


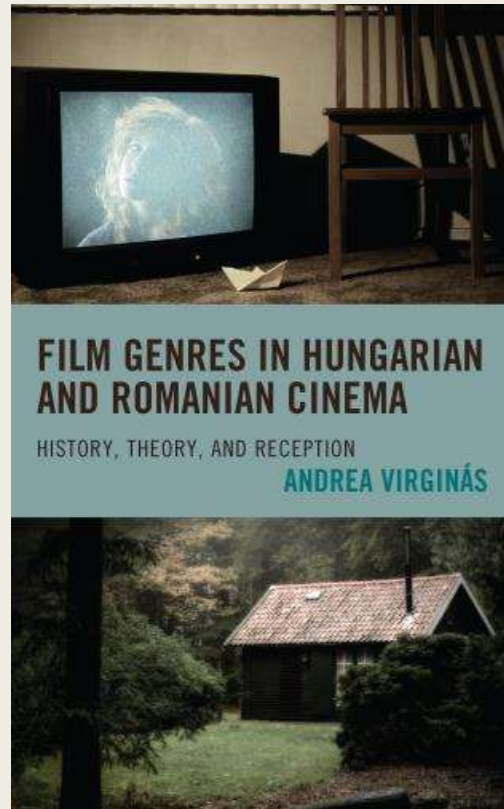


A KÖZÖSSÉGI TRAUMATIZÁLTSAĞ JÁTÉKFILMES FELDOLGOZÁSAI A KORTÁRS (KELET-)EURÓPAI FILMBEN: A MEDIATIZÁLT KULTURÁLIS EMLÉKEZET EGY LEHETSÉGES MODELLJE

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Meta-framework 1: Film Genres & Small National Cinemas



- This research started in 2013, with presentation and written output throughout the 2010s
- The last item being this monograph with Lexington Books (April/May 2021)

Meta-framework 1: Film Genres & Small National Cinemas

- Its most pertinent result for the present topic was highlighting the adequacy of comparatively examining films belonging to small national cinemas (Swedish, Danish, but also Hungarian and Romanian films) on the basis of their working with classical/transitional/post-classical film genres (Langford 2005)

Meta-framework 2: Collectively traumatic dimensions of the communist era

- In this respect my entry point proved to be the female characters of a handful of films with Eastern European associations or production background that I kept returning to
- Obviously, the main method in this proved to be that of identifying allegorical subtexts, as well as using allegorizing as a main theoretical tool, with the individual female characters attributed collective dimensions thanks to various (audiovisual) poetic possibilities

Meta-framework 2: Collectively traumatic dimensions of the communist era

- I worked with the audiovisual representation modes of distinctly female traumas (rape, prostitution motherhood) and their possible intersections with the Eastern European region's recent history



Meta-framework 2: Collectively traumatic dimensions of the communist era



- I went on examining the process of afilmic natural spaces becoming profilmic ones, arguing that such a method was capable of evoking memories coded in the body



Meta-framework 2: Collectively traumatic dimensions of the communist era

- Finally, I ended up with a comparative analysis of white collar working women with this time Romanian associations or Romanian production background, suggesting that their characteristics of mixing various class aspects are indicative of large-scale social mobility with roots in the communist-era social engineering



Meta-framework 3: shared regional traumas & historical films in European cinema

- the (common-sense) revelation that shared regional traumas can be and are worked through historical films in European cinema, a most popular genre in Eastern Europe too
- thus the particularly pressing transnational memories, often traumatic, could find a mode of expression in this way

Meta-framework 3: shared regional traumas & historical films in European cinema



Cultural memory-work/historical film

- “Where sociologists prefer the term ‘collective memory’ (or ‘social memory’; see Olick et al. 2011) and wonder who is doing the remembering and with what impact on social relations, scholars in the field of cultural memory studies focus on the cultural foundations of collective memory: using which media technologies and with the help of which cultural models and forms, do particular stories become constituted, shared and linked to identity?” (Ann Rigney 2016, 66)

Cultural memory-work/historical film

- „[o]urs is a world in which films rank second only to photographs as the means by which people claim to connect with the past (...).” (Hughes-Warrington 2009, 1).
- European cinema may be conceived of “as a dispositif that constitutes, through an appeal to memory and identification, a special form of address, at once highly individual and capable of fostering a sense of belonging” (Elsaesser 2005, 21).
- An ‘apparatus’ for working through collectively traumatic experiences: (historical) narrative (fiction) film

Cultural memory-work/historical film

- “[...] the way a cultural work narrates a trauma is a function not only of the nature of the event and its initial impact on the victims, but also of the conditions of the work’s production and reception” (Hirsch 2004: 10-11).
- While deeply conceptual artistic works need to be examined as modes of coping with unresolved collective traumas, in a Hungarian and a Romanian, indeed, in an (Eastern) European framework, narrative feature films also provide valuable insights, as non-exclusive, habituated “modes of production and reception”

Cultural memory-work/historical film

- “There must be details, not necessarily many of them, to set the action in a period which the audience unhesitatingly places in the past – not a vague past but a past considered as historical. The cultural heritage of every country and every community includes dates, events and characters known to all members of that community. This common basis is what we might call **the group’s ‘historical capital’**, and it is enough to select a few details from this for the audience to know that it is watching an historical film and to place it, at least approximately.” (Sorlin 2009, 14-15).

Cultural memory-work/historical film

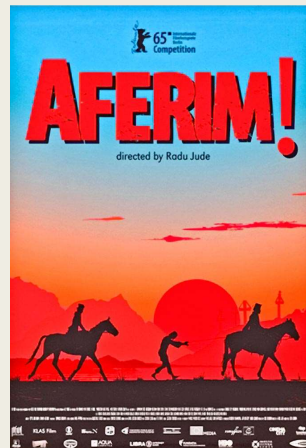
- *The first generation of the victims* – those who (in their capacities of filmmakers and/or audience) actually had direct experiences of the historical events depicted in a given historical film;
- *the second generation of forgetters* – whose “task” is to forget, also as creator(s) and audience;
- *the third generation of memory restorers* – who need to remember and mourn the dead, in their historical film-related activities too (Assmann, 2012).

Cultural memory-work/historical film

- Such historical films pertaining to the (Eastern) European canon that have gathered visibility either through good (domestic) audience numbers and/or thanks to their being granted awards and (prestigious) festival recognitions
- Thus (Eastern) European historical films that are authenticated by collective recognition are markers that the act/process of collective remembering has been going on smoothly, with the necessary pitchings happening between the (collective) remembering strategies favoured by the creative crew of the films and the remembering strategies mobilized by the non/professional audiences within the Romanian and the Hungarian domestic markets placed within the larger European canon

The mid- to late 2010s saw the domestic success in Hungary and Romania of two – apparently very different – historical films that return to the 4th, respectively the 7th decades of the „long” 19th century.

Aferim! (2015, diegetic time: 1835)



Bet on Revenge (2017, diegetic time: 1860s)



Combined framework – communicative generations and that of collective – audience or critical – success

- addressing an era when the present-day states created on nationalistic principles did not exist either in Hungary or in Romania
- both short-circuit the Assmanian model, making it irrelevant from the horizon of the films' period of production and that of the actual audience seeing them
- Hungarian and Romanian audiences of the 21st century (who should mourn and remember the historical collective traumas of the 20th century) prefer to encounter such eras and happenings that fall outside the Asmmanian chain of communicative memory

Combined framework – communicative generations
and that of collective – audience or critical – success

- “(...) in favouring the visual and emotional data while simultaneously playing down the analytical, the motion picture is subtly – and in ways we do not yet know how to measure or describe – altering our very sense of the past.” (Rosenstone 2009, 35).

Poetics: combining irony and playfulness, being anachronistic regarding the depicted era, linguistic puns and cultural re-codings betraying sensibility

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQ9N3ABLdbY>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASrZHyKMO-Q>



Cultural memory-work/historical film

- Even if it seems quite adequate to position historical film as a formal-aesthetic dispositif culturally authorized to operationalize these generations of communicative memory, a great audience segment in Eastern Europe
- 1. happily participates in such memory-work that goes beyond the three communicative generations
- 2. enjoys the postmodern poetic strategies employed by the two films – which thus perform a profound re-coding/re-thinking of the historical film discourse.

Such historical films that deal with the (aftermath) years of the 2nd WW and also achieved audience and critical success within their respective domestic markets in the 21st century

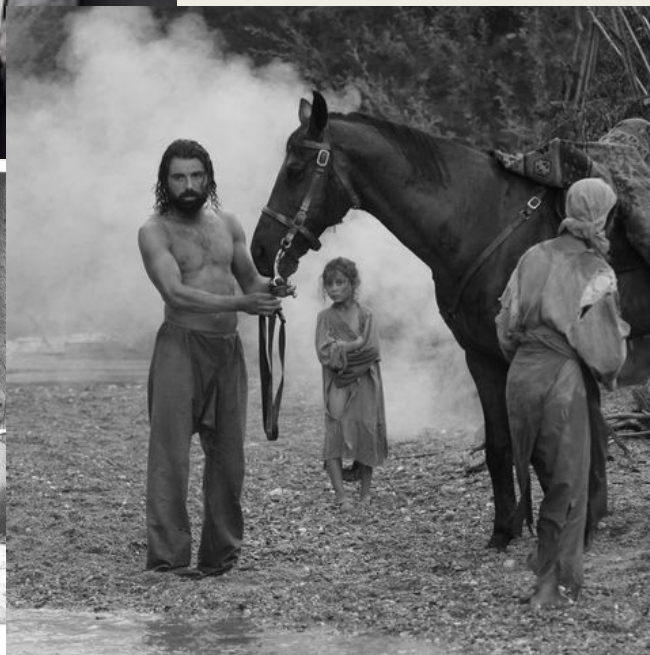


Cultural memory-work/historical film. Case 1.

- Cases of what Fredric Jameson positions as „the nostalgia film”, paraphrased by Marnie Hughes-Warrington as when/how “the surface sheen of a period” is transformed into a commodity as a “compensation for the enfeeblement of historicity in our own time” (Hughes-Warrington 2009, 3)?
- Midcult aesthetics

Cultural memory-work/historical film. Case 2.

- Introduction of out-of-the ordinary, possibly estranging audiovisual elements when historical moments of extreme significance are rendered
- “Trauma, like a covered stain, still has effects. It makes the traumatized person react disproportionately to a present trigger on the strength of the injury from the past. Or it displaces that which brought the trauma about with a different object that is somehow associated with the object of the past.” (Margalit 2002, 126).



Cultural memory-work/historical film

- Depicting a country in a limbo between eras and orders
- The style overwrites/is stronger than the historical specificity: ripe monarchism (1987 *Morometii*) looking similar to the feudal state (*Aferim!*) or early communism (*Morometii 2*), only the plight of the Romanian peasant remaining eternal.
- What we see here is exactly the lack of any “surface sheen” specific of a historical period, and a strong audiovisual composite style of its own standing, which, instead of “the enfeeblement of historicity” as formulated by Jameson could be rather described as a wish for a-historicity, for being posited outside of actual, historical time and space.

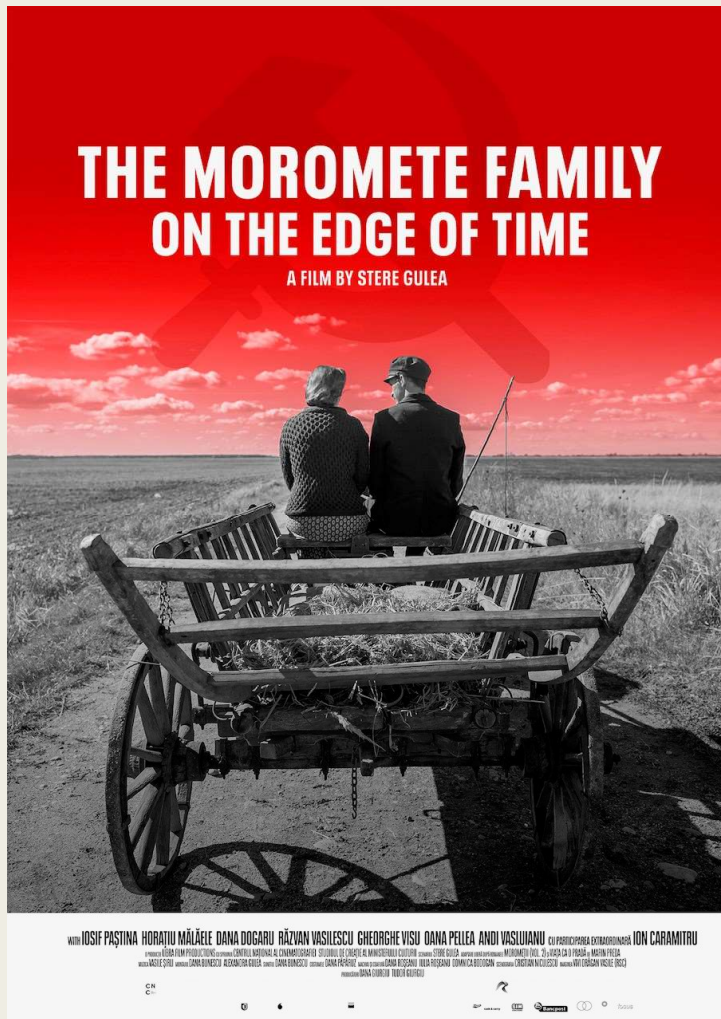


Cultural memory-work/historical film

- The late 1940s and the early 1950s in the 2010s Hungarian historical film discourse with a mass/popular domestic appeal are conceived of as chamber dramas, short-span narratives with one or more breaking points, mostly filmed within interiors recreated with a painstaking historical precision as far as furniture, decors and household objects are considered.
- The attention to “surface sheen” is definitely present.
- The same favouring of stories set in a limbo state between two state forms (the immediate years following the 2nd WW) or two stages of the communist state (the proceedings of the 1956 Hungarian anti-communist uprising).

Cultural memory-work/historical film

- The Assmannian model of communicative generations creates the chain of actual victims, forgetters and mourners/recallers positioned as successive generations in relationship to the collectively traumatic happenings
- Referring to such mid-twentieth century happenings in an (Eastern) European setting as the 2nd World War and/or the instauration of the communist dictatorships would position older filmmakers of historical films as victims of the represented events, while those a generation younger could fall in the category of forgetters, and the youngest ones to the third-generation memory restorers, lacking autobiographical, personal experiences.



Moromeții 2 (2018)

- Dir., script Stere Gulea, prod. Oana Giurgiu, editing Dana Bunesu, Alexandra Gulea, costumes Dana Paparuz, actresses Dana Dogaru and Oana Pellea in lead/important roles



Aurora Borealis (2017)

- Dir. Márta Mészáros, script Márta Mészáros and Éva Pataki with Zoltán Jancsó, lead roles performed by Mari Törőcsik, Ildikó Tóth and Franciska Törőcsik

Conclusion (temporary)

- The female filmmaker a “victim” of the represented historical event: midcult canon and aesthetics adopted – *Aurora Borealis, Morometii* – *On the Edge of Time*.

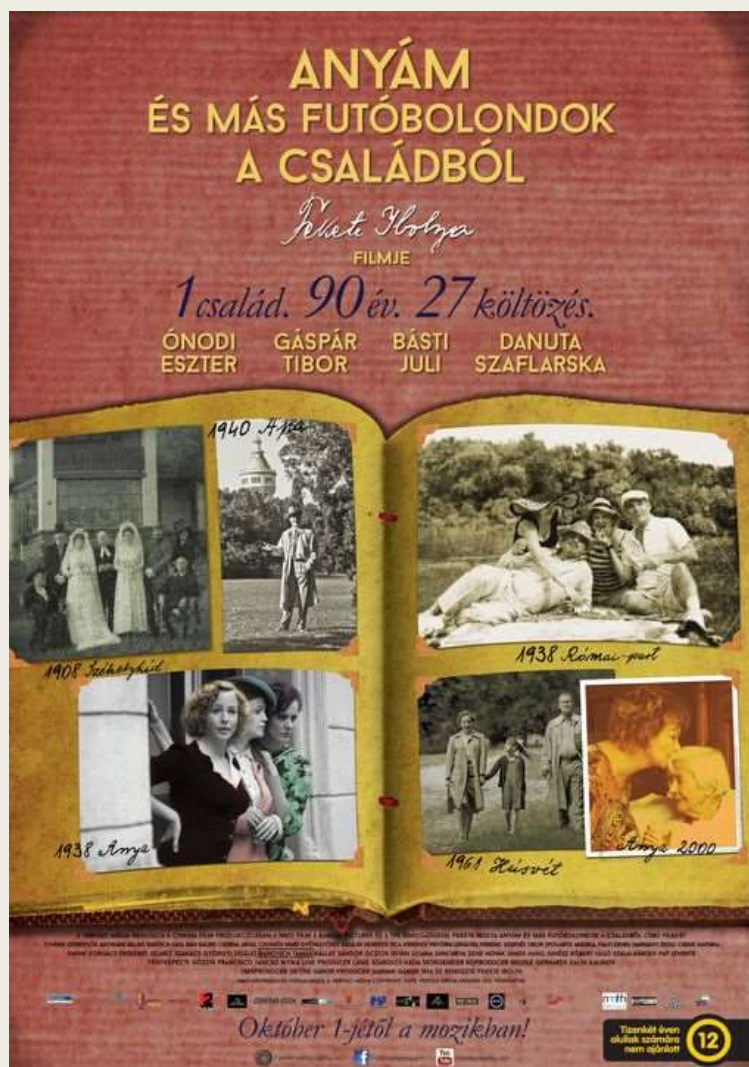
Aglaja (2012)



- Novel by **Aglaja Veterányi**, script and direction by **Krisztina Deák**, film editing by **Bernadett Tuza-Ritter**, costumes by **Györgyi Szakács**, lead roles **Eszter Ónodi**, **Piroska Móga**, **Babett Jávör**

Mother and Other Loonies in the Family (2015)

- Writer/dir. **Ibolya Fekete**,
costumes by **Györgyi Szakács**,
lead actors **Danuta
Szaflarska, Juli Básti, Eszter
Ónodi**



Conclusion (temporary)

- Belonging to the second generation of those “who need to forget”: the “veiling over” method occurs alongside the midcult choices – *Aglaja* and *Other Loonies in the Family*.



*I Do Not Care if We Go Down
in History as Barbarians*
(2018)

- Writer/dir. Radu Jude, producers Maren Ade, Ada Solomon, etc., production design Iuliana Vilsan, chief acting role Ioana Iacob



Eternal Winter (2018)

- Dir. Attila Szász, script Attila Szász and Norbert Köbli, production design by **Viktória Horváth**, **Marina Gera** and **Mária Magdolna Kiss** in (chief) acting roles

Conclusion (temporary)

- A third-generation standpoint of hoping for historical accuracy and authenticity (in spite of the lack of bodily, personal, common memories) might result in exclusive midcult – the case of *Eternal Winter* – or exclusive “veiling over” methodology, as in *I Don’t Care*

Theories of cultural remembering amid mediatized conditions

“Synchronic communities of living men/people” (Király 1998, 233)

“Banal commemoration” - a mode of remembering also linked to mediatized group or mass communication, characterized as “informal, subtle, and non-intrusive” and “able to contain a memory that would otherwise generate protest and animosity” (Vinitzky-Seroussi 2016, 90)

Theories of cultural remembering amid mediatized conditions

- “A common memory, then, is an aggregate notion. It aggregates the memories of all those people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually. (...) A shared memory, on the other hand, is not a simple aggregate of individual memories. It requires communication. A shared memory integrates and calibrates the different perspectives of those who remember the episode (...) into one version. Other people in the community who were not there at the time may then be plugged into the experience of those who were in the square, through channels of description rather than by direct experience. Shared memory is built on the division of mnemonic labour.” (Margalit 2002, 51-52)

Thank you for your
attention!

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*Feature Filmic Processing of
Collective Traumatization in
Contemporary European Film: A
Possible Model of Mediated Public
Memory-Work* (Bolyai János
Research Scholarship, Hungarian
Academy of Sciences 2021-2024).



Thank you for your
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