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Coming into Age/ncy

Women in Filmmaking — The Hungarian Case

Industry practice has received insufficient attention in histories of East-Central European cinema in general, with studies that also consider gender being particularly scarce. The growing body of scholarship that focuses on East-Central European women's participation in filmmaking reflects broader tendencies in international feminist Film Studies insofar as it tends to limit discussion to the contributions of female directors, or assesses completed works. Other behind-the-screen positions have received scant attention and questions of production have not been broached.¹⁾ In response, I attempted elsewhere to provide the first history of the Hungarian film industry that was written from a feminist perspective,²⁾ one that covered the ways in which women were represented on the screen and how they contributed to film production during the period of state-socialism and the first fifteen years of democratic rule.³⁾ That study considered whether the representation and the participation of women were more favorable during state-socialism or after it. This essay provides a summary and an analysis of the data uncovered in the process of researching that project, before addressing questions of representation in the final section.

- 1) See for example Elżbieta H. Oleksy, Elżbieta Ostrowska, and Michael Stevenson (eds.), *Gender in Film and the Media: East-West Dialogues* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000); Dina Iordanova, 'Women's cinema, women's concerns', in *Cinema of the Other Europe: The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film* (London: Wallflower, 2003), pp. 119–42; Almira Ousmanova, 'Re-making love: love and sexual difference in Soviet and Post-Soviet cinema', in *Lytys, medijos, masinė kultūra* (Vilnius: Academy of Fine Arts, 2005), pp. 179–92; Anikó Imre, *East European Cinemas* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Ewa Mazierska and Elżbieta Ostrowska, *Women in Polish Cinema* (New York: Berghahn, 2006).
- 2) The use of the lowercase pronoun "i" signifies my reservations about a convention in the English language, wherein the first-person singular is capitalized and thusly prioritized. It comes across as a remarkably self-centered characteristic and as such may deserve to be denaturalized. In this sense my use of "i" is not unlike the initially distracting but now widely accepted replacement of the generic "he" with gender-neutral pronouns. See T.R.O.Y., 'The new world disorder: a global network of direct democracy and community currency'. <http://utopianwc.com/2001/troy_text.asp> [accessed 19 June 2012].
- 3) This article is an abbreviated version of Part III of my monograph *Gendered Creative Options and Social Voices: Politics, Cinema, and the Visual Arts in State-Socialist and Post-Socialist Hungary* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2013). I thank the publisher for granting me permission to reprint an edited version here.

The “emancipation” of women through paid work and civic engagement constituted part of the political agenda of state-socialism.⁴⁾ Consequently, the education, employment, and public visibility of women increased considerably. One of the most high-profile achievements of such a policy was the unprecedented numbers of women in employment, which reached 95% by the end of the 1980s. Female employment rates surpassed those of developed nations, including even those of Scandinavian countries, which were widely seen to have been trailblazers in this respect. Women’s participation in secondary and tertiary education also grew rapidly, exceeding that of men by the mid-1970s.⁵⁾ Nevertheless, in spite of these gains, gender stereotyping remained a pervasive problem. While some professions boasted high levels of female participation, others remained all but closed to women, who were particularly underrepresented in positions of power.

Both the inroads that women made and the obstacles that stood in their way continued after socialism ended in Hungary in 1989. Although women now have equal educational opportunities — to the extent that they constitute the majority of full-time students — gender-specific differences in educational and career paths remain.⁶⁾ Worryingly, studies showed that the number of working women decreased as state-socialist employment structures — and the relative security they offered — fell by the wayside. At the same time, gender discrimination became an unofficial part of recruitment practices, with the growth of conservative and even anti-feminist views setting Hungary apart from its East-Central European neighbors.⁷⁾

The inroads that women made into under-researched professions such as filmmaking demand closer scrutiny, not least because of the tensions that have arisen over female employment. As sociologist Judit H. Sas suggests:

Women’s mass employment should only be the first step in realizing gender equality. This first step, however, has not brought about major changes in sex-based discrimination or historically produced gender relations. Women’s mass entry in the labor

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- 4) A growing body of social science scholarship helped me to assess the roles that gender politics played in the socialist era and how they shaped women’s perceptions of the transition to democracy and the free market. See Judit H. Sas, *Nőies nők és férfiak férfiak* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984); Olga Tóth, ‘No envy, no pity’, in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds), *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 213–23; Mária Frey, ‘Nők és férfiak a munkaerőpiacon’, in Nagy Ildikó, Tiborné Pongrácz, and István György Tóth (eds), *Szerepváltozások. Jelentés a nők és a férfiak helyzetéről 2001* (Budapest: Társi-SZCSM, 2001), pp. 9–29.
 - 5) See Andor Ladányi, ‘Két évforduló: A nők felsőfokú tanulmányainak száz éve’, *Educatio*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1996), pp. 375–89.
 - 6) Teréz Laky and László Neumann, ‘Policies shaping employment, skills and gender equality in the Hungarian labour market: National Report, 2004’. <http://www.bifrost.is/wellknow/Files/Skra_0005520.pdf> [accessed Nov 17, 2012].
 - 7) See for example Julia Szalai, ‘Some aspects of the changing situation of women in Hungary’, *Signs*, vol. 17, no. 1 (1991), pp. 152–70; Diane M. Duffy, ‘Social identity and its influence on women’s roles in East-Central Europe’ *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2000), pp. 214–43; Anna Pollert, ‘Gender relations, equal opportunities and women in transition in Central Eastern Europe’, lecture given at Central European University, Budapest, Hungary 2001; Marietta Pongrácz, ‘Opinions on gender roles: findings of an international comparative study’, in Ildikó Nagy, Marietta Pongrácz, and István György Tóth (eds), *Changing Roles: Report on the Situation of Women and Men in Hungary 2005* (Budapest: TÁRKI, 2006), pp. 71–84.

force did little to women's and men's differing access to positions of authority, decision-making [...] or those requiring intellectual investment.⁸⁾

Consideration of the social dynamics of creative practice prompts three intersecting questions. First, did state-socialist efforts to include women in working life influence women's participation in creative professions? Second, did their participation in such professions influence the ways in which they were portrayed in audiovisual products? And third, did these representational practices and the distribution of labor reflect social changes that were unfolding in the transition period?

Feminist thinkers have debated if, and if so how, the representation of gender in audiovisual forms is influenced by a rise in the number of female cultural producers.⁹⁾ While no clear consensus has emerged, it can be said that they tend to agree that increased female participation does lead to more progressive representational practices, and that progressivity is hard to imagine without a growth in female involvement in production. This notion led me to conduct a survey of films made in Hungary between 1945 and 2005, both to ascertain the number of women who participated in the industry, and to consider the degree to which they might have influenced the representation of women. Such an approach was complemented by a qualitative content analysis of those films, one that was intended to assess the ways in which female characters were depicted. Drawing on feminist film scholarship, i considered the favorable representation of women to hinge on the following criteria, with attention paid to character choices that influenced the development of the narrative and its conclusion. Favorable representation included self-sufficient female characters, the depiction of women who were not punished for displaying agency and independent action, and endings that either did not return female characters to mixed-sex unions or challenged patriarchal order. Other favorable features included addressing female audiences and the deliberate eschewal of fetishizing the female body. By favorable participation i mean cases in which women occupied a range of behind-the-scenes roles throughout the production process, including the key positions of director, (script)writer, camera operator, editor, and producer. Such circumstances suggest that, in terms of the gender of behind-the-scenes production personnel, the Hungarian film industry was characterized by diversity, and that women's participation in filmmaking was therefore not restricted to individual productions.

8) Sas, *Nőies nők*, p. 104.

9) A major strand in feminist studies employs a sociological approach to cultural products. Concerned with exposing the stereotypical, sexually objectifying nature of dominant modes of representation, and by the flatness of women characters, proponents of this view tend to posit a direct relation between the number of women creating representations and the nature or transformation of those representations. Proponents of another major trend, textual analysis, found this approach wanting, and, instead of focusing on the gender of filmmakers, examine the textual codes of cinematic signification, arguing that camera movement, the scale and type of shot, the methods of editing and lighting, as well as dialogue and narrative techniques may also underpin sexual imbalance in the processes of identification. This debate has been rehearsed by a great number of authors in a multitude of texts. For a succinct and insightful overview see Shohini Chaudhuri, *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006).

Women's Inroads into Filmmaking

The inaugural issue of the American journal *Women and Film* announced that "the struggle" to end cultural products that foisted oppressive ideology and stereotyping onto women needed to be taken up "on all fronts": from images of women on the screen to female participation in the industry that produced them.¹⁰⁾ While the marginalization of women in film production does not have to be the result of a conscious masculinist agenda, their near-exclusion may nevertheless produce tangible, material consequences. A male-dominated environment often affects the manner in which the female minority is treated; all the more so when female workers have only just started to make inroads into near-male-only professions like Hungarian film production. Márta Elbert, the first female production manager of the national film studios in Hungary, recalled the attitude that permeated her workplace thusly: "You had to adopt a tough, self-confident, in fact masculine posture if you did not want the men around to feel up your butt or molest you".¹¹⁾ Moreover, Lili Surányi, who worked in a number of positions at film studios and in national television, related how she temporarily "disappeared from the picture"; "what happened was that I was not willing to become the mistress of the highly influential general director. [...] He had me sacked. [...] His revenge has swayed my life a great deal".¹²⁾ Marian Evans's study of female participation in the New Zealand film industry also suggests that filmmaking is "a business based on personal relationships and social contacts. [...] This requires a social integration within the professional community".¹³⁾ Moreover, the social dimensions of securing production capital, Sharon Krum has argued, can pose particular challenges to women because the forms of networking that are so central to that side of the business often work to exclude female participation.¹⁴⁾

Comprehensive records of female involvement in the film industries of the former Eastern bloc countries (and elsewhere) are largely unavailable.¹⁵⁾ A general paucity of data

10) Quoted in Sue Thornham, *Feminist Film Theory: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), p. 9.

11) Elbert Márta, "Megsemmisülsz, vagy felrepülsz a csillagokig ...", *Filmkultura.hu*, December 2003. <<http://www.filmkultura.iif.hu/regi/2004/articles/profiles/elbertm.hu.html>> [accessed 28 September 2012]. Translated by author.

12) Surányi, Lili. "Csinálják ezt ma utánunk!" Surányi Lili jelmeztervező-tévérendezővel Fazekas Eszter beszélget. <<http://www.filmkultura.hu/regi/2004/articles/profiles/suranyil.hu.html>> [accessed July 2, 2012].

13) D. Hunt quoted in Marian Evans, 'Development: Opening space for New Zealand women's participation in scriptwriting for feature films'. Ph.D. Dissertation: Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, 2009.

14) Sharon Krum, 'Beware! Queen Kong is coming', *Guardian*, 24 February 2006. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/feb/24/gender.oscars2006> [accessed 14 January 2013]

15) A number of qualitative studies investigate female directors' contributions to East-Central European cinema or critically assess the roles female characters are assigned. See for example Barbara Quart, 'Eastern European women directors', in *Women Directors: The Emergence of a New Cinema* (New York: Praeger, 1988); Catherine Portuges, *Screen Memories: The Hungarian Cinema of Márta Mészáros* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); Éva Varga and Gábor Kresalek, 'Nők az ötvenes évek filmjeiben', in László Á. Varga (ed.), *Vera (nem csak) a városban* (Budapest: Hajnal István Kör, 1995); John Haynes, 'Reconstruction or reproduction? mothers and the great Soviet family in cinema after Stalin', in Melanie Ilic, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood (eds.), *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Ewa Mazierska and Elżbieta Ostrowska, *Women in Polish Cinema* (New York: Berghahn, 2006); Petra Hanáková, 'From Mařka the Bricklayer to Black and White Sylva: images of women in Czech visual culture and the Eastern European visual paradox', *Studies in East European Cinema*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2011).

on creative professions may well be down to creative practice not being regarded as a form of labor that contributes to a society's economic well being, or to difficulties in applying labor research methods that are better suited to gauging other, more regulated forms of employment. It is, however, possible to record the make-up of the film industry in state-socialist Hungary because personnel were well-paid employees of the state.¹⁶⁾ Such studies have also been made of other national film industries. For example, Martha Lauzen's "Celluloid Ceiling" and a study of Danish Film and Television by Mette Knudsen and Jane Rowley both examined the number of women in well-paid, influential positions such as director, producer, screenwriter, camera operator, editor, and executive producer.¹⁷⁾ Lauzen also conducted a quantitative content analysis of the annual top 250 films at the North American box office, paying particular attention to goal-oriented female characters, to their realization of those goals, and to the number of female protagonists who occupied positions of power in a film. Knudsen and Rowley sought "to find out who makes the funding decisions and who gets the chance to communicate their visions" within the national film and TV industry.¹⁸⁾ In a separate survey of writers and directors, Marian Evans mapped "women's contemporary public participation in story-telling" in the New Zealand film industry.¹⁹⁾ These scholars showed that — in spite of press reports to the contrary — women had not achieved parity with men either in the US entertainment business (where only 0.5% of films were made solely by women), or in the other two national industries.

My research methods were similar to those employed by these authors inasmuch as they involved consulting the credits of narrative feature films in order to determine female involvement. However, I considered a longer period of time and a broader spectrum of industry positions so as to get a better sense of the range of jobs that were taken by women, as well as of the gendered character of the industry as a whole. Statistics were broken into manageable 5-year blocks, which were deemed sufficiently long to indicate broader shifts and tendencies.²⁰⁾

16) For related information see Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of the Other Europe: The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film* (London: Wallflower, 2003), p. 21; John Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema: From Coffee House to Multiplex* (London & New York: Wallflower Press, 2004), p. 48.

17) Mette Knudsen and Jane Rowley, 'Gender and work in Danish film & TV 1992–2002' New York Women in Film & Television, <<http://www.nywift.org/article.aspx?id=82>> [accessed 11 September 2012]; Martha Lauzen, 'The celluloid ceiling: behind-the-scenes employment of women in the Top 250 Films of 2001: Executive summary', http://www.films42.com/feature/july_feature.asp; 'The celluloid ceiling: behind-the-scenes employment of women in the top 250 films of 2005, 2006' <<http://www.nywift.org/article.aspx?id=79>> [accessed 30 July 2012].

Lauzen's research was popularized to some extent by the Guerilla Girls, a group of American feminist activists and artists who sought to increase the presence in the arts of women and people of color. The group drew on Lauzen's findings for a billboard campaign that it executed on the streets of Hollywood and which included posters featuring slogans such as "No woman director has ever won the Oscar", "Women directed only 7% of the top 200 films of 2005", and "Female film directors [in Hollywood]: 4%". See <http://www.guerrillagirls.com>.

18) Knudsen and Rowley, 'Gender and work'.

19) Evans, 'Development'.

20) The following sources were consulted: Varga Balázs (ed.), *Hungarian Feature Films 1931–1998*. (Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet, 1999); the series *Filmévkönyv* (the annual Film Almanac; publisher: Magyar Filmintézet) and the catalogues of the yearly Hungarian Film Week (Magyar Filmszemle). I am also grateful to the film critic and researcher Balázs Varga, to the costume designer Lilla Khoór, and to the editor Anna Kis for their observations.

Respecting the collaborative, hierarchical, and contested manner in which power functions in the filmmaking process, my survey sought to answer the following questions: Which non-acting professions boasted high numbers of women? Who were the women who blazed a trail in their professions? What conditions might help to explain the development of clear gender divides within a profession? Have gradual increases of women in positions of power led to an increase in female participation generally or to changes in the ways women are represented on-screen?

The Case of the Hungarian Film Industry






























It perhaps comes as little surprise to learn that costume design was the first filmmaking profession to be dominated by women. As early as 1945–49, as many as 31.5% of Hungarian films — or six out of 19 — employed a woman in this position, or, to be precise, they used the same female costume designer: Lili Surányi. Similarly, one woman — Vitéz Miklósné — worked as the production manager on four of the 19 Hungarian films made during the period. It was not until 1981 that another female production manager worked on a Hungarian film. Only two films featured female editors from 1945–49. This low figure is quite surprising given the fact that shortly after this time the number of films boasting a female editor equaled that employing a female costume designer. Where several women worked as costume designers from 1950 to 1955, a single woman — Szécsényi Ferencné — was the only female editor during this time. The quantity of women in a given profession is important because it enables us to determine whether one or two individuals broke into a profession and then enjoyed regular employment, or whether a broader penetration of the profession had in fact taken place. Some of the women involved turned out to be the wives and daughters of male industry-insiders. It took some time for women to break into costume design and editing in their own right. From 1961–65, large numbers of women became story editors. Table 1 shows that, over the years, women came to occupy a greater diversity of positions in the Hungarian film industry. Across a twenty year period, they made inroads into 13–14 positions. The period 1981–85 saw women occupy the greatest number of positions: 17 in total. However, they still tended not to secure roles that enabled them to make decisions about subject matter, the position that a film took on its subject matter, or characterization. This high number remained fairly stable: it did not dip below 13 positions in the period examined. The post-1989 Hungarian statistics stand up favorably to those returned by the aforementioned Danish and US surveys of the 1990s and early 2000s. They do, however, show a significant drop in the number of women that had previously occupied such positions in the Hungarian film industry.

The percentage of women involved in the three most female-leaning positions increased steadily during the state-socialist period (see Table 2). Women edited 90% of films, worked as costume designers on 70–80% of them, and, in 35–40% of cases, the story editor was female.²¹⁾ These figures dropped after the system change. The drop in female

21) The credits of subsequent film do not always indicate the name of the costume designer, making the related data somewhat precarious.

Table 1: Women's participation in various behind-the-screen positions of Hungarian feature film production, 1945–2005

Sources: for data 1945–1998: Balázs Varga, *Hungarian Feature Films 1931–1998* (Budapest: Hungarian Film Institute, 1999); for data 1999–2005: annual Film Almanac (*Filmévkönyv*; Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet), catalogs of the yearly Hungarian Film Week (Magyar Filmszemle), and www.magyarfilmszemle.hu. Numbers and percentages are my own computation.

functions women featured in		number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employing in the position*
period 1945–49 (total number of films made: 19)			
costume designer		6	31,5
production manager		4	21,0
editor		2	10,5
choreographer		1	5,2
writer		1	5,2
period 1950–55 (total number of films made: 48)			
costume designer		15	31,2
editor		7	14,5
script writer		5	10,4
production manager		4	8,3
story line editor		2	4,0
lyrics		1	2,0
period 1956–60 (total number of films made: 111)			
costume designer		59	53,0
editor		17	15,3
story line editor		14	12,1
set designer		11	9,9
script writer		7	6,3
choreographer		3	2,7
writer		3	2,7
consultant		1	0,9
period 1961–65 (total number of films made: 92)			
costume designer		77	83,6
story line editor		26	28,2
editor		16	17,3
script writer		9	9,7
set designer		7	7,6
assistant director		6	6,5
choreographer		6	6,5
writer		3	3,2
lyrics		2	2,1
director		1	1,0

functions women featured in	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employing in the position*
period 1966-70 (total number of films made: 106)		
costume designer	92	86,7
editor	35	33,0
story line editor	31	29,2
script writer	12	11,3
director	7	6,6
set designer	5	4,7
choreographer	5	4,7
writer	3	2,8
assistant director	2	1,8
lyrics	2	1,8
idea	1	0,9
production manager	1	0,9
music	1	0,9
period 1971-75 (total number of films made: 96)		
costume designer	78	81,2
editor	40	41,6
story line editor	34	35,4
script writer	13	13,5
consultant	12	12,5
director	6	6,2
assistant director	6	6,2
lyrics	5	5,4
writer	4	4,1
set designer	4	4,1
music	3	3,1
choreographer	1	1,0
idea	1	1,0
period 1976-80 (total number of films made: 110)		
costume designer	85	77,2
editor	82	74,5
story line editor	45	40,9
script writer	20	18,1
director	13	11,8
writer	10	9,0
consultant	8	7,2
set designer	7	6,3
music	5	4,5
assistant director	4	3,6
choreographer	3	2,7
production manager	3	2,7
idea	2	1,8
lyrics	1	0,9

functions women featured in	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employing in the position*
period 1981-85 (total number of films made: 102)		
editor	87	85,2
costume designer	75	73,5
story line editor	43	42,1
script writer	18	17,6
director	9	8,8
production manager	9	8,8
consultant	8	7,9
writer	4	3,9
set designer	3	2,9
lyrics	3	2,9
choreographer	3	2,9
idea	3	2,9
sound	3	2,9
cinematographer	2	1,9
music designer	2	1,9
assistant director	2	1,9
special effects	1	0,9
period 1986-90 (total number of films made: 88)		
editor	84	95,4
costume designer	70	79,5
story line editor	38	43,1
script writer	13	14,7
director	13	14,7
set designer	8	9,0
production manager	7	7,9
consultant	5	5,6
writer	4	4,5
music	4	4,5
special effects	2	2,2
sound	2	2,2
producer	1	1,1
period 1991-95 (total number of films made: 85)		
editor	80	94,1
costume designer	58	68,2
script writer	28	32,9
director	21	24,7
story line editor	15	17,6
producer	11	12,9
studio manager	10	11,7
set designer	9	10,5
production manager	7	8,2
writer	5	5,8
idea	3	3,5
consultant	3	3,5
choreographer	2	2,3
sound	2	2,3
cinematographer	2	2,3
music	1	1,1

functions women featured in	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employing in the position*
period 1996–2000 (total number of films made: 99)		
editor	72	72,7
costume designer	52	52,0
producer	20	20,0
production manager	16	16,1
script writer	16	16,1
story line editor	10	10,0
set designer	10	10,0
director	8	8,0
music	7	7,0
choreographer	4	4,0
consultant	4	4,0
special effects	2	2,0
cinematographer	2	2,0
studio manager	2	2,0
writer	1	1,0
lyrics	1	1,0
sound	1	1,0
period 2001–05 (total number of films made: 119)		
costume designer	71	59,6
editor	64	53,7
production manager	29	24,3
producer	23	19,3
set designer	20	16,8
script writer	17	14,2
director	8	6,7
story line editor	8	6,7
special effects	7	5,8
music	5	4,2
writer	2	1,6
sound	1	0,8
cinematographer	1	0,8

* Cases when women fill the position individually or in mixed-gender teams. For the differences between the number/percentage of women filling the position individually or in mixed-gender teams, see Table 2.

Table 2: Number and proportion of women in selected behind-the-screen positions of Hungarian feature film production, 1945–2005 (highest numbers and percentages in bold face type)

Period (number of films analyzed)	Position																							
	Director				Script writer				Storyline editor				Editor				Costume designer				Production manager			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1945–49 (19)	–	–	–	–	–	1	–	5.2	–	–	–	–	2	–	10.5	–	6	–	31.5	–	4	–	21	–
1950–55 (48)	–	–	–	–	3	5	6.2	10.4	2	–	4.1	–	7	–	14.5	–	15	–	31.2	–	4	–	8.3	–
1956–60 (111)	–	–	–	–	7	–	6.3	–	10	14	9	12.6	17	–	15.3	–	59	–	53	–	–	–	–	–
1961–65 (92)	1	–	1	–	5	9	5.4	9.7	26	–	28.2	–	16	–	17.3	–	77	–	83.6	–	–	–	–	–
1966–70 (106)	7	–	6.6	–	5	12	4.7	11.3	30	31	28.3	29.2	33	35	31.1	33	89	92	84	86.7	–	1	–	0.4
1971–75 (96)	6	–	6.2	–	6	13	6.2	13.5	34	–	35.4	–	39	40	40.6	41.6	78	–	81.2	–	–	–	–	–
1976–80 (110)	12	13	10.9	11.8	12	20	10.9	18.1	41	45	37.2	40.9	80	82	72.7	74.5	85	–	77.2	–	1	2	0.9	1.8
1981–85 (102)	8	9	7.8	8.8	6	18	5.8	17.6	38	43	37.2	42.1	85	87	83.3	85.2	72	75	70.5	73.5	8	9	7.8	8.8
1986–90 (88)	10	13	11.3	14.7	11	13	12.5	14.7	34	38	38.6	43.1	80	84	90.9	95.4	69	70	78.4	79.5	3	7	3.4	7.9
1991–95 (85)	12	15	14.1	17.6	11	28	12.9	32.9	21	–	24.7	–	72	80	84.6	94.1	51	58	60	68.2	3	7	3.5	8.2
1996–2000 (99)	7	9	7	9	8	16	8	16	10	–	10	–	58	72	58.5	72.7	44	52	44	52	14	16	14.1	16.1
2001–05 (119)	8	–	6.7	–	5	17	4.2	14.2	4	8	3.3	6.7	59	64	49.5	53.7	63	71	52.9	59.6	23	29	19.3	24.3

- 1 Number of films with a woman in the position
- 2 Number of films with a mixed-gender team in the position (when applicable)
- 3 Percentage of women in the position
- 4 Percentage of with mixed-gender teams in the position (when applicable)

Sources: for data 1945–1998: Balázs Varga, *Hungarian Feature Films 1931–1998* (Budapest: Hungarian Film Institute, 1999); for data 1999–2005: annual Film Almanac (*Filmévkönyv*; Budapest: Magyar Filmintézet), catalogs of the yearly Hungarian Film Week (Magyar Filmszemle), and <http://www.magyarfilmszemle.hu/>. Numbers and percentages are my own computation.

story editors was no doubt a product of the position being phased out as the Hungarian industry transitioned from the film cooperatives or "units" of the socialist period to the increasingly decentralized structure of the nascent free market. The quantitative data only permits the drawing of preliminary hypotheses about the decreasing number of female costume designers and editors, and, by extension, the growing number of men that moved into these positions. This shift was perhaps partly down to increased competition for work that followed the restructuring of the industry along capitalist lines. As far as costume design is concerned, doors may have been closed by the emergence of powerful figures who bought up the hitherto state-owned prop warehouses, thereby preventing other designers from accessing the tools of their trade.²²⁾ As for editing: a shift from largely manual to digital processes certainly resulted in greater numbers of men gravitating to, or remaining in, the profession, perhaps due to their having gained experience of working with similar technologies in spheres such as advertising.

The 1980s witnessed an increase in the recruitment of female production managers. However, even though women held 20% of these positions, they were more often than not teamed with one or more men. Standalone female producers accounted for only 5% of the films produced between 1991 and 2005, compared to the 18% that were made with a mixed-sex team. Only 3% of production managers were women. Although the function and status of today's producers and the production managers of the socialist industry do not completely overlap, it is interesting to point out a relative similarity concerning their feminization. Sharon Krum responded to the findings of Martha Lauzen's study on female participation in some sectors of the American film industry by asking: "How [can we] explain the number of women executives in Hollywood, where six studios now have female heads of production?"²³⁾ Although she stops short of offering an explanation, Krum implies that women stood a greater chance of succeeding in administrative and managerial aspects of the business than they did in high-level creative positions. Lauzen dubs this phenomenon "the Celluloid Ceiling"; a term designed to call to mind the invisible barriers to career development that social scientists called "the glass ceiling", whereby women can see the potential for professional upward mobility but are prevented from realizing it. As the studies cited above suggest, there appears to be a barely penetrable celluloid ceiling in the Hungarian film industry, one that separates low-level behind-the-scenes roles and top "above-the-line" creative positions.

Women rarely worked as camera operators. The idea that their underrepresentation in this position may be down to the physical demands of the job is, however, more relevant to earlier times — when heavy 35mm cameras were used — than to the contemporary period, which has seen increased use of lightweight digital cameras. As such, the rare occasions on which women did work as camera operators are largely restricted to the 2000s.

Throughout the period under examination, women were underrepresented in positions that meaningfully influenced on-screen representation: screenwriters and directors. Women scriptwriters increased from a zero in 1945–49 to a modest 12.5% (or 18.1% as co-writers) in socialist times, before falling to 4.2% (or 14.2% as co-writers) in the first fifteen

22) This factor was suggested by the costume designer Lilla Khoór and by the editor Anna Kis.

23) Krum, 'Beware!'.

years of democracy. The highest proportion of women writing original screenplays or who had written literary works that were adapted for the screen was 12.9% (1991–95) and 7.2% (1976–80) respectively. In both cases, these high water marks were followed by a rapid decline, which in 2001–05 hit an all-time low of 1.6% and 4.2% respectively.

Women were remarkably slow to break into directing. Interviews with television director Lili Surányi indicate that the industry saw the very idea of a female director as unfeasible:

When in 1957 a townsman of mine was appointed director of the national film studios, I was there the following day. He indeed asked me what kind of job I would want to take. “I wanna direct!” Back then it sounded like a foolish idea. A female director? ... Even female assistant directors were hard to find back then.²⁴⁾

Following the emergence of Éva Zsurzs in 1966 and of Márta Mészáros in 1968, the number of films directed by women rose from 6% to 15%. This figure remained fairly stable in the early 1990s, when 17.6% of Hungarian films were directed or co-directed by a woman, before it dropped in 2001–05 to 6.7%. In the early 1960s, Éva Zsurzs became the first woman to direct Hungarian narrative feature films.²⁵⁾ She primarily adapted classical Hungarian novels for television, although they were also screened theatrically. Márta Mészáros was the first woman to direct major Hungarian feature films. In her autobiographical work *DIARY FOR MY LOVERS* (1987), Mészáros recalls how she was treated in a patronizing way when she sat an entrance exam at the Budapest Film School. She suggests that deeply entrenched sexism, rather than institutional obstacles, blocked her way. On account of her distinctly women-centered films, Mészáros became an important figure in discussions of how Hungarian women directors represented female characters on the screen, with the thematic concerns and stylistic qualities of her films securing Mészáros the attention and recognition of feminist film scholars and commentators around the world. Her early films feature mainly working-class characters that are required to deal with issues relating to reproduction, middle-age womanhood, and destructive interpersonal relationships. Mészáros also sought to preempt the possibility that her films would lend themselves to a controlling male gaze. Stylistically, she avoided fetishizing the female body; narratively, she minimized male protagonists, in favor of explorations of relationships between women.

Two female directors — Livia Gyarmati and Judit Elek — made their feature film debuts in 1969, after which point, between one and four women broke into the profession in each of the subsequent five-year periods. These breakthroughs may initially appear promising was it not for the fact that the women in question still represented a tiny minority of the directors working on Hungarian films. At their most prominent, women comprised only 11% of directors in 1976–80, when they helmed 12 of the 110 films made, and 14% in 1991–95, when they were responsible for 12 out of 85. The most recent period shows a de-

24) Surányi, ‘Csinálják ezt ma utánunk!’

25) Before Zsurzs, Lia Simonyi made documentaries and short films between 1939–53, after which she immigrated to, and continued to work in, Switzerland. See Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema*, p. 113.

cline in the percentage of female-directed Hungarian films: of the 119 made from 2001–05 only eight or 6.7% were helmed by women. Moreover, apart from Mészáros, whose forty-year career marks her as the most prolific female filmmaker in East-Central European cinema, Hungarian women have to date directed only small numbers of film.²⁶⁾ Where Mészáros directed 21 feature films in the period examined, Livia Gyarmathy made only eight, Éva Zsurzs six, and Judit Elek and Györgyi Szalai five respectively. In line with Lauzen's findings, directors such as these nevertheless increased female participation in Hungarian filmmaking because they often choose to collaborate with female scriptwriters, story editors, editors, and advisors rather than their male peers.

Undermining Gender Hierarchies

A survey of Hungarian female directors does not allow us to draw the conclusion that feminist film practice has a strong track-record in Hungary. The handful of women directors who broke into the industry tended to make only a small number of films which rarely featured female-dominated casts of characters. Those who did make female-dominated films do not necessarily perceive their work as feminist, even though their films clearly addressed feminist concerns and even though the directors — most notably Mészáros — sometimes take an activist stance. Instead, a number of films that were made by men in the late 1960s through to the 1980s centralized socially- and historically-situated female characters, as opposed to objectifying, vilifying, or blindly revering them.²⁷⁾ Petra Hanáková observes similar dynamics in Czechoslovak cinema but suggests that relatively valuable portrayals were limited to the 1950s. However, where Hanáková suggests a disjuncture between representational tendencies bringing in capable women and the heavy political control of culture at the time, it is possible to draw a different conclusion about this “visual paradox”.²⁸⁾ The content of the films of the 1950s can in fact be seen to have derived from the political discourse of the day; the new socialist agenda is articulated in the form of active, self-sufficient female characters. In short, these representational patterns were possibly facilitated by the preeminence of the “women's question” — women's equality and liberation — in communist rhetoric and policy, as well as by the high levels of public visibility that women experienced during state-socialism. Hanáková finds it similarly paradoxical that the liberalization of the 1960s precipitated an end to this form of representation in Czechoslovak Cinema. Such conditions did not, however, see a marked shift in gender representation in Hungarian films. On the contrary, favorable portrayals of female characters of various ages and from social backgrounds proliferated and became ever more varied and nuanced throughout the socialist era as a means of addressing not only women but a general audience as well.

26) See Iordanova, *Cinema of the Other Europe*, pp. 119–42. This situation also characterized the Hollywood directors surveyed by Krum. See Krum, ‘Beware!’.

27) For a detailed study of these forms of representation see my forthcoming monograph. Here I can only briefly summarize my related propositions in an effort to show how the statistical industry survey and the qualitative analysis come together in that book.

28) Hanáková, ‘From Mařka the Bricklayer’.

The largely favorable depiction of women in Hungarian cinema was also likely influenced by the modes of production that characterized the socialist period and the free market. During the former, the production and distribution of films was underwritten by the state, thereby ensuring a film's domestic release and partially freeing its makers from the type of profit-seeking that characterizes the free market.²⁹⁾ This model exerted an influence upon film content, in terms of subject matter, stylistic choices, and representation. From the 1960s to the 1980s, it gave rise to experimental and cerebral filmmaking that encouraged active, interpretive consumption. While it was not a direct result of feminist intervention, this "cinema of moral concern" transformed the codes of classical narrative cinema in ways similar to the "counter-cinema" that was called for by some feminists. It is therefore possible to suggest that feminism — as a specific politics defined by Western theory and experience — was (and is) not the only vehicle for challenging gender hierarchies.³⁰⁾

In the 1990s and 2000s, the prevalence of female protagonists dropped in Hungarian films. This marginalization has been interpreted in some quarters as an attempt to recuperate masculinity against the backdrop of new "post-emancipation" democracies that are marked by the re-affirmation of gendered hierarchies in the public- and private-sphere, and by a denial of many of the goals and achievements of state-socialism — including its positions on gender equality. Other film scholars have suggested that the shift is emblematic of far-reaching recent processes affecting East-central European cinema. The latter typically propose that "values, concepts, visions, and even technical details have been affected by this acute crisis" — to which it might be added that such a crisis has also flattened the ways in which women and women's issues have been treated on the screen.³¹⁾

Since the completion of the research upon which this essay draws, female students are no longer in the minority at Hungarian Film Academy. It remains to be seen whether this new generation of creative practitioners includes female filmmakers who generate sizable bodies of work, and how the style and content of their films help to shape Hungarian cinema.

29) Csala Károly, 'Helyzetkép a magyar filmről', <<http://www.filmkultura.iif.hu/regi/1999/articles/essays/csala.hu.html>> [accessed June 12, 2012]; Iordanova, *Cinema of the Other Europe*, p. 27–28; Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema*, p. 117.

30) This position echoes Iordanova's assessment of socialist cinema. See Iordanova, *Cinema of the Other Europe*, pp. 108–16.

31) Krisztina Sztojanova, 'Rendszerváltás a kelet-európai mozikban', transl. Katalin Battyán, *Eszmélet*, no. 35 (1997), p. 24; see also Anna Varga, 'A film száz év magánya: A magyar kapitalizmus művészetellenessége és a filmkultúra konfliktusa', *Eszmélet*, no. 73 (2007), pp. 102–39; Andrew Horton, 'Passive and pubescent: peculiar gender politics in Central European Cinema', *Central Europe Review*, no. 34, 17 May 1999. <<http://www.ce-review.org/kinoeye/kinoeye34old.html>> [accessed 3 June 2012].

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Diary for My Lovers (Napló szerelmeimnek; Márta Mészáros, 1987).

SUMMARY

Coming into Age/ncy.*Women in Filmmaking — The Hungarian Case***Beata Hock**

This essay considers the extent to which women participated in the Hungarian film industry, and how they contributed to the nation's cinema, between 1945 and 2005. It therefore compares these phenomena under state-socialism and capitalism. An exploration of the ideological, social, and material conditions of cultural production provides the conceptual background of the essay. Data generated by empirical research is approached from a feminist perspective that takes into account related debates about the manner in which increases in the number of female cultural producers influence film content. I argue that during state-socialism a comparatively strong female presence in film production reflected the broader promotion of female employment. At this time, women broke into some positions and saw their numbers grow in others, but at the same time they were less likely than men to assume positions of authority or exert a meaningful influence over the creative process. Hungary's transition to capitalism brought with it a transformation in the gendered distribution of labor in the national film industry, with the number of women in behind-the-scenes positions such as costume designer, editor, and story editor all dropping below levels experienced during state-socialism.