

Space in Romanian and Hungarian Cinema

“This book offers an original and innovative framework for considering Hungarian and Romanian cinema. In focusing on the disciplinary spaces of socialist and post-socialist film, Anna Batori sheds light on the ways in which vertical and horizontal planes and lines in cinema can have significant political implications. This is an important work for film theory as well as for wider studies of the region.”

—Matilda Mroz, *University of Sussex, UK*

Anna Batori

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For my parents, István and Valéria.

PREFACE

The wish to categorise Eastern European art films under a defined and united aesthetic umbrella came to my mind as a university student when, after visiting so many Eastern European film festivals, film clubs and conferences, I felt a striking connection among the moving images from the post-socialist region. The more films that I, a true cinophile, watched, the more clearly I could understand the difference between global film-making practices and Eastern European cinema. My everyday in Hungary and Romania—together with my first-hand experience of the capitalist transformation of the region and the very strong socialist heritage that rules its everyday—only helped me to see the enormous imprint that socialism has left in people’s minds and the cinematic thinking of the region. These art films have a depressing, gloomy atmosphere that originates not only from the disheartening topics they deal with but from the very physical spaces they chose for the setting. This very recognition, together with my memories regarding these spaces, encouraged me to base my doctoral research on this topic.

I must thank *Screen* for the extraordinary opportunity that their doctoral scholarship has given me. It was an honour to have such a prestigious journal sponsor this research. My deepest gratitude goes to Dimitris Eleftheriotis of the University of Glasgow, Alastair Phillips of the University of Warwick and Ewa Mazierska of the University of Central Lancashire. I feel deeply indebted for their support and encouragement. I am grateful to the staff of the School of Culture and Creative Arts and the Department of Film, Theatre and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow, which hosted my doctoral research. I also feel obligated to the Russian, East European,

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The list of the contributors who made this monograph happen would simply extend its limits. However, a special debt is owed to Mihai Fulger, who guided me through the Romanian archive labyrinths, and the enthusiastic staff of the CNC. Also, I thank my colleagues in the field of Film Studies and Eastern European Studies for all the ideas and help and for the will to make this field grow.

Finally, my friends and family. Special thanks go to Zsófia Vasi, Nigar Nazirova and Sajjad Ali Khan for their unconditional love, patience and support during this research. Last but not least, my most profound gratitude goes to my family: István, Valéria, Blanka, Árpád and Botond. Your way of thinking, values, personal support, absolute encouragement, and unbroken optimism have given me the strongest net that catches me when I fall. I thank you for guiding me through our bittersweet Eastern European everydays and the gift to be proud of where I come from. For always believing in who I am, this book is dedicated to you.

Personally, I do not think that Eastern Europe is as depressing as the films depict. What is more, for me, Eastern Europe is one of the brightest and most welcoming parts of the world, where interpersonal communication has a special value and where traditions still form a strong glue among citizens. The reason why film-makers depict this region so darkly—which stands in contrast to my first-hand experience—must be sought in the political, social and cultural structure of the socialist past and the subsequent quick, ruthless capitalist transformation. I hope this book helps scholars, students and non-academics to see and understand the films of Eastern Europe and their gloomy atmosphere from a slightly different perspective.

Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Anna Batori

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