1950s
Někde je možná hezky	It May Be Beautiful Elsewhere	Milan Cieslar	1991	1989
Pějme píseň dohola	Let's All Sing Around	Ondřej Trojan	1991	1980s
Kouř	The Smoke	Tomáš Vorel	1991	1980s
Vyžilý Boudník	Worn Out Boudník	Václav Křístek	1991	1970s and 1980s
Tankový prapor	Tank Battalion	Vít Olmer	1991	1950s
Černí baroni	The Black Barons	Zdeněk Sirový	1992	1950s
Šakalí léta	Big Beat	Jan Hřebejk	1993	1950s
Vekslák aneb Staré zlaté časy	Hustler or The Good Old Days	Jan Prokop	1994	1980s
Žiletky	Blades	Zdeněk Týc	1994	1980s
Díky za každé nové ráno	Thanks for Every New Morning	Milan Šteindler	1994	1970s and 1980s
Malostranské humoresky	Humoresques from the Lesser Town	Jaromír Polišenský (Zdeněk Gawlik,	1996	1980s
Kolja	Kolya	Jan Svěrák	1996	1980s

Ceremoniář	Master of Ceremony	Jiří Verčák	1996	1950s
Zapomenuté světlo	Forgotten Light	Vadimír Michálek	1996	1980s
Bumerang	Boomerang	Hynek Bočan	1997	1950s
Zdivočelá země	A Country Gone Wild	Hynek Bočan	1997	1950s
Báječná léta pod psa	Wonderful Years That Sucked	Petr Nikolaev	1997	1960s-1990s
Pelíšky	Cosy Dnes	Jan Hřebejk	1999	1960s
Početí mého mladšího bratra	The Conception of My Younger Brother	Vladimír Drha	2000	1950s
Rebelové	Rebels	Filip Renč	2001	
Tmavomodrý svět	Dark Blue World	Jan Svěrák	2001	1950s
Pupendo	Pupendo	Jan Hřebejk	2003	1980s
Milenci a vrazi	Lovers and Murderers	Viktor Polesný	2004	1980s
Kousek nebe	A Little Piece of Heaven	Petr Nikolaev	2005	1950s
Obsluhoval jsem anglického krále	I Served the King of England	Jiří Menzel	2006	1930s-1950s
…a bude hůř	It's Gonna Get Worse	Petr Nikolaev	2007	1970s
Smutek paní Šnajderové	The Sadness of Mrs. Snajdrova	Piro Milkani	2007	1960s
Anglické jahody	English Strawberries	Vladimír Drha	2008	1968
Pouta	Walking Too Fast	Radim Špaček	2009	1982
Zemský ráj to napohled	An Earthly Paradise for the Eyes	Irena Pavlásková	2009	1960s-1970s
Holka Ferrari Dino	The Ferrari Dino Girl	Jan Němec	2009	1968
Tři sezóny v pekle	Three Seasons in Hell	Tomáš Mašín	2009	late 1940s
Klíček	The Little Key	Ján Novák	2009	1953
Občanský průkaz	Indentity Card	Ondřej Trojan	2010	1970s

Resumé

Plátno smíchu a zapomnění: kolektivní paměť a reprezentace státního socialismu v české kinematografii

V disertační práci se zabývám otázkou, jak se kinematografické reprezentace vztahují ke kolektivní paměti státního socialismu v České republice, respektive v Československu. V práci řeším nejprve teoretický problém, zda-li je vhodné subžánr historických filmů studovat jako typ vědění odpovídající historii, nebo sociální paměti.Tvrdím, že důležitý není rozdíl v médiu reprezentace, ale ve způsobech utváření vědění o minulosti. Přestože mohou existovat „historiofotické“, tedy historiografické filmy, běžnou produkci dlouhých hraných filmů je vhodné studovat jako sociologický problém z hlediska kolektivní paměti. Zatímco historie představuje druh vědění utvářených poměrně jednoznačně vymezenou sociální skupinou, kolektivní paměť vzniká b bezpočtu sociálních lokací.

Nemožnost hovořit o obsahu určité paměti bez analýzy sociálních charakteristik skupiny, jež ji vytváří, vyžadovala, abych se zabýval českými filmaři pomocí teorie sociálních polí Pierra Bourdieuho. Tato perspektiva umožňuje sledovat konflikt mezi úsilím některých filmařů o uměleckou autonomii na straně jedné a politikou či ekonomikou na straně druhé. Jejich celkové postavení ve společnosti se pak symbolicky pozvedává díky statusu intelektuálů, který se čeští filmaři mohou díky úzkým vazbám na literaturu a divadlo a vzhledem ke své roli v předchozím režimu v některých případech nárokovat. Zdůrazňování umělecké autonomie a kulturního dědictví v současnosti by bylo nemyslitelné bez předchozí státně-socialistické organizace kinematografie.

Další část disertace se zabývá samotnými reprezentacemi státně-socialistické minulosti v české kinematografii. Zvolený přístup se vyhýbá interpretaci filmového díla, a namísto toho usiluje především o popis pozice, jež tyto reprezentace zaujímají v kontextu kinematografické tvorby. Korpus adekvátních filmů byl sestaven pomocí tematického kritéria. Jeho určujícími znaky jsou disproporcionální uznání ze strany publika i filmové kritiky. Korpus je dále popsán ve větších detailech. Důležitými milníky v jeho dynamice jsou druhá polovina devadesátých let, kdy nejen v rámci korpusu, ale v celé kinematografii dominovaly hořké komedie, a dále období zhruba po roce 2007, kdy se začínají konzistentně objevovat žánrově závažnější reprezentace.

Závěrečná diskuse se věnuje právě problému žánrů. Obhajuji v ní užitečnost konceptu žánru pro sociologii kultury a demonstruji toto pojetí na pokusem o vysvětlení úspěchu komedií v reprezentaci období státního socialismu. Vzhledem k nižší klasifikaci komedií v žánrových hierarchiích se jedná o vhodný žánr, jímž mohou nacionální intelektuálové oslovovat širí publikum. Komedie a humor v dějinách českého nacionalismu zaujímaly dlouhodobě významnou pozici, a z toho důvodu je jejich využití k reprezentaci politického tématu, jaké představuje státně-socialistická minulost, symbolicky adekvátní. Stoupající odmítání tohoto postupu ze strany filmové kritiky však naznačuje, že post-socialistická kinematografie již nezaujímá natolik politicky relevantní pozici,jako v předchozím režimu. Kinematografická kolektivní paměť však nadále působí jako relativně autonomní místo paměti, navzdory souběhu české historiografie a oficiální paměti.

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