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**Dinosaurs,
Moles and Cowboys:
Late Communist
Youth Media**

INTRODUCTION

What had been known as the cinema of Eastern Europe has faded into oblivion along with the world of communism. We know the reasons: the cinema of dissidence, spearheaded by award-winning films such as *Man of Marble* (*Człowiek z marmuru*, 1977) and *Mephisto* (1981), was produced and framed by the Cold War, a period that, to my students on both sides of the Atlantic, appears to be a prehistoric age when the world was in black and white. But we are not here to mourn or resurrect the great dinosaurs of heroic anti-communist resistance and existential angst. There is no doubt, of course, that we need to resist the double dangers of amnesia and nostalgia, which lurk around efforts to recover forgotten memories of the communist period in post-communist cultures, buried in globally mediated flows of consumer fantasies and nationalistic campaigns to 'confiscate' memories (Ugresic 1996). The effort to recover forgotten socialist cinemas, films and film-makers has to take into account both the Cold War legacies of categorisation and selection and the entertainment-centred media economy of an accelerating, increasingly imposing present. We need not so much another truth-seeking mission but, rather, multiple re-framing missions, which take seriously the various, inevitably nostalgic and amnesiac relations to the films of the past.

The *Via Transversa* conference gave us one of the few important opportunities to engage the forgotten cinemas of Eastern Europe in new ways. These new ways should complement but also challenge the selective Western attention to East European high modernist culture and its vanguard oppositional film-makers, and should confront local Eurocentric, nationalistic investments in preferring and supporting some registers of culture and ignoring or despising others. Now we can and should refocus on the neglected production and consumption of popular films all through the socialist period: films that appropriated Hollywood generic formulas with local inflections; and that catered to desires much less easily contained by Soviet regimes than high-cultural dissidence. Many communist comedies, musicals and melodramas never crossed

borders; they were certainly not exported to the West. They were enjoyed primarily by national audiences—and enjoyed a great deal, much more than high cultural opuses. But many, such as East German Westerns or children's television programmes, were produced in regional or European collaboration and distributed and viewed in most Soviet satellite countries. A shared television infrastructure, enabled by its own satellite, and enhanced with the establishment of Intersputnik in 1971,¹ greatly contributed to this flow of content. In an era of convergence, the study of the forgotten cinemas of Eastern Europe also needs to include the study of socialist television. Besides issues of aesthetics and (national) politics, we are also obliged to extend our inquiry to the role of technology in circulating and censoring content, and to issues of audiences, reception and pleasure. These areas have been as intensely ignored up to now in studies of East European film as indigenous art films were by national audiences.

While relatively much attention has been paid to feature films of the arthouse variety and, to a lesser extent, documentaries, the work of the unique and productive animation studios of socialist Eastern Europe can now be re-discovered and re-evaluated. This is an especially compelling task in an era of increasing digitalisation, when animation is becoming indispensable to film-making; and the boundaries between the traditional turfs of live action and animation are blurred. Rediscovering animation goes hand in hand with the need to challenge the hierarchical relations between children's and adult's media culture. The post-Wall generations are relentlessly targeted by and the most susceptible to the consumerist attractions of global children's media. For their parents' generation, the memories of *Little Mole* (*Krtek*, 1957–2000) and other popular figures are one of the primary ways of collectively remembering their childhood. Rather than allowing it to sink into oblivion or leaving it to the whims of consumerist nostalgia,

1 A satellite communications service organisation among the USSR and Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Mongolia and Cuba, one of the first on the globe, now boasting about 40 member states and a joint venture with Lockheed Martin, with headquarters in London and Moscow.

children's films and television programmes of the socialist era constitute some of the most relevant areas of concern, to be studied in a comparative, transnational context.

STUDYING GLOBAL CHILDREN'S CULTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Most accounts of children's media culture today focus on the United States, Western Europe and Japan as representatives of a global digital culture that is increasingly integrated. While gestures are routinely made towards a digital divide, a barrier beyond which the rest of the world resides, the assumption is that technologically advanced cultures represent the inevitable future towards which the rest of the world is rushing. Descriptions and theories of children's media culture are written from and about a state of affairs that knows no alternatives to a fully commercialised children's media.

However, most adult post-Soviet citizens have vivid memories of an alternative media ecology, where children's culture was dominated by national politics and where commercial concerns played a negligible role. These memories constitute a crucial component of individual and collective cultural identities and influence visions for the future. The nostalgia shared by these cultures has also passed on these memories to post-communist generations. In addition, while digital advancement is seen as key to catching up with Europe and the rest of the world, there is a considerable amount of resistance to the technologisation and commercialisation of children's media culture across the educational spectrum and the media. Whereas many of the smells, tastes and sights of communism are only recoverable through individual corporeal memories, most children's films and television programmes have been kept in circulation by the nostalgia wave and also as an alternative to Disney and other global commercial media for children.

MOLE VS. DINOSAUR: LATE COMMUNIST CHILDREN'S MEDIA

While ethnographic studies of children's media habits in 1970s–1980s communist countries are not available, I have yet to talk to an East European over five who is not familiar with *Krtek*, the 'Little Mole', created by Czech animator Zdeněk Miler in 1956, with a continued production of episodes from 1963 to 2000. The protagonist won himself enormous popularity in most East European countries, as well as in Germany, Austria and China. 'Krtek' yields 225 hits on YouTube; and a simple Google search turns up fan sites in German, Japanese and most East European languages. Thanks to the ancillary marketing of stuffed animals, books, DVDs, posters, toys and T-shirts, one bumps into *Little Mole* virtually anywhere in the region. A short case study of late communist children's television centred around this most popular series should shed comparative light on the role of children's media in post-communist nostalgia, and the potential importance of both for theorising children's media in a global context today.

Films made for children during the communist period showed great aesthetic diversity and innovation. Animation received a potent boost from the 1960s onwards, when adult animation became a site of stylistic and ideological experimentation, concentrated around major animation studios in Prague, Krakow, Budapest and Zagreb (Lendvai 1998; Holloway 1983). Most of the short and, later, feature-length films produced during communism were populated by creatures much smaller than dinosaurs: small animals from nearby forests and waters, such as rabbits, hedgehogs, frogs and foxes, or creatures from folk tales and national legends. As Svetlana Boym notes: 'After the dictatorship the subversive cultural tendency is to miniaturize, not aggrandize.' In the Soviet Union, after the collapse of Stalinism, children's monsters were miniature, not gigantic (Boym 2001: 39).

W. J. T. Mitchell cites *Jurassic Park* (1993) to discuss the function of the dinosaur image in terms of scale: it is a film in which

‘mass media, massive animals, mass destruction, mass consumption, and mass resurrection from the dead... all converge in the ‘animation’ of the dinosaur.’ (Mitchell 1998: 63.) By contrast, it is hard to imagine a successful animated character on American children’s screens as unspectacular as the Little Mole and his friends, Rabbit and Hedgehog. These cartoons are characteristically economical, in aesthetics and content alike. Zdeněk wanted his *Little Mole* tales to cross borders with ease. For this reason, after the first, narrated episode, in subsequent ones he eclipsed dialogue altogether, including only exclamations and other noises. The simple stop-motion, hand-drawn cartoons call for an old-fashioned spectatorial sensibility and evoke a slower, smaller, more contemplative world. The characters’ power does not come from smart talk, physical abilities, frenzied Pixar motion or simple ‘cuteness’. Rather, paradigmatically, one roots for them because of their ability to survive despite the odds. Their little lives in the shadows of greater enemies, such as people and machines, are precarious. But they appreciate the smallest pleasures, taking disappointment with patience and good humour. They are not troubled by oversized ambitions, the perpetual promise of growing big or making it big. Unlike Disney or most other American cartoons, which usually single out a character as the centre of identification and afford it the dominant point of view, Little Mole is more of a narrative tool to deliver an allegorical message about the entire community’s fate.

In the first and probably most memorable episode, ‘How the Mole got his pants’ (‘Jak krtek ke kalhotkám přišel’) released in 1957, the Little Mole, setting the horizon of the socialist citizen’s wishes appropriately humble, yearns for overalls with big pockets. The entire forest comes to his aid, each animal lending useful skills that turn flax into fabric, which is then cut and sewn into an attractive pair of overalls. The satisfaction is immense as the mole parades around in his home-produced clothes. The episode provides a characteristic and, in retrospect, ironic lesson in sustainability, given the zeal with which public opinion and, to some extent, policy in the United States has recently begun to urge a shift to sustainable means of

production and consumption, imposing this newly-found wisdom on the newly ‘wasteful’ Third World. While communist regimes hardly proved to be sustainable in an economic sense, the approach to the environment as an essential resource for survival is a message to be taken to heart by the late-capitalist West as well as by post-communist Eastern Europe, increasingly permeated by the imported consumer ideology that condones and even encourages waste.

Other episodes are even more openly critical of Stalinist bureaucratic modernity and mass consumerism alike, prefiguring the current global worry about the ecological impact of mass consumerism. The episode ‘Mole in the dream’ (‘Krték ve snu’, 1984) evokes the dystopia of the loss of electricity. A man survives the winter in his snowed-in house only with the help of the unbreakable endurance and spirit of the Mole and his little friends, the real East Europeans. Yet another episode, ‘Mole in the city’ (‘Krték ve městě’, 1982), foreshadows environmental disaster: it begins with an army of machines relentlessly levelling the entire forest to make room for a row of soulless, identical housing blocks. All is left is a tree stump, on which Mole, Rabbit and Hedgehog huddle together. The bureaucrats try to compensate for the animals’ loss by assigning them an inflatable forest in an office. The three friends happily settle even for this until they accidentally puncture it. They are politically powerless against socialist bureaucracy and make the best of grotesquely inadequate living conditions.

If, as Theodor W. Adorno argues, dinosaurs stand for the monstrous, totalitarian state apparatus and patriarchy (Mitchell 1998: 19), the bulldozers, mechanised tools of the mass destruction of the environment, as well as their operators, embodied by the chief bureaucrat on top of the food chain, fulfil the role of dinosaurs. Unlike the monsters of *Jurassic Park*, however, the menace of bulldozers and bureaucrats is all too real and thus fails to fascinate. The child-adult viewer of these fairy-tales is expected to identify with the displaced and oppressed underground animal’s point of view. The monsters are represented as purely external, alien, imposed. This is different from the point of view constructed by dinosaur and other monster

tales, which actively invite identification with the dinosaur at the same time as they evoke a sense of ecological horror and guilt over causing extinction, which is inscribed into American children's positions within the global economy (Willis 1999: 193).

Little Mole could be most didactically contrasted to a popular dinosaur series for young children, a kind of 'Jurassic Park Jr.', produced by Steven Spielberg: *The Land Before Time* (since 1988). The fluidly animated anthropomorphic vegetarian dinosaur kids of *The Land Before Time* are in perpetual danger from the elements and the real baddies, the meat-eaters. The centre of the youth gang and the point of identification is the big-eyed orphan boy sauropod Little Foot. In part VI: *The Secret of Saurus Rock* (dir. Charles Grosvenor, 1998), Little Foot finds a father-substitute role model in The Lone Dinosaur, a warrior longneck with a scar, who comes to the community's rescue in a heroic battle against predators, says little, and then wonders off into the sunset. Little Foot's and, by implication, the spectator boys', desire is to grow up to be a tough, masculine hero just like him, whose life is unfettered by longings and belongings and entirely devoted to fulfilling his duty of fighting evil.

The dinosaur's intimate connection with American national mythology, and the overlapping histories of bone and gold rushes in the heroic period of Western expansion on which Western narratives draw makes *The Secret of Saurus Rock*, a dinosaur Western, a perfectly logical combination. Given this convergence in the support of a specifically American kind of nationalism, a penchant for violence and the assertion of tough masculinity, one would logically assume that Westerns were just as unwelcome in communist Eastern Europe as dinosaurs were. Just the opposite is true, however.

In the last section of this paper, I would like to highlight some of the outstanding results of domesticating Westerns in late communist cultures. *Little Mole*, the border-crossing East European animated series for children who are expected to develop a mature political consciousness, is in some ways the opposite of the 'big, fierce and extinct' qualities of the dinosaur, designed to impress adults into an emotional

and cognitive state associated with childhood. Contrasting the culture of the mole with the culture of the dinosaur allows us to begin to address important historical differences that inform East European media for children.

However, there are also ways in which late communist cultures were not essentially different from capitalist ones when it came to phantasmatic engagements with popular media material, defying the sharp and hierarchical differences between children's and adult's, as well as high and low cultures. While *Little Mole* and many other animated tales were made specifically for a young audience, American Western films, shown on television across the region, constituted a bridge between adults' and children's media cultures under communism. Far from being innocent entertainment, however, imported and locally produced Westerns alike performed a complicated function for local national identities, creating avenues to articulate and experience the officially silenced relations towards Europe and its imperial others (uncomfortably identifying with both), and a similarly ambivalent relationship with America and its admired-despised national culture—a series of identifications that Christian Feest, in the German context, calls 'cultural transvestism' (Feest 2002: 31). East European Westerns appropriated in ambivalent ways the aesthetic and ideological features of a genre that is at once 'quintessentially American', according to André Bazin (1971), and well-adaptable to depictions of grand struggles elsewhere. The Western's simple narrative and ideological structure also makes it rather cartoonish, lending itself to animation.

THE WESTERN AS A PARADIGM OF (EAST) EUROPEAN YOUTH ENTERTAINMENT

The fascination with the American West and its near-mythical inhabitants has a long European history. In the Europe of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Western stories and films constituted part of a large colonial intertext, along with imperial adventure tales that depicted white men's encounters with the exotic and savage people and animals of Africa, Asia and

Latin America. These colonial representations were building blocks that allowed imperial Europe to constitute itself 'on the backs of equally constructed others' (Stam, Spence 1976: 636). Ella Shohat and Robert Stam argue that the cinema, and later television, continued the project of nationalism that Benedict Anderson attributes to print capitalism (see Anderson 1991: 44). 'The cinema, the world's storyteller *par excellence*, was ideally suited to relay projected narratives of nations and empires.' (Shohat, Stam 1996: 153.) In addition to securing white supremacist viewing positions, as Shohat and Stam argue, the colonial adventure story of imperial cinema provided a psychic *Lebensraum* for the enlarged boy subject, 'for the play of the virile spectatorial imagination' (Shohat, Stam 1996: 153).

The Western, a genre within what we can call imperial cinema, has been a chief, if rarely acknowledged element of European cultural nationalisms. This implies that the widespread fascination with the discoveries in the New World, the expansion to the Wild West, and encounters between Europeans and Native Americans should also be considered in a cross-cultural European, if not global context. This also means that East European engagements with these American adventure stories should not be exempted from the same postcolonial, and gendered critique to which the Western genre has been subjected in the United States and imperial adventure stories in Western Europe.

Post-communist intellectuals are rightly frustrated by the general infantilisation of culture—about the 'cartoon-level narratives and identities' to which Disney, the commercialisation of television, the use of digital edutainment techniques at school and of computer games after school have reduced practically all spheres of daily life. Their nostalgia for the abstract aesthetic and allegorical charge of *Little Mole* and other 'valuable' kinds of children's entertainment is understandable. At the same time, there is a general amnesia about an entire register of communist and pre-communist popular cultures that blatantly and uncritically incorporates racist and imperialistic ideologies. The cultural transvestism facilitated by Westerns shows only the tip of the iceberg in this regard.

The unexamined Orientalism of much of what is considered 'folk' children's culture in Hungary, for instance—including songs, legends, stories and nursery rhymes, the earliest bits of language through which young citizens are interpellated—is saturated with racist depictions of Turks and, by extension, Muslims, inherited from the Ottoman Empire. Everyday language is saturated with racist stereotypes of the Roma.

One can argue that embracing the Western's cartoon-level identities is part and parcel of such nationalistic and imperialistic identity games. Jyotsna Kapur claims that Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995), along with many other popular representations of Indians in American (and, by extension, global) children's culture exemplifies the commodification of history within what Fredric Jameson calls the postmodern condition. According to Jürgen Habermas, this condition is characterised by a loss of history and utopian ideals, where the past is conjured up as a series of costumes or styles—'for instance, as a kind of game between cowboys and Indians—with no allusion to the material conflicts that characterize earlier times and ours.' (Kapur 2005: 74.) She faults consumer culture for the 'cannibalization of history', for 'reducing [history] to a costume party'. As a result, the dead is erased from memory not because of a totalitarian regime but by the mind-numbing tyranny of the market's demand that things should not be taken too seriously (Kapur 2005: 75). Disney used the concept of children's play in this way to defend itself from accusations of falsifying history on multiple accounts in its seriously airbrushed and romanticised version of the encounter between the Indian maiden Pocahontas and the white soldier John Smith. Play equals entertainment here, which teaches children 'an early lesson in accepting the tyrannical demand of the entertainment industry that we must enter its halls with our brains turned off' (Kapur 2005: 82).

To use the concept of children's play to defend the film is to agree to Disney's reinvention of play as entertainment and thus reduce it from a site of utopian thinking to a site of consuming market-produced commodities. This is a serious reduction of

the symbolic value of childhood. Of course seriousness is hardly a desirable quality in the idealized consumer in late capitalism. In an economy run on debt, the adult consumer too is drawn in the image of the child—impulsive, seeking immediate gratification, and playfully consuming toys such as computers and cars. [---] It thus makes a pygmy of the adult at the same time as it empties childhood of its distinction as a place from which another world can be imagined. (Kapur 2005: 82.)

I argue then that while dinosaurs had been completely identified with American imperialism and commodity culture and thus repudiated, the racist fascination with the noble savage that infused Westerns through the communist period and remains a crucial register of popular culture has functioned as an unspoken vehicle to emulate the white supremacist ideals of European imperialism. This is the other side of the coin of high cultural pessimism about the America-led commodification of children's and adults' culture: the high-brow criticism leaves intact the imperialist playground, the psychic *Lebensraum* of the masculine and white supremacist imagination, which East European cultures had preserved.

Christian Feest locates a massive minor literature of Indian fascination in Europe. In German alone, he counts about a thousand titles published between 1875 and 1900. Karl May's Indian stories, favourites across Eastern and Central Europe, would be unthinkable without this large and unexplored intertext (Feest 2002). In the Central and Eastern part of Europe, where modern empires remained rather static and uninterested in imperial ventures outside the continent, Western stories about the frontier played a special role in solidifying nationalistic sentiment. During the socialist period, when the same populations were pushed outside the continent and locked into an ideological ghetto, Westerns functioned as screens onto which to project compensatory desires for full European-ness, manifest in the images of untainted whiteness and unquestionable masculinity that Westerns offered. James Fenimore Cooper's and Karl May's novels, supported by state book publishing industries, introduced

young pioneers to Westerns and perpetuated an unchecked fascination with the binary universe of the Wild West.

Another important reason why Westerns could nourish identification with the American West in the face of the widespread official rhetoric of anti-capitalism as well as with local nationalisms in the face of official rhetoric about international communist brotherhood was that Westerns were not supposed to be taken as seriously as contemporary adult American film dramas were. May's and Cooper's novels were distributed as children's or juvenile literature along with similar boys' adventure stories by classic national and regional authors (e.g. Ferenc Molnár's *Pál Street Boys* (*A Pál utcai fiúk*, 1906)), an international favourite among boy-bonding stories), adolescent adventure tales about boys conquering nature, overtly propagandistic novels and films about heroic boy groups, often in wartime contexts (e.g. Arkady Gaidar's *Timur and His Platoon* (*Тимур и его команда*, 1940)), war films and partisan films (e.g. *Walter Defends Sarajevo* (*Valter brani Sarajevo*, 1972)) and historical novels and films that evoked selected and glorified historical events from the national and European past, particularly from the Ottoman occupation (e.g. Géza Gárdonyi's *The Stars of Eger* (*Egri csillagok*, 1899)). This loose genre of films about boys and men fighting and conquering, many of which were literary adaptations, constituted a television edutainment of sorts, in front of which the entire family could curl up.

Children's media, especially animated films, often drew on the mythical themes of the Western: in an episode of *Bolek and Lolek* (*Bolek i Lolek*, 1963–1986), the eponymous pair of popular cartoon boys, originally from Poland, stop on the Wild West between a trip to the Moon, an adventure in Argentina, a hike on the cliffs of the Kilimanjaro, time travel to the 'Golden City of the Inca', and the exploration of the North Pole. Since looking from Eastern Europe every location is equally mythical, devoid of the baggage of the actual histories of imperialism, they can be cowboys in Texas as much as visitors to an ancient Maya city. At the beginning of each episode, the boys spin a globe, literally holding the world in their hands

in the wish-fulfilling, hand-drawn and sanitised universe of socialist children's animation.

While *Bolek and Lolek* was made specifically for children, and is successfully marketed as children's fare to this day, animation itself was not primarily a children's medium. As even *Little Mole* shows, much of the animation produced in the Soviet region carried an allegorical dimension of anti-communist dissent, especially following the failed anti-Soviet uprisings in 1956 and 1968, when censorship forced many film-makers into the 'safer' fields of animation. Jiří Trnka, the founding figure of the Krátký Studio in Prague, followed a long tradition of politically charged puppetry, a device of protest and revolt since the 17th century (Holloway 1983: 228). In 1949, he created his popular puppet satire *The Song of the Prairie* (*Árie prerie*, 1948) based on Jiří Brdečka's *Lemonade Joe* stories. These stories entered a regional circulation, also influencing the Yugoslav cartoon *Cowboy Jimmie* (1957) and the Polish *The Little Western* (*Mały Western*, 1961); and were later adapted into a Czechoslovak feature film.

The Little Western continues to play with the mythical, archetypal elements of the Western, mixed with those of other kinds of adventure genres—most evident in the recurring treasure motif, which marries the Gold Rush with pirate tales. Transplanting elements of the Western into animation in Eastern Europe created something markedly different from the main course of both American animation and the Western in America. When the shadow puppet cowboy lifts the water to find the treasure buried underneath, or when he uses paint from the figure of another puppet to draw a rope, there is no mistaking the intention to demystify frontier heroism and use the genre simultaneously to comment on the horizon of possibilities on an East European, communist scale. The very title *Mały* ('Little') *Western* performs this function. The Western is the genre of the grand: vast open landscapes, untamed wilderness, spectacularly dressed and poised, manly men with big weapons engaged in fights to the death for big ideals. All this takes place in the name of the budding country's God-given manifest destiny, which justifies even genocide and the destruction of the environment.

It seems that the stripped-down encounter that the Western stages between Man and Nature lends itself well to a similarly elemental fascination with movement, the chief feature of animation. The victory over wild animals in the course of bull fights and horse taming, which recur in the world of Witold Giersz, is mirrored by the taming of the animator's material, staging a chain of self-conscious reflections on man's intellectual struggle with the elements within the grotesquely reduced and regulated landscape of socialist cultures.

The covert discourses of the American Western, hidden just barely under the water, to borrow the pictorial metaphor from *The Little Western*, turned the genre upon itself from the 1960s onwards to generate ironic, comic, self-reflective, revisionist Westerns such as *The Unforgiven* (1960), *Blazing Saddles* (1974), *Dead Man* (1995) or *VeggiTales: The Ballad of Little Joe* (2003), or Westerns geographically distanced from American nationalism such as Sergio Leone's spaghetti Westerns. East European re-workings of the genre have typically sustained an element of performativity, manifest in playful imaginative transgressions of realism, overt parody or allegorical deployment. This is evident in Trnka's puppet film *The Song of the Prairie*, and even more so in Oldřich Lipský's 1964 feature film *Lemonade Joe or The Horse Opera* (*Limónádový Joe aneb koňská opera*). Both films were also scripted by Jiří Brdečka himself. They both take place among the cacti and rocks of the Southwestern desert and pay tribute to a number of Western films; but their characters also resemble those of European fairy-tales: the lady for whose favours two antagonists vie; the good and clean cowboy-prince on a white horse, whose entrances are accompanied by lengthy songs; and the diabolical magician, dressed in black, who commands a gang of shifty-looking Mexican bandits.

In actual Westerns there is no room for effeminacy; whether the cowboy is with or against the law, he is expected to be unshaven, sweaty, leather-covered and laconic, with a strictly controlled economy of movement and certainly no show of emotion. *Lemonade Joe*, the blonde protagonist of the 1964 film of the same title, blindingly white from boots to hat, is made to

appear even more puppet-like than the earlier puppet film's exuberant hero. But while the cowboy is so emotion- and expressionless that he needs to be constantly beaten up and injured to prove he is alive, Lemonade Joe's appearance remains impeccable. It is the camera that takes on the task of proving that he is made of flesh, in what is probably the most out-of-place shot in a Western: Joe is introduced by a disrespectful close-up on the mouth and teeth, which borders on both the pornographic and the medical. Even more jarring is the cut to the slightly wider shot, which creates the appearance of a woman's bonneted chin.

Joe breaks as easily into big smiles as into song and he is as kind to people as a travelling salesman. Indeed, he turns out to be one in the film, which further feminises his character. Since he sells 'Kolakoka Lemonade' (hence his nickname), he joins forces with the two Goodmans, young Winnifred and her father, who are on a mission against whisky consumption. Their antagonists are — naturally — the Badmans: Doug and his brother Horác, aka Hogofogo, the dark-complexioned, wicked magician. In one scene, Hogofogo appears in blackface to deceive Joe, which both accentuates and mocks the racial underpinnings of the dialectic between hero and antihero.

Joe is played by Karel Fiala, a Czechoslovak operetta star. Olga Schoberová, who plays Winnifred, also appeared in the West German Westerns *Gold-Diggers of Arkansas* (*Die Goldsucher von Arkansas*, 1964) and *Black Eagles of Santa Fe* (*Die Schwarzen Adler von Santa Fe*, 1965), both filmed in Czechoslovakia (before becoming a *Playboy* covergirl, see Hames 2002). Peter Hames claims that *Limonadovy Joe* is 'a tribute to an era of innocence' before directors like Anthony Mann, Sergio Leone and Sam Peckinpah 'turned Westerns into something altogether more disturbing' (Hames 2002). But I think the opposite is true: rather than holding on to an era of innocence lost in the real West, the film is simultaneous with if not prefigures the deconstructive turn in the Western's history, building on a rich history of genre subversions in East European animation. Fiala's Joe is more like an East European intellectual's wish-fulfilling fantasy, an East-

Western hybrid: a cowboy with an artistic vein, who is master of his gun and is followed around by pining girls, but for whom 'honour' is not contingent on duels to the death; and the cowboy's mission to enforce the law of the frontier is perfectly consistent with the job of a travelling lemonade salesman.

The Manichean symbolism of the film inadvertently comments on the racist and sexist structure of the genre. Joe's total whiteness and the Goodmans' naïve goodness are as extreme as the dark magic and shady intentions of the Badmans and the whiskey consumption of their men. To the extent that 'narrative models in films are not simply reflective microcosms of historical processes; they are also experiential grids or templates through which history can be written and national identity created' (Shohat, Stam 1996: 146), we should read this foregrounding of binary symbolism as a comedic effort to demystify and mock the moral framework of official Soviet ideology in the 1960s. The mockery of tough masculinity and of the moral superiority of whiteness is most evident in the ending, where the hero, instead of riding off into the sunset alone after killing the criminal, unites with the Badmans, as well as the bad girl, Tornado Lou, in one big family. They turn out to be brothers and sister, who were raised separately. The *deus ex machina* fusion is celebrated with a new, similarly hybrid drink, Whiskola, which can be enjoyed by both alcoholics and teetotalers.

Most East European transplants of the Western genre fall short of the sophisticated satire that foregrounds the ugly underbelly of nationalist ideology. *Lemonade Joe* is an exception in this regard, rather than the rule, made specifically for a more high-brow audience, and regarded as a cult classic today. Most East Europeans are much more likely to be familiar with the twelve DEFA (Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft) Westerns produced between 1965 and 1983 in the Babelsberg studios, as well as on location in Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and Cuba. These East German Westerns, or *Indianerfilme*, were produced, distributed exhibited and enjoyed regionally (Gemünden 2002: 241–242). They may also be the oddest Westerns in film

history. They were made with the approval and funding of communist states, who set out to appropriate an inherently capitalist, American genre to support the ideological mission of the socialist state and to appease socialist citizens yearning for entertainment. Unlike Hollywood Westerns, or West German adaptations of Karl May's sensationalist novels made by Harald Reinl during the same period, whose ideological mission remained unspoken and overwhelmed by the pleasures of the genre, DEFA Westerns provided politically correct entertainment: they took a historical-materialist view of history; and shifted the focus to a semi-scientific, anthropologically-inclined view of the Wild West, and from the cowboy, the universal hero of animated films to the Indian (Gemünden 2002: 245).

Even though East German Westerns were conceived as a way to distance the socialist public from Karl May's uncritical celebration of the Wild West and its noble savage, the deep synergy among all nationalisms, which conditions national unity on processes of inter-national and intra-national othering and provides the basic representative infrastructure of the Western genre, asserted itself despite producer Günter Karl's belief in creating a more enlightened, anti-capitalist Western. Soliciting identification with the freedom struggles of humanised noble savages such as Chingachgook in fact followed from and fed right into the long-standing exoticisation of American Indians, whose potential point of view continued to be mediated through the white sidekicks who joined the Indian struggle for independence (all related to May's legendary character, Old Shatterhand). A potential, autonomous Native American history was replaced by the film's allegorical referent, German national history; and the Indian struggles became building blocks of a rejuvenated desire for autonomous national culture in a divided Germany (Gemünden 2002: 246).

Indianerfilme became screens onto which to project a mix of phantasmatic identifications. The central figure of these identifications was the dashing and desirable Gojko Mitić from Yugoslavia, an honorary East German, whose exotic Balkan roots stood in for the exotic Indian as the most authentic substitute possible. His image unites Yugoslav partisan, model German,

American, displaced Jew and Native American hero. Mitić's Balkan-ness at once ensured a desirable distance between Indians and German national culture (confirmed by the taboo on miscegenation in the DEFA narratives) and allowed various desires for the other to be articulated. In East German Westerns, Gojko Mitić acts out fantasies of resistance fighter and anti-fascist guerrilla; provides a role model for young citizens, and relieves older ones of responsibility (Gemünden 2002: 250–251). Mitić himself had worked on West German and Italian Westerns before moving to East Berlin and choosing to be an Indian star. He was a great role model for children, a peaceful man (on and off-screen), an anti-alcoholic, and a teen girl idol on a transnational scale.

East and South European identities, not quite European, neither colonised nor coloniser but shifting ambivalently between the two, are able to inhabit the opposite positions of the Western—cowboy and Indian—with particular flexibility and vigour. The various national versions converge in a regional pattern that derives from the discursive practices of Orientalism and imperialism. During communism, the inherent nationalism of the Western provided an 'innocent' blueprint for sustaining and confirming the validity of ethno-racial hierarchies without having to address or take responsibility for them. The alleged childlike innocence of such collective identity games has helped to naturalise the restorative nostalgia that culminated in violent conflicts in the post-communist region.

FILMS

- Black Eagles of Santa Fe (Die Schwarzen Adler von Santa Fe)*, dir. Alberto Cardone, Ernst Hofbauer. West Germany, 1965
- Blazing Saddles*, dir. Mel Brooks. USA, 1974
- Bolek and Lolek (Bolek i Lolek)*, written by Władysław Nehrebecki. Poland, 1963–1986
- Cowboy Jimmie*, dir. Dušan Vukotić. Yugoslavia, 1957
- Dead Man*, dir. Jim Jarmusch. USA, 1995
- Gold-Diggers of Arkansas (Die Goldsucher von Arkansas)*, dir. Paul Martin. West Germany, 1964
- Jurassic Park*, dir. Steven Spielberg. USA, 1993
- The Land Before Time. Part VI: The Secret of Saurus Rock*, dir. Charles Grosvenor. USA, 1998
- Lemonade Joe or The Horse Opera (Limonádový Joe aneb koňská opera)*, dir. Oldřich Lipský. Czechoslovakia, 1964
- Little Mole (Krtek)*, dir. Zdeněk Miler. Czechoslovakia (Czech Republic), 1957–2000
- The Little Western (Mały Western)*, dir. Witold Giersz. Poland, 1961
- Man of Marble (Człowiek z marmuru)*, dir. Andrzej Wajda. Poland, 1977
- Mephisto*, dir. István Szabó. West Germany, Hungary, Austria, 1981
- Pocahontas*, dir. Mike Gabriel, Eric Goldberg. USA, 1995
- The Song of the Prairie (Árie prairie)*, dir. Jiří Trnka. Czechoslovakia, 1948
- Timur and His Platoon (Тимур и его команда)*, dir. Aleksandr Razumny. Russia, 1940
- The Unforgiven*, dir. John Huston. USA, 1960
- VeggiTales: The Ballad of Little Joe*, dir. Tim Hodge. USA, 2003
- Walter Defends Sarajevo (Valter brani Sarajevo)*, dir. Hajrudin Krvavac. Yugoslavia, 1972

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