

standable and visible. Näripea's work has its sophisticated functions with cinematic spaces and sites of filmic imagination and metaphor. The importance of these elements in the construction of narrative also emphasizes the intervention of the viewer in space identification. Materials and resources used and cited are ample enough to fully support the premise of the dissertation and apply the thesis to concrete examples in Soviet Estonian films. The methodology of the dissertation is more than adequately stated in the introductory pages of the work as well as being clearly restated when needed throughout the thesis.

In this and other regards, Eva Näripea's *Estonian Cinescapes: Spaces, Places and Sites in Soviet Estonian Cinema (and Beyond)* makes a decisive and highly welcomed contribution to the field of screen studies with an historical approach generally, and especially in its Estonian connotations.

Book Review

Anikó Imre (ed.), *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, Malden: Wiley and Blackwell, 2012, ISBN 978-1-4443-3725-9, 525 pp.

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A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas, a collective volume edited by Anikó Imre, is a continuation of her previous book *East European Cinemas* (2005). With its predecessor, it shares an attempt to reexamine the cinema of the region within global contexts of film and cultural studies. The volume includes twenty-five essays authored by a versatile team of scholars, most of them (twenty, to be specific) being affiliated with Western academia. The scope of the volume is impressive. It examines selected aspects of cinemas of Hungary, Czech Republic, former Czechoslovakia, former Yugoslavia, Poland, Romania, Latvia, Estonia, Slovenia, Turkey, GDR, and Albania, whereas Slovakian and Bulgarian productions are also briefly mentioned. Such a broad scope of the collection clearly evokes an inclusive notion of Eastern Europe informing this research project. However, with so many national cinemas of the region being covered, the absence of the others, for example Ukrainian or Lithuanian, becomes even more pronounced. To notice this selective approach within the otherwise impressively wide scope of the collection is not to criticize it for its "incompleteness" for it is clear that the volume was not conceived of as a comprehensive survey. Yet, a better explanation

of the geopolitical framework of the volume would provide a useful point of departure for the reader.

The content of the volume is divided into four sections: "New Theoretical and Critical Frameworks", "Historical and Spatial Redefinitions", "Aesthetic Re(visions)", and "Industries and Institutions". In her introduction, Imre explains that the collected essays serve two main aims. The first is to examine the post-communist transformations of Eastern European Cinemas, whereas the other is to contextualize these changes. As she further states, the "collection makes three major interventions in the study of Eastern European cinema" (7) which are: (1) to reexamine the nationalistic framework for Eastern European Cinemas; (2) to bring to the surface the aesthetic and ideological dialogue between Western and Eastern European cinemas; and (3) to foreground Eastern European Cinemas' potential to contribute to theoretical debate within global films studies.

The first intervention in the field occurs in several essays that extensively employ the category of transnational cinema. For example, in her discussion of Péter Forgács's documentary on the Spanish Civil War, Marsha Kinder examines how his transnational perspective deconstructs national grand narratives. In turn, Ewa Mazierska employs the notion to examine three Eastern European co-productions to argue that they produce the effect of Foucauldian heterotopias. Finally, Michael Goddard proposes a reconsideration of Polish national cinema by including in it films made by diasporic filmmakers who are traditionally marginalized in the critical accounts of Polish cinema in both vernacular and international writings.

Another prominent strategy to reconsider the national framework of Eastern European cinemas is deconstruction of the mechanisms of cinematic negotiations of the (national) past for the nation-project. This direction of critical analysis is represented by Nikolina Dobрева who examines several Eastern European films representing the genre of historical epic with a thematic focus on struggles with the Ottoman Empire. She argues that they served “as a space of complex interactions between nationalism, Orientalism, and Marxism” (345). Likewise, Petra Hanáková interrogates the potential of historical epic for mobilizing national sentiments. In her fascinating study of post-communist reinvention of the tradition of Jan Hus, she discusses its role in negotiating the Czech nationalist project. Greg DeCuir, Jr. examines historical spectacles of the Yugoslav Black Wave to demonstrate how they dismantle the nationalist-Communist discourse. As Kriss Ravetto-Biagoli argues in her essay, Post-Yugoslav cinema continues with critical reassessment of the category of nation. The cinematic representation of the Romanian recent past is a focus of Alice Bardan’s essay. Specifically, she argues that due to their performativity, irony, and reflexivity they can be located within the context of post-national cinema. Finally, there are two essays discussing how documentary cinema participates in the complex process of negotiating the national. John Cunningham examines the work of Hungarian filmmaker Tamás Almási, whereas Alice Lovejoy provides an eloquent study of Czech documentarist Karel Vachek’s *Little Capitalist Tetralogy*.

The essays discussing the Baltic cinemas’ engagement with national issues are especially to

be welcomed as the region has been overlooked within the field for a long time. In her productive discussion of Estonian films of the 1960s, Eva Näripea reconstructs the process of emerging national cinema from the body of (trans)national Soviet film production. She suggests approaching Estonian cinema not as a victim of Sovietization but rather as an outcome of an ongoing and complex process of artistic and ideological exchanges and negotiations between the Soviet/Russian center and Baltic peripheries. In a similar vein, Andreas Trossek discusses how Estonian animation cinema negotiates the national with the Soviet. In her survey of mostly post-Soviet, Latvian documentary cinema, Maruta Z. Vitols persuasively discusses its contexts of Soviet imperial forces, national impulses, and European intellectualism. Finally, Irina Novikova eloquently argues that historical epic genre of Latvian cinema has been an important part of the genealogy of the national cinema.

The second critical intervention the volume makes is in the foregrounding of the relationship between Western and Eastern European cinemas, which serves to contest the isolationist Iron Curtain rhetoric frequently employed by earlier scholarship within the field. Western-Eastern European co-productions and diasporic filmmaking provide the most evident examples of such relationships (discussed, for example, in already mentioned essays by Kinder, Mazierska, and Goddard). A method of comparative analysis is another strategy to explore these affinities which proves successful in a number of essays. For example, Bjørn Sørrensen examines the relationship between British Free Cinema and the Polish documentary movement of Black Series. Greg De

Cuir, Jr. analyses transnational contexts of the Yugoslav Black Wave. Finally, Francesco Pitassio focuses on the political dimension of Western-Eastern cultural exchanges. In his detailed and well documented historical study, he reveals how Eastern European socialism, specifically its Czechoslovak variant, left its imprint on the Italian socialist movement with cinema playing an important role in the process.

Essays on Albanian and Turkish cinema offer an especially stimulating proposition to reconsider the relationship between East and West and, consequently, the category of Eastern European cinema itself. Bruce Williams’ engaging historical survey of Albanian cinema is of exceptional value here as it fills a long existing gap in the study of Eastern European cinema. Melis Behlil examines contemporary Turkish cinema, which is probably more familiar to the reader, yet she locates it in the unfamiliar context of its affinity with Eastern European cinema. A decision to include an essay on Turkish cinema can be seen as perhaps the most radical effort of the volume to re-define the category of Eastern European cinemas.

The third critical intervention attempted by the volume is to highlight Eastern European cinemas potential to reinvigorate and stimulate new developments within global film studies. In her introduction to the volume, Imre emphasizes a need to change or reconsider dominant critical perspectives on Eastern European cinemas. As she argues, it is necessary because of radical changes that occurred within these cinemas during the post-communist era. While describing these changes, she states “that filmmaking has become radically decentralized and depoliticized. Its beating heart is no longer the director and his dissident artistic

vision but the producer and the political-economic imperatives of a globalized media industry.” (1) This conclusion seems to refer, however, as much to the cinemas of Eastern Europe as to the global world cinema. In response to the changes occurring within the global system(s) of film production, with an increasing role of transnational funds, film studies have gradually shifted their focus from the concepts of auteurism and national cinemas toward the categories of audience and producer(s). Several essays in the volume employ this pragmatic critical approach which proves effective. An exemplary case of production studies is provided by Stefan Soldovieri’s analysis of production contexts of Polish-German co-production, *The Silent Star* (*Der Schweigende Stern*, 1960, Kurt Maetzig). Ioana Uricaru presents a meticulous analysis of the strategies of financing Romanian cinema in the 2000s, pointing out how they foregrounded a model of low-budget art cinema that has recently gained international recognition within film festival circuits. Dorota Ostrowska highlights the importance of Polish post-war “film units” that emerged as a consequence of a political Thaw in the mid-1950s and provided filmmakers with relative artistic freedom within a state-controlled film industry.

Employment of new critical strategies and theoretical approaches to Eastern European cinemas certainly allows the authors of the collected essays to reassess Eastern European cinema(s) and shed light on some of its aspect that were previously overlooked. Steven Shaviro eloquently theorizes the body discourse developed in György Pálfi’s *Taxidermia* (2006). Novikova employs a post-colonial perspective to look at the national film industry in Latvia. Meta Mazaj and Shekhar

Deshpande efficiently apply the notions of “small cinemas” (elaborated by Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie) and “regional cinema” (as offered by Fredric Jameson) to examine Slovenian cinema’s position within global world cinema. Catherine Portugese locates Polish, Czech and Hungarian films on the Holocaust within a well-established theoretical framework of the Holocaust and memory studies. Likewise, Zoran Samardžija discusses two Serbian films concerning the Bosnian war within a familiar paradigm of historical totality that has been often employed in analyses of Eastern European films dealing with the experience of WWII, the Holocaust, and Stalinism.

Admittedly, the collected essays are well grounded in the current theoretical debates, thus, they productively contribute to global film studies. Furthermore, applying, for example, a post-colonial approach to Eastern European cinema inevitably requires a re-examination of the former, which testifies to the region’s ability to stimulate theoretical debate within the field of global film and cultural studies. Recognizing all benefits resulting from approaching the cinema of the region from new theoretical perspectives, one may, however, notice that these have been developed within Western academia. It could be argued that this “import” of theoretical framework constitutes another form of cultural exchange between West and East, yet this relation seems to be still more of dependency than equality.

The book is easy to navigate through, although the criteria of dividing the material into four sections are not always very transparent. For example, one may wonder why the essay on Turkish cinema ends up in the section entitled “Industries and

Institutions”? Or why an excellent production study penned by Soldovieri is included in the “Historical and Spatial Redefinitions” part? Perhaps it would be useful to present in the introduction a more detailed explanation of criteria used to structure the book, or to precede each of these four parts with a brief section explaining its content and structure. Volumes of such size and scope as *Companion* require efficient tools facilitating navigation through their content. The reader of Imre’s book will definitely benefit from a detailed and comprehensive index including names, places, titles, and terms. Compiled separately for each essay reference lists and endnotes may facilitate further research on the subjects. While commenting on the editorial aspect of the volume, some minor mistakes in spellings of names and inaccuracies need to be noted (for example, the wrong accent in the name of Jerzy Wójcik and incorrect name of the director Ryszard Bugajski, p. 458). It has to be noted that a more careful proofreading would improve the quality of this valuable publication.

A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas is impressive in its scope and high-quality research. It testifies to Eastern European cinema(s) being fully incorporated into global film studies. Film scholars and critics as well as those researchers who work within broad Eastern European studies will welcome the publication as an important contribution to the field.