

# THE HUNGARIAN POST-COMMUNIST BLACK SERIES (1956–2012) A PREPARATORY SKETCH ABOUT THE HISTORICAL TIMES' STRUCTURE

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*The humanities have known few moments as decisive as the time when “Empires,” dynasties, and centuries placed under the evocation of an eponymous hero, all those old divisions, in a word, born from a monarchic and oratory tradition, started to give ground to another type of division, based on the observation of social phenomena.*  
Marc Bloch, La Société féodale (1939-40)

*Nothing is more important, in our assessment, at the center of the social reality, than this keen, intimate, indefinitely repeated opposition between the instant and the slow passage of time. Whether it is for past or actuality, a sharp consciousness of this plurality of social time is indispensable to a common methodology in the human sciences.*  
Fernand Braudel, Ecrits (1958)

Through a corpus assembled under the name of the Hungarian Post-communist Black Series, this paper aims to reconsider the proposals of Nouvelle Histoire historians as well as the time stratum of R. Koselleck, regarding the articulation of different time sets when constructing film history. How can film historians build a proper time structure involving economic and political memory, the evolution of the Hungarian film production system and the multiple times a film may recall? This reflection was made in order to understand such a chain of events as 1988–1990, and to offer new ways of considering the problem of an event's status in its relation to films and the form of memory they present.

**Keywords:** Hungarian film, post-war filmproduction, transition

In their respective times, Bloch and then Braudel raised two different – yet deeply related – issues regarding our understanding of historical time. Their lessons, along with the works and ideas of other historians', nourished extensive debates

during the following decades. Nevertheless, it seems to me that they still, today, offer consequent food for historical thought, especially when interrogations of the arts take center stage and overwhelm the equilibrium (always needing to be renewed) of the articulation of historical times, carriers of the riddled diversity of the phenomena inherent to each social structure.

In this respect, I would like to introduce a few reflections on the matter of time in film history, based on the example of a corpus of movies<sup>1</sup> gathered by András Bálint Kovács under the title “post-communist black series” in Hungary [36]. These films, which present a strong shared sense of aesthetics,<sup>2</sup> led me from the hypothesis of their serial gathering to the possibility of their gathering due to the Hungarian micro-society out of which they were produced – an “art world” [Becker] that still seeks ascertainment. Thus, this research is centered upon the exploration of linkages between two major transformative points; one of an aesthetic nature exemplified by *Kárhozat* [Damnation], in 1988, and the other, political, attributable to the fall of communism in 1989. Could those two transformative points be linked?

The most obvious answer calls for a “stylistic reaction” or rather “anticipation”<sup>3</sup> of the political and social changes which took place around 1989 [Kovács, 35]. I would like to suggest a different way of approaching this issue,<sup>4</sup> based on a more meticulous examination of those events, replaced in structures<sup>5</sup> which belong, on this observation’s scale, to a form of Braudel’s long length (*longue durée*).<sup>6</sup> Those movies rather appear to translate the results of a slow evolution between this Hungarian film society and the history of their own country over the course of the past sixty years: the aesthetic transformative point of 1988 would not mainly be linked to 1989 nor would reflect a form of interest related to the post-communist transition, but would rather translate a point in the evolution of a much deeper, life-sized pattern of *mental atmosphere* [Bloch; 96] in the society under examination.

At this point, we can clearly see the importance of merging Braudel’s multi-temporality with Bloch’s idea, according to which time(s) have to be set, for the needs of the analysis, depending on the structures of the social phenomenon. As Michèle Lagny noted,<sup>7</sup> very few – at least, film – historians have shown an ability to adapt themselves and produce, beforehand, a consequential theoretical reflection on time – the “substance of history” [Prost; 103] – by conducting their work to the fundamental point where it takes into account time’s superposed plurality given by the essence of the object in question, in order to get as close as possible to the nature of the relationality between the different series of events composing the evolution of a society.<sup>8</sup> The German historian Reinhart Koselleck seems the most visionary heir to Braudel, and in his wake I will refer from this point forward to the concept of “time’s stratum” (*Zeitschichten*) [Koselleck; 21], rather than to Braudel’s multi-temporality, for it more efficiently reflects the fundamental idea

of different, autonomous, yet related layers of time, and in their tracks, that is to say, the “contemporaneity of the non-contemporary” [Koselleck; 151] – a lesson Siegfried Kracauer initiated in his last, unfinished work [139 sq]<sup>9</sup>.

Therefore, the question still remains: how can we come to a proper historical understanding of distinct chains of events? In this case, how can we build and define a real *structure of historical time's stratum*s based on the “observation of social phenomena” in order to answer the basic etiologic questions asked by an aesthetic transformation? Which times do we have to determine, how should we periodize them (externally and internally), how can we define their inner characteristics (rhythm, speed, form) and their external, human-based representation and perception (see *infra*)? How can we articulate them and, in the end, how can we bring them together within a unifying time?

### 1. Economic and political memory

Although conducting a geographical study of Hungary – and it is worth taking a moment to underline its position in the heart of the Pannonian basin, surrounded by the Alps in the west, the Carpathians in the north and east, and the Balkans in the south – could help stress the specific remoteness of its inhabitants and the society under examination, it seems that these considerations, paired with a short linguistic overview, is not relevant at this stage. Braudel found his beloved *longue durée* there, and built his story on this premise,<sup>10</sup> but our fundamental time's stratum is not of a *longue durée* and should be sought in the general aspects of Hungarian economy. In 1968, a reform gave Hungary a different profile from the other East European countries, leading to the famous idea of the *legvidámabb barakk*, or the most cheerful barrack. This was referred to as the New Economic Mechanism (NEM). The economic growth of Hungary rose in the 1970s, a situation which was to deteriorate from the beginning of the 1980s, until 1994. During this second period, which could symbolically start in 1982 with the entrance of Hungary into the International Monetary Fund (with 7.5 billion dollars of debt), 1989 appears to be, on a strictly economic level, the surface sanction of a deeper, longer crisis. The regime change accelerated something which had already been in effect for years. The Antall government continued to switch from the planned economy to a market economy, and kept implementing privatization. In 1994, the situation changed. A new government, led by Gyula Horn, applied the “austerity program” with, for example, aggressive privatization of state-owned companies, which yielded impressive growth until the global crisis of 2007–2008<sup>11</sup>.

Political time works in a different way, yet tightly woven together with economic time. The hypothesis on which this inquiry is based merges the political

approach with Hungary's ideological history, since what is at stake is mainly the question of the transition toward democracy. In this respect, shifts from left to right wing after 1989 do not affect the structuring of time. That is to say, keeping the events of 1956 in mind, 1962 is our real starting point. It was in 1962 that the period of the "consolidation of socialism" was declared complete by the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party – and a general amnesty was pronounced for most of the people who had been sentenced in 1956. This is the context that allowed the development of the NEM. Thanks to the durability of János Kádár among several other phenomena, a long era started, ending in 1988–1990, with the fall of communism.<sup>12</sup> The second era, from 1988 until 2012 – when the new Constitution, offered by the Orbán government, was adopted, which meant a shift from the *Magyar Köztársaság* (Republic of Hungary) to *Magyarország* (Hungary) – is the extensive post-communist era, the effective transition toward democracy – ending with a surprising question mark.

The interwoven structure, composed of the relations between economy and politics in Hungary during more than half a century, could not possibly be overlooked. Mutual influences were strong, from the end of the "consolidation of socialism" to the NEM, from the early 1980s crisis to the political events around 1989 – staying on the most upper layer of events. Other fundamental considerations, however, have to be taken into account – such as general social consequences, basic material conditions of life, distinct impacts on the different "class mentalities" – the list goes on. But to analyze properly the relation between those chains of events, they have to be kept separate: not only do their respective periodizations, external and internal, not match – we will see later the importance this has – but they also do not evolve in the same way. Economy's time shows ups and downs, growths and decreases, whereas politics' time shows flats and reliefs, stabilities and disparities. Institutions' and laws' time can only be considered as corresponding to stages, there is no form of growth, and stability cannot be overthrown. Economy's time is slower and with much bigger inertia than that of politics', where an event can lead almost immediately to another and change the face of the country in just a few hours.

In the end, what should be at stake, and built on the premises of economic and political history, is rather a *memory*: answering not the question "what happened?" but rather "how did/do people have a certain consciousness of the events and the global situation?" This shift in perspective is crucial in order to rummage about in the *experience* of political events and economic structures that Hungarian society has gone through. From the two types of traces differentiated by Georges Duby, sources should be used as sediments for building the questionnaires, and collecting the first kind of traces, which "reside, diffused, swaying, countless, clear or muddled, in the memory of men from our time" [Duby, 1973; 8–9].

## 2. Organization of the Hungarian film production system

Hungary's global, economic, and political situations are derivatives of multiple evolutions: the evolution of laws pertaining to cultural life, and the evolution of filmic institutions, as well as the shift in production structures and general organization of film production. In 1963, the system of production, which was to last for the next twenty years, was settled. To briefly summarize<sup>13</sup>: there were five studios, including the Béla Balázs Stúdió (BBS), under the tutelage of the General Council of Film (censorship, exploitation of production) and Mafilm (State society, only employer and owner of film installations). This setup was to last until 1985, due to the control of György Aczél, who was the main cultural politician during these twenty years. On 1 July 1985, the film production system was deeply re-organized, in order to answer the economic wellbeing of the country. An increased element of autonomy and responsibility was introduced, as well as a new element of economic competition between the different film studios<sup>14</sup>. In the end, there was an opportunity to make films outside of the official studios, financed by private capital. As Jean-Pierre Jeancolas stated it, “this year of 1985 was the year of Társulás Stúdió's closing, Gábor Bódy's suicide, also the one, even if it is less clear on their discontent consciousness’, in which the economic crisis and its immediate consequences in every field [...] became unavoidable imperatives. 1985 would have been the year of the shift, of the blockage and the closing of Hungarian cinema. 1985 was more important in their eyes, for the cinematographic creation, than the political and social turn of 1989-1990” [Jeancolas; 211]. In 1987, a second major reform came. The four studios were transformed into financially and artistically independent companies, opened to private capital, and the monopoly of Mafilm was abolished. In 1991, the previous state organization was replaced by the brand new Magyar Mozgókép Alapítvány (MMA), which became the Magyar Mozgókép Közalapítvány (MMK) in 1998. It is worth noting that Ferenc Köhalmi accompanied this very progressive transition. From 1982 to 1996, he remained the Head of the Film Management Board (*Filmfőigazgatóság vezetője*), which shows quite accurately how Hungarians intended the transition to be – as a slow, seamless process toward a new reorganization.

This filmic production time is a lower stratum of the global structure. As Pierre Sorlin stressed, if films “bring up to date possibilities of meaning, virtual in the society, they do it inside an economic group they are marked with” [112]. Consequently, this time helps us understand how the transformations of the film production system allowed for the creation of certain films and greatly influenced them. On the other hand, the period before the actual transition, in 1985, is useless besides having drawn the outlines of an initial, stable situation, which would change quite slowly for almost fifteen years. Although it is slow, its inertia is not that high, since changes are rapidly put into action in the film industry.

### 3. Sociology, mentalities, commitments

The three previous time's stratum aim to prepare the analysis of the fourth one, where I will switch from mostly descriptive comments to the explanatory part. The genealogy of this time's conceptualization finds its roots as far back as the late 1940s, with Lucien Febvre and his "mental equipment" (*outillage mental*) [Febvre, 1947; 166]. Additionally, Bloch went to the earlier quoted idea of a "mental atmosphere." First, Febvre's rather psychological approach, and secondly, Bloch's more socially based approach led to a great shift in the practices of French historians in the 1960s toward a mentalities history. In this psycho-sociological path, though slightly divergent, my goal in this section is to define a time able to frame an inquiry of what one could call a "form of extended commitment" from a society to this ideology: how did this *art world's* insight, *representation* about the communist and post-communist era as well as their daily consequences evolve?

The periodization operation is surely not proof against challenges, since such a time cannot be marked out by precise events. This time is on the human-life scale, it begins with people: in the Hungarian film society under examination here, most of the people involved were born in the 1950s and are still alive today. In this floating set of time, a suspended pattern could be used, tracing the human's natural evolution: childhood and somehow neutrality until about sixteen years of age (the 1970s), adolescence with a time of strong commitments until the age of thirty/thirty-five (around 1985), and ultimately developing into maturity with disillusionment from then on<sup>15</sup>. This should also be handled with great care: whereas economic time was mostly constructed as a line going up and down, and political time is rather understandable in terms of flats and reliefs – consistencies and tumults – this time should be seen as a unique, mono-directional line similar to a very long and slow transition, consisting of an outstanding number of swerves and redirections toward something known only *a posteriori*.

At this point, a few considerations regarding the characteristics of this time will shed light on its relations to the others. First and foremost, here lies Braudel's *longue durée*<sup>16</sup>. This time is the slowest, the most anachronistic one regarding the constellations of events which may occur in the other sets of time – "the inertia, capital historical force, which is rather due to minds than to the matter" [Le Goff, 1974; 112] reigns supreme in this time. In this spirit, we should also stress its depth: one could react immediately to something, but to reach the deeper levels of one's consciousness and basic everyday life philosophy, events are slowed so that they can be processed, and most of the time it takes several, sometimes seemingly non-related events to reinforce such and such aspect of someone's inner construction. Here, revolutions are almost imperceptible, shaped by an innumerable amount of insignificant events. Furthermore, we have to take into account the fact



that a man is much more affected by events or situations when he is sixteen than when he is forty years old.

This time is comparable to the *longue durée* also because of its unifying value. Paul Ricoeur, in his analysis of Braudel's work, highlighted the convergence of the *longue durée* with physical time as "the unifying principle of the specific times of diverse colors" [1983; 381]. This coordinating body will be responsible for the "interlacing of times," inviting to a mind in counterpoint. As a result of the previous draft in its characterization, I could say, for example, that depending on the point (age) at which we are situated, other times will not have the same strength. The consequences of the NEM during the 1970s were much more important for a thirteen-year-old teenager in his understanding and perception of communism than everything which might have been going on in the political sphere. On the other hand, the persistence of censorship mechanisms during the beginning of the 1980s will guide a young filmmaker in his practice, on the level of poetics and theme, more strongly than the beginning of a national economic crisis. The 1985 law about the reorganization of the cinematographic structures has a much deeper impact on a young filmmaker's life than the entrance of Hungary into the IMF, three years before. The austerity program of the nineties surely helped Hungary to get back on track, but it was a complete disaster for the Hungarian film industry and its filmmakers. There are also some sociological knots at work here, cultural networks, "main centers of global sociability" [Le Roy Ladurie; 399] such as the BBS, the short adventure of the Társulás Stúdió, the 25<sup>th</sup> Theatre (25. Színház) or the Young Artists' Club (*Fiatalkor Művészek Klubja*), where people from the *anti-világ*,<sup>17</sup> as they called it, met, exchanged ideas, opinions, etc. A few elements, like spatial knots in the time, which had a strong influence on the ideological evolution of the supra-individual and intersubjective structure – mentalities, beliefs, commitments: "a mentality is not only the fact that several individuals think the same thing: this thought, in each of them is, in diverse ways, marked by the fact that others think it as well" [Veyne; 113]. These are the very places where the process of ideological commitment and artistic thinking are the strongest.

#### 4. Films, transition, historicity

In the end, some results of this artistic thinking can be seen in the films themselves. The misleading evidence of this periodization would like to state that this time starts in 1988, with the Hungarian release of *Kárhozat*, and stops in 2011, with Tarr Béla's last film, *The Turin Horse*. Two examples on each side will show that both films are not to be trusted. I will use them to bring some answers to the initial hypothesis and, hopefully, to the question of how one can rethink

the simultaneities and the difference of interactions between events that have to be understood through their respective positions within separated temporal sequences, proving that such a structuring of time allows a sharper understanding of the phenomenon.

*Kárhozat* is nothing like a film-manifesto. When asked about its influence on his first film, *Árnyék a havon* (1992), Janisch claimed that he started to work on the project in 1987, and at this time, he rather recognized himself in the conception of György Fehér's *Szürkület* (Twilight, 1990) – he caught sight of it in a studio.<sup>18</sup> Before that, Janisch also directed two short films in which traces of his later style are undeniable. Tarr's *Sátántangó* (Satan's Tango, 1994) was a project he started in the middle of the 1980s, before *Kárhozat*, but could not go through because of financial reasons. János Másik, who worked as a composer with Szabó Ildikó and Enyedi Ildikó, explained that, at the time, *Sátántangó* was much more unexpected.<sup>19</sup> Either way, it is possible to theorize neither a transformative point, nor a real transition from communist – or rather, for most of these filmmakers, anti-communist – films to post-communist films. In my understanding, these movies and their appearance do not reflect a political change, and 1988 cannot be linked with 1989. Gábor Eröss stated that “the ‘fall of communism’ does not particularly interest Hungarian filmmakers, at least not the events, rather the results” [239]. In the case under examination, I only agree with the first part of Eröss' claim. The second is an anachronism, “the sin amongst all unpardonable” [Febvre, 1947; 32]: how could a series of films have, as a topic, the *results* of something which actually started only five years later? I would rather describe a longer evolution: this society, mainly born in the difficult aftermaths of 1956, grew up in the 1960s. These filmmakers were raised in a paradoxical time, since their youth was marked both with a national trauma, and a very progressive broadening of the dictatorship. During the 1970s, life got a bit softer – the NEM started, slowly, to have positive effects –, although they kept fighting against a coercive regime – after all, it remained a dictatorship. Tarr, who already made films, belonged to what has been named the “Budapest Documentary Film School,” shot about practical social issues. In the 1980s, communism – through economy and social conditions mostly – started slowly to deteriorate. This is the movement which influenced, most probably unconsciously, the creation of what Kovács called “the post-communist Hungarian black series” which was, at least at its beginnings, much more communist than post-communist, meaning that it is linked to the history of communism, rather than to the post-communist transition. The second part of the 1980s showed, especially in the film society, through the laws of 1985 and 1987, the fall of an economic system as well as the crumbling of a dominant ideology. I think directors were doubly disappointed: after being raised in it, by communism itself, but also by its progressive disappearance during the 1980s, since everyday life did not get any better.



In this respect, I tend toward minimizing the importance of the consequences of the revolutions of 1988–1990. Major political changes did happen, but years had to pass before any economic and social visible improvements occurred. The first government, led by Prime Minister József Antall (also a scholar, archivist, historian) and president Árpád Göncz (also a writer and translator, for instance of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*), was not ready to handle such a difficult situation, and life continued to worsen. The consequences of the policies of the second government headed in the same direction, since the austerity program could not possibly raise the standard of living in the first years – the inertia of economic time is fundamental. On the whole, during the twenty years surrounding 1989 (ten on either side), the Hungarian situation mainly got worse and worse. The event itself was almost nothing more than the continuation of the second disappointment, a “slender bobble of history [with] small backwashes” [Duby, 1973; 8], crushed into the torrent of people struggling in vain, one day after another, for their wages, a bigger flat, a western car, etc. It reminds me of what Aby Warburg said about the discovery of the *Laocoon* in 1506: “if they had not discovered it, the Renaissance would have invented it” [241] – the event as a symptom of socio-economic currents.

Henri Rousso asked about French films under Vichy “what is the link between a filmic representation and the collective memory?,” concluding on different possibilities in terms of “anticipation” or “crystallization” [274–275]. In my case I would say that the economic and social movements of the time, with their high inertia, but long length, progressively led, from one disappointment to another, this specific Hungarian artistic society pushed to operate changes in their aesthetic and themes. They got away from practical social issues to reach more philosophical interrogations about the meaning of time, the possibility of progress or the status of hope. Together, these ‘black series’ films, created by a society about “a historical experience belonging [to them] inherently” [Leutrat; 9], constitute a representation of their collective memory of a social trauma<sup>20</sup>, lived on a daily basis for decades.

Marc Ferro wrote that films can be the basis of a “historical and scientific investigation mode” [211], underlining that “a process apparently used to express length, or an other device (of style) transcribing a displacement in space etc., can unbeknown by the director and reveal ideological and social zones he/[she] was not aware of” [22–23]. In this respect, I would like to briefly delve into a single example: the question of time. The very original treatment of time and its *mise-en-scène*, in most of those movies, can be explained by various factors. I do not want to deny the strong aesthetic influences these movies carry, such as the first of Jancsó's films<sup>21</sup>, Bergman, or rather philosophical influences, like Kafka or Nietzsche [among others, Bouquet; 76–77, Lengyel; 265–284, Tison; 107–121]. I do want to stress that besides that, we can also trace the extent to

which these films are traces of a “regime of historicity,” witnesses of the historical self-consciousness of a society in a “crisis of time, [...] when the articulations of past, present and future come to loose their obviousness” [Hartog; 29]. We shall see “cinema as one of history’s forms of experience [...], it attempts, in its own way, to get closer from the places and times were the interiority of our memory and process of our socialization meet” [Delage; 98]. The progressive disappearance of historical films, popular during the 1960s and 1970s, and their taste for characters imprisoned in an endless time and undefined places leads to the above all fact: “henceforth, the question of time is at the origin of the story. An uninhabitable, opaque, uniform yet shapeless time: a present without past but not without memory; a present without future yet suspended in an indefinite waiting” [Rollet, 2006; 103]. Rollet’s insightful analysis of historical time in Tarr’s films contains the seeds of a reflection to conduct inquiry, with the recent work of François Hartog, about the regimes of historicity.<sup>22</sup> Hartog analyzes – in the legacy of Koselleck on modern times – the contemporaneous regime of historicity as *presentism*, “understood as the closing in on the present alone, and point of view of the present on itself” [261]. In society ruled by *presentism*, “future is no longer equated with]promises nor the “hope principle,” but with threat. Such is the reversal. This future is no longer a bright horizon we walk toward, but a shadow line we set in motion in our direction, while we seem to be stamping the present area and brewing over a past which does not pass” [255-256]. I will not develop further than another quote from Rollet: “Béla Tarr’s cinema does not fall under a “postmodern” imaginary, but rather under a “metamodernity,” where the consciousness of our unsurpassable historicity collides with history’s absence of meaning” [2016; 35].

On the other side of the historical pole, *A Torinói ló* as the closing movie is debatable. A sociology of cinematographic forms – or rather a morphologic analysis – should take into account a hard core<sup>23</sup> from which every films distance to it would be determined. In this respect, *A Torinói ló* seems quite far from Fehér’s and Tarr’s previous films. If it still belongs to the corpus, it should not be included without qualification. Same for Kornél Mundruczó’s *Delta*, since the director does not belong to the same generation, started making films later and uses a quite different style. This grey area is part of a bigger one: the second period of this time. Regarding them as a whole, we can clearly distinguish two main periods. Leaving the conception time of the first films behind, we first have the blossoming of those dark flowers, from 1988 to the end of the nineties. In this decade, eleven of the fifteen films were released, whereas only four were released during the next thirteen years, at a decreasing pace and, even more importantly, by only two of the eight directors. By the end of the nineties – the will to put an arbitrary time limit to the result of complex conditions would be childish –, the directors’ use of this aesthetic weakened. They took different paths, except for Tarr who kept building

his work, step by step. The last hypothesis I will draft, following and concluding the pattern I have been developing until now, is that this aforementioned weakening reflects the progressive economic and political stabilization from the middle of the nineties. Possibly, hopefully, necessarily, facing the contemporary political and social conditions evolution of Hungary, a new art world will tighten back up from younger filmmakers, new films will be created, answering to, arguing with the dominant experience of time – where progress is made out of an invasive past, and future is consigned to the level of the past.

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## Notes

- 1 It includes Tarr Béla's *Damnation* (*Kárhozat*, 1988), *Satan's Tango* (*Sátántangó*, 1994), *Werckmeister Harmonies* (*Werckmeister harmóniák*, 2000), *Man from London* (*A Londoni férfi*, 2007), *Turin Horse* (*A Torinói ló*, 2011), Fehér György's *Twilight* (*Szürkület*, 1990) and *Passion* (*Szenvedély*, 1998), Enyedi Ildikó's *My 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (*Az én XX. Századom*, 1989), Szász János' *Woyzeck* (1994) and *Witman's boys* (*Witman fik*, 1997), Szabó Ildikó's *Child Murders* (*Gyerekgilkosságok*, 1993), Sopsits Árpád's *Shooting Gallery* (*Céllövölde*, 1990), Janisch Attila's *Shadow on the Snow* (*Árnyék a havon*, 1992) and *Long Twilight* (*Hosszú alkony*, 1997) and eventually Kornél Mundruczó's *Delta* (2008).

- 2 Among other characteristics: depressed atmosphere, use of black and white, sequence shots, slow movements of camera, slow pace, undetermined places, etc.
- 3 Marshall McLuhan already underlined arts' ability to "forestall a social or technology future evolution, sometimes more than a generation beforehand" [15]. All quotes are translated from French by author.
- 4 An interesting warning of the misleading nature of different transformative points in different chains of events can be found in *De Blum à Pétain. Cinéma et société française (1936–1944)*, where the author shows through consequent analysis that French fiction films from this era "worked in the opposite direction of prevailing ideologies before and after the Occupation" [Garçon; XII].
- 5 Since interrogations about time are at stake here, structures as such will not be described as they should.
- 6 His most famous example is his PhD dissertation, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (1949). See also the insightful analysis by Paul Ricoeur [1982; 366–381].
- 7 "Rarely until now [film historians] made the effort to formulate the conceptual frames with which they could justify the delimitations imposed by themselves" [Lagny, 124].
- 8 "Above all, I guessed that a society, like a landscape, is a system with numerous factors determining its structure and evolution, that relations between those factors are not of cause and effect but of correlation, interferences" [Duby, 1992; 15].
- 9 He wrote about the non-homogeneity and the non-contemporaneous nature of time and the historical universe, arguing that an event's date only has importance from the position it has within its temporal sequence [214].
- 10 Fernand Braudel, *op. cit.* We should notice that his master, Lucien Febvre, close to geographer Vidal de la Blache, started his 1912 dissertation with a chapter dedicated to the geographic *mise-en-scène* of his territory [Febvre, 1970; 24–43]. Additionally, one should not forget that a consequential amount of theoretical propositions from the French *Ecole des Annales* can already be found in Jules Michelet's masterwork: "Without a geographic base, the people, the historic actor seems to be walking in the air, like in those Chinese paintings where the floor is missing" [VI].
- 11 One could ask why the chronology is stopped at 2008, while the last produced film was in 2011. Exploring different times, seemingly hardly related to films, should not make us forget that, in the end, the movies are the center of this study. However, from 2007 only one movie was released, the last of Tarr Béla's, whom, by this time, was renowned worldwide, preventing him from most of the economic constraints.
- 12 Needless to say that this summary has to be nuanced. Even though I do not want to sink into wider considerations, I would like to clarify one point I cannot possibly investigate deeper here. 1988–1990 should be looked over as a "revolution" in how Krzysztof Pomian would understand it: "Every revolution is nothing but the disruption of a structure and the advent of a new structure. In this meaning, 'revolution' loses its ideological aura. [...] A revolution is no longer thought of as a sequence of unique events. It is a wave of innovations." Pomian, in koselleckian terms, raised the "horizon of meaning" (*Sinnhorizon*) of the event, transforming it into a revolution. Therefore, 1988–1990 should not only be understood as a revolution, but also as a part of a wider period, the post-communist era. [Pomian; 132].
- 13 For further information, refer to listed secondary sources from which this abstract was constructed: [Jeancolas; 51–58, Iordanova; 22–29, Cunningham 94–159, Havas; 211–221].
- 14 At the end of the year came the annual account, and the success of the studio's productions set its subsidies for the following year.
- 15 This overall simplification – which leaves place for more complex analysis to be accomplished in a larger work is based on my discussions with several persons from this society (Másik János,

Janisch Attila, Forgács András, Vig Mihály, etc.), along with a Hungarian proverb Vig Mihály quoted : “Someone who does not want to save the world at twenty years old is bad, someone who still wants to do it at forty is stupid” [Chiffolleau; 32], and the often repeated assertion of Tarr according to whom both his interests in his realizations went from social to ontological and cosmic problems [Ballard].

- 16 “The *longue durée* does not have to be a long chronological period, it is this part of history, the one of structures, which evolves and changes in the slowest way.” [Le Goff, 1983; XI–XII].
- 17 Literally “anti-world” – the opposition.
- 18 Interview with author, 27/07/2015 in Budapest.
- 19 Interview with author, 08/07/2015 in Budapest.
- 20 Ricoeur’s paper about relations between history and verity on one side, and memory with mourning on the other is prior to any reflection [1998; 22–23].
- 21 Particularly in the camera’s slow, incarcerating movements, as Jarmo Valkola noted it [183].
- 22 Antoine De Baecque’s work about Tarkovski, Guerman, Sokurov and Kusturica, with its central idea of “demodernisation” as a “cinematographic form of history” in East European films is an important and complementary theoretical point of view [311–373].
- 23 Jean-Pierre Jeancolas rightfully determined that the two films from Fehér György and those from Tarr Béla, until *A Londoni férfi*, constitute this ‘hard’ core [294–299].