
Televizní kultura jako místo post-socialistické kolektivní paměti

Habilitační práce

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ÚVOD

Stati předkládané v tomto souboru textů analyzují vybrané momenty, v nichž se během uplynulých pětadvaceti let konstituování novodobé demokratické tradice české společnosti protнула politická rovina hledání koexistence s totalitní minulostí a kulturní rovina televizní kultury zapojené do těchto procesů. Jako momenty, v nichž se setkala ustavování paměti socialismu se společenskou působností televize, jsou ve druhé části této práce představeny: reprízy tzv. normalizačních televizních seriálů v průběhu 90. let minulého století, nově vznikající televizní ztvárnění socialismu ve stylu nostalgie a retro a lokální adaptace globálních televizních formátů využívající post-socialistickou významotvornost.

Perspektivu předkládaných statí charakterizuje důraz na jednotu kulturního a politického. Volbu tohoto přístupu inspiroval zejména obor kulturní studia, v jehož duchu jednotlivé stati i tento zastřešující vstupní komentář vznikly. Kulturní studia přes padesát let udržují a upřesňují své základní východisko a představu, že v kultuře (chápané v širokém slova smyslu jako libovolné praktiky produkce a konzumace významů) se „reprezentují a projevují mocenské vztahy“ (Bendová, Strnad; 2014). Jakýkoli kulturní akt je současně i politickým krokem. V mikrokosmu generovaných významů a jejich recepce se stvrzují nebo narušují společensky hegemonní interpretace – probíhá zápas o podíl na moci označovat okolní svět, v němž mají vždy již jistý náskok ti, kteří disponují mocí světu ideologicky dominovat. Politický přesah kultury tedy v kulturních studiích odkazuje k tenzi mezi dominantními (již ustavenými, převládajícími) a rezistentními (nesamozřejmými, narušujícími) významy objevujícími se během cirkulace kulturního textu či – slovy Stuarta Halla (1992) – v rámci komunikačního oběhu (communication circuit). Stejně tak je v kulturních studiích zvykem chápat politickou dimenzi geneze a úpravy významů (tedy kultury) v duchu rozdílu, který Chantall Mouffe vymezila mezi „politikou“ (the politics) a „politickým“ (the political). „Pod pojmem ‘politické’ chápu dimenzi antagonismu, kterým se ustavuje lidská společnost, zatímco ‘politika’ je soubor praktik a institucí, jejichž prostřednictvím vzniká řád a organizace lidského bytí v kontextu konfliktuality pocházející ze sféry ‘politického’“ (Mouffe, 2005: 9). Politika je mocenský a správní provoz ve vládě, parlamentu a politických stranách. Oblast „politického“ je ve srovnání s tím mnohem širší a je tvořena spleť vztahů, pozic a diskurzů kolem otázek, které se v dané společnosti stávají předmětem sporu.

Status tématu, které se opakovaně překlápí v předmět sporu, získalo v průběhu posledních dvou dekád vývoje české společnosti hledání vztahu k socialistické minulosti a rozrůžňování jeho modalit související s postupným přesouváním socialismu ze současnosti do paměti. Kulturní analýzy zabývající se tím, jak televize vstoupila do profilování a rozrůžňování vztahů k socialistické minulosti, tedy patří také k disciplíně paměťových studií (memory studies).

Shrneme-li výše uvedená východiska, můžeme konstatovat, že předkládané stati se z perspektivy kulturních a paměťových studií zabývají sedimentací paměti socialismu, do níž se vybranými momenty nezanedbatelně zapojila televizní produkce a konzumace a pod níž prosvítá půdorys nově ustavených hegemonií a rezistencí post-socialistické společnosti. Jednotlivým předkládaným statím předchází komentář nabízející několik širších kontextů studia televizního vkladu do konstituce post-socialistické paměti. Předdeslané kontexty šířeji rozpracovávají teoretická zázemí, jejichž rozsah v samotných statích závisí na omezeních daných původními publikacemi, a podtrhují tak, doufejme, vyznění konkrétních statí.

TELEVIZNÍ KULTURA JAKO MÍSTO POST-SOCIALISTICKÉ KOLEKTIVNÍ PAMĚTI¹

(Komentář k souboru publikovaných statí)

1. Post-socialistická společnost a její sedimentace vztahu k socialistické minulosti

Perspektiva čtvrtstoletí, které uplynulo od společensko-politického zlomu v roce 1989, uvozujícího další transformace bývalých komunistických režimů ve střední a východní Evropě, již umožňuje sledování jisté dynamiky a proměny vztahu reformujících se společností k vlastní problematické a často stigmatizované minulosti. Tuto proměnu vystihuje vývoj od původní poměrně jednohlasné společenské vůle k odsouzení komunismu a odloučení se od něj na počátku 90. let až k některým specifickým diskursům obratu zpět k socialistické minulosti přibližně na přelomu tisíciletí, jejichž různé podoby a projevy jsou obvykle směřovány pod pojmem post-socialistická nostalgie (Berdhal, 1999; Roberts, 2003; Nadkarni, Shevcenko, 2004; Ekman, Linde, 2005; Boyer, 2006; Velikonja, 2009; Reifová, 2009; Pehe, 2014; Kalinina, 2014, Pehe, 2020).

Chceme-li rozkrývat příčiny a důsledky, jimiž je post-socialistická proměna vztahu k socialistické minulosti tvořena, primárním přístupem musí být zkoumání tohoto jevu jako sedimentace kolektivní paměti (Halbwachs, 2010). Tato zakládající sociologická teorie paměti vyjímá paměť z nitra jednotlivce a situuje ji do společenských meziprostor „mezi“ sociálními aktéry – do skupinových interakcí, ale také do sociálních vztahů dominance, moci, ideologie a hegemonie. Perspektiva kolektivní paměti umožňuje vnímat vztah k minulosti jako relativně pružnou naraci, která není uzavřena rekonstrukcím a často sedimentuje v interakci se současnými hegemonními výklady minulosti, pokud se s nimi dokonce zcela nepřekryje.² Do narativizace minulosti a rekonstrukce paměti vstupuje řada aktérů, kteří mají větší či menší potenciál jednat jako vlivní „aktéři paměti“ (Meyers, Neiger, Zandberg; 2011) Kulturní studia zaměřující se na významotvorné střety mezi dominancí a rezistencí v tomto procesu rozlišují utváření paměti „shora“, pod tlakem struktur oficiální politiky paměti či dominance hegemonie, a vzlínání paměti „zdola“, v podobě „popular memory“, která je

¹ Část tohoto úvodního komentáře byla v průběhu přípravy habilitační práce otištěna jako teoretická esej v angličtině: Reifová, I. (2018) The pleasure of continuity: Re-reading post-socialist nostalgia. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21(6): 587–602.

² Příliš silný důraz na rekonstruktivní charakter paměti a chápání paměti minulosti pouze jako funkce dominantních ideologických rámců současnosti bývá kritizován jako „prezentismus“ (Mihelj, 2014: 449). Specifická prezentistická interpretace minulosti má přirozeně své hranice a „ne každá fikce prostě projde jako dějiny“ (Trouillot, 2015: 29)

výrazem paměťového jednání obyčejných lidí stojících mimo vrstvy historických expertů či politických elit (Foucault, 1975). Kamil Činátl označuje souhrn všech těchto různě orientovaných sil jako „paměťový provoz“ (2014: 46). Znázornění geometrie sil účastníků se formování paměti je v našem kontextu důležité, protože proměna vztahu k socialistické minulosti v rámci českého post-socialismu bude zkoumána právě jako postupné vyvažování institucionálně a ideologicky zvýhodněné politiky paměti spíše populárními a ve vztahu k výchozí paměťové politice rezistentními diskurzy.

1.1 Oficiální politika diskontinuity paměti

Záhy po událostech z listopadu 1989 a stvrzení změny režimu volbou Václava Havla prezidentem republiky 1.1 1990 se stal vztah (respektive redukce vztahu) k socialistické minulosti (označované obvykle jako „komunismus“) předmětem mnemopolitiky, tedy oficiální politiky paměti. Politika paměti je podle Kubika a Bernharda (2014) koncept specifitějšího, politologického pohledu na kolektivní paměť. Je to soubor „strategií, které používají političtí aktéři k tomu, aby ostatní přiměli pamatovat si minulost určitým kýženým způsobem a důsledků těchto manipulací“ (2014: 7). Jedním z nejsamozřejmějších východisek i cílů rané post-socialistické mnemopolitiky bylo odsouzení a zavržení socialistické minulosti. Opíralo se mj. o zřetelně antikomunistickou mediální veřejnou sféru nově zprostředkovávající hlas dříve umlčovaných kritických intelektuálů a disidentů a o široký konsensus vyjádřený volbami 1990, v nichž Občanské fórum získalo přes 53 % hlasů. Zásadní okolností je to, že oficiální mnemopolitika byla založena a provozována jako politika diskontinuity.³ Oddělení od dřívějších forem sociální organizace a jejich překrytí či nahrazení novými vzorci, pravidly, zákony, projevy, mediálními komentáři, prostupovalo celou společnost, od soudnictví po cestování, od národního hospodářství po televizní vysílání. Socialismus se naráz stal překonanou minulostí, kombinací zážitků tragična a trapnosti, k níž se společnost stavěla odmítavě. Problém paměti neexistoval, protože nikoho nenapadlo, že komunismus by si někdo chtěl pamatovat. Začala se formovat „tranzitní kultura“, která definovala socialismus jako něco, „čemu je třeba utéct, potlačit to a zlikvidovat“ (Kennedy, 2002: 13).

³ Z legislativního hlediska nově ustavený režim hlásící se k demokracii fungoval ovšem na principu právní kontinuity. Většina socialistické zákonnosti byla převzata a jen doplňována nebo opravována novými zákony či novelami.

Zevrubné předělávání politických, ekonomických a sociálních institucí k obrazu společností fungujících na principech demokracie a tržního hospodářství bylo chápáno jako návrat k přirozenosti. Pojem „tranzice“ – převzatý z modernizačního slovníku latinskoamerických společností 60. let (Buden, 2013: 37) – v případě zemí střední a východní Evropy odkazoval k úsilí o co nejrychlejší a nejtěsnější aproximaci Západu, který reprezentoval nepřerušovaný průběh oné tradice přirozenosti, s níž je třeba se opět sjednotit (Bunce, 1995). Tranzice chtěla být projektem změny a nápravy, následujícími po definitivním zneškodnění socialistické mentality (Kennedy, 2002: 14). Tranzitní kultura spočívala ve srovnávání s ideálem, registraci zaostalostí a nedostatků a jejich odstraňování. S odstraňováním nedostatků byl však delegitimizován i substrát, na který nasedaly; celé klíny minulosti, v nichž byly institucionální dysfunkce proložené vrstvami každodenních prožitků a apolitických identit.

Kapitalisticky ukotvená demokracie představovala samozřejmou, okolním světem potvrzenou a logicky správnou cestu historického vývoje, z níž jsme sešli a po čtyřiceti letech bloudění se vracíme tam, kam jsme odjakživa patřili, což Pavel Kolář (2012) označuje za teleologické chápání času vnímaného jako příběh nutně spějící k liberální, tržní společnosti. Záměna historicity za přirozenost je podle Rolanda Barthes (2004) hlavním nástrojem tvorby mýtu. (Pojem „společenská přirozenost“ je sám o sobě protimluv a odkazuje k maskování něčeho, co je vždy konvencí, za nutnost.) Post-socialistická mytologie v tomto smyslu obsahovala i časovou dimenzi přispívající k zavržení minulosti. Minulosti byl připisován charakter umělé (historické) hříčky politického inženýrství, zatímco budoucnost byla znovunastolenou přirozeností. Sílu mýtu o diskontinuitě, tedy radikální nesourodosti mezi společnostmi před a po roce 1989, dokládá opakovaná skandalizace historických prací,

keré nacházejí mezi těmito sociálními systémy překryvy a přechodové oblasti kontinuity⁴ (Pullman, 2011; Pullman, Kolář, 2016), některými veřejnými intelektuály.⁵

S mýtem diskontinuity v zádech, byl odklon od socialismu hladký a rychlý a vůle tvářit se, že šlo jen o exces, který částečně zapomeneme a částečně odčiníme, byla silná. Jako by se to ani nestalo nám. Text na předsádce knihy Borise Budena „Konec postkomunismu“ (2013) upozorňuje na fakt, „že svou komunistickou minulostí svévolně manipulujeme, zkoumáme ji jen z perspektivy forenzního zájmu, jako mrtvolu, jež je v průběhu trestního řízení zdrojem užitečných indicií, že ji můžeme nahlížet už jen jako nějakou jinou, nám odcizenou kulturu...“ V raném období společenské transformace oficiální politika paměti aktivně propracovávala jen jednu linii vztahu k socialistické minulosti, a to logiku nápravy křivd. Jediná paměť socialismu, která měla plnou podporu antikomunistické (a s postupem ekonomické reformy čím dál tím více také neoliberalní) dominantní narace, byla paměť reparační. Mnemopolitické texty, jako jsou zákony a s nimi související projevy politiků, novinové rozhovory či politické komentáře, uchopovaly socialistickou minulost výlučně zredukovanou na zdroj zranění a nespravedlností, která je nutno do nejvyšší možné míry napravit. „Povolené“ torzo přetrvávajícího vztahu k minulosti neslo ideu minulosti zúženou na patologie a deviace, jejichž následky se pokoušíme zmírnit.

Francois Mayer (2009) uvádí, že československá a česká společnost zavedly princip retroaktivní spravedlnosti – tedy spravedlnosti, jejíž působnost mířila nazpět do minulosti a vztahovala se na formy zločinů a bezpráví spáchaných komunistickým režimem. „Češi, vedle Němců, ve střední Evropě zašli nejdále v procesu legislativního vyrovnávání se s minulostí. Jejich legislativa obsahuje rozsáhlý soubor zákonů zaměřených na rehabilitaci obětí, na nápravu morální i materiální újmy, na očištění státní správy, na stíhání, vyšetřování a

⁴ Je třeba vymezit rozdíl mezi pojetím pojmu „kontinuita“, jak s ním pracují Michal Pullmann (2011) a Michal Pullmann a Pavel Kolář (2016), a to, jak je „kontinuita“ a „diskontinuita“ chápána v této práci. Uvedení historici se soustředí spíše na spojitost některých hodnot či vzorců jednání (například předsunuté zárodky neoliberalismu v rétorice přestavby ve výzkumu Koláře) mezi socialismem a kapitalismem, čímž polemizují s ideou „tlusté dělící čáry“ a s narativem kompletní výměny „zlé“ totalitně vnucující moci za „dobrou“ a zcela odlišnou svobodu a demokracii. V této práci označují pojmy „kontinuita“ a „diskontinuita“ jinou vrstvu vztahu mezi socialismem a kapitalismem – v převážné většině výskytu pojmu nejde o kontinuitu sociálního jednání mezi těmito dvěma sociálními systémy, ale o (dis)kontinuitu paměti socialismu. Tato různá pojetí se však neprotiřečí, protože koncepce hluboké ruptury (absence kontinuity) mezi sociálními systémy je v oblasti politiky paměti živnou půdou pro diskontinuitní vytlačování paměti socialismu (s výjimkou represí) mimo paměť.

⁵ Zejména Jana Rejžka v roce 2011 (LN, 9.6. 2011) a Michala Klímy v roce 2020 (<https://www.forum24.cz/michal-klima-pise-dekanu-pullmannovi-jak-to-vite-ze-lide-nechteli-za-socialismu-na-rivieru-omlouvate-diktaturu/>)

odsouzení zločinů komunismu, na otevření archivů bývalé tajné policie (StB)“ (2009: 53). Legislativně byly kodifikovány rehabilitace obětí komunismu, zvláště politických vězňů; restituce majetku vyvlastněného po roce 1948; odstavení osob zastávajících dříve významné pozice v KSČ nebo spolupracujících s StB z veřejných funkcí formou lustrací; protiprávnost komunistického režimu a legitimita odporu proti němu namířeného; speciální úřad pověřený dokumentováním a vyšetřováním zločinů komunismu pro potřeby soudních rehabilitací a právo každého občana seznámit se se složkou, kterou na něj eventuálně vedla StB. Étos diskontinuity – setřásání socialismu jako celkového životního způsobu a zaostření zbytku paměti na dobové patologie – dále posílila ekonomická opatření umožňující privatizaci státního majetku a vznik soukromých firem či reformy zdravotnictví, školství a sociálního zabezpečení.

I Mayer, kterou jistě nelze podezřívat ze sentimentálního ohlížení se za socialismem, uvádí, že princip retroaktivní spravedlnosti představoval „politickou snahu stanovit normy pro interpretaci minulosti“ (s. 54). Také konstatuje, že plošný charakter rehabilitací a lustrací, které nezaváděly individuální projednávání případů před soudem, ale chtěly být univerzálními, mimosoudními nástroji rozlišení obětí a viníků (s. 66), sugerovaly ideál paušálního zavržení minulosti (s. 73). Plošná povaha reparační legislativy – tedy to, že se nepočítalo s individuálním rehabilitováním politických vězňů či lustrováním potenciálně zkompromitovaných veřejných činitelů postupně případ po případu před soudem – z ní dělala spíše společenskou morální deklaraci týkající se zavrženíhodné povahy minulého režimu, než věcný prostředek řešení jednotlivých případů. Socialistická minulost byla v oficiální politice paměti redukována na zločiny komunismu a přetavena do jurisdikce adresované nikoli soudům a jednotlivým obětem, ale celé společnosti jako jasné vymezení preferovaných hodnot a norem. Tyto hodnoty (na rozdíl od mechanismů jejich převedení do sociální praxe) byly poměrně zřetelné: kdo pomáhal minulost udržovat v chodu, je viník, kdo se pokoušel minulost narušit a byl za to sankcionován, je oběť. Celý tento robustní normativní systém regulující morální a právní hodnocení socialismu byl postaven na důsledné (vlastně znásobené) anihilaci socialistické minulosti. I poté, co minulost skončila, je těžištěm našeho normativního systému úsilí o její destrukci v době jejího trvání.

Postupně se v české historické vědě objevili historikové, kteří pojmenovávají formativní (a normativní) diskurs určující směr české politiky paměti jako antikomunismus (Kopeček, 2008; Gjuríčová, Kopeček, 2008; Navrátil, Hrubeš, 2018). Celospolečenský antikomunistický

konsensus spolu se specifickou politikou paměti na počátku post-socialistického období postavily vztah k socialistické minulosti na dvou doplňujících se „mnemonických režimech“ (Berdhal, Kubik, 2014: 14): likvidaci paměti a paměti likvidace. Společnost přistupovala k socialistické minulosti s předsevzetím: většinu minulosti zapomeneme (likvidace paměti) a co nepůjde zapomenout, odčiníme (paměť likvidace). Tím se s minulostí „vyrovnáme“ a minulost bude bezpečně internována v překonaných dějinách. Jaké bylo překvapení, když se toto „vyrovnání se s komunistickou minulostí“ ukázalo být spíše Pandořinou skříňkou.

1.2 Kontinuita populární paměti

Málokdo v první polovině 90. let tušil, že ostří a razance mnemopolitických nástrojů, jimiž se společnost odpoutávala od socialismu, se zúročí v návratu minulosti na politickou i kulturní scénu a snaze dosáhnout přijatelné vazby mezi současností a minulostí. Přesto se přibližně od zlomu tisíciletí objevují tendence znovu se zabývat socialismem prostřednictvím nejprve kulturních a materiálních artefaktů a později obsahů politických postojů veřejnosti. Společností chtěná i politicky prosazovaná post-socialistická diskontinuita a její konkrétní nástroje však zakládaly pravděpodobnost této opačně orientované zpětné reakce, tedy hladu po kontaktu se socialistickou minulostí, nejspíš už v době svého uvádění do života.

Koncept retroaktivní spravedlnosti nápravou a zmírněním křivd – ať byl jakkoli patřičný a opodstatněný – začal být vzhledem ke svému plošnému určení a deklaratorní povaze vnímán jako aspirace několika vybraných skupin obětí (disidenti, političtí vězni, cenzurou postižení intelektuálové) na to, aby byla jejich specifická skupinová paměť generalizována jako paměť celospolečenská. Mnohými relativně nevzrušeně prožívaná minulost byla v polistopadové politice paměti převyprávěna jako střet viníků a obětí – aniž by tuto bipolární perspektivu doprovázel mechanismus spolehlivé operacionalizace těchto rolí. Ještě podstatnější než vymezení extrémních kategorií viníků a obětí bylo však to, že většina společnosti subjektivně ani objektivně nepatřila (či úplně nepatřila) ani do jedné z nich. Přestože mnoho lidí nikdy osobně nepotkalo žádného politického vězně, bývalého disidenta, vysokého funkcionáře strany ani dozorce z komunistických lágrů, oficiální politika paměti chápala právě tyto „mnemonické aktéry“ jako hlavní postavy paměti minulosti. Z Berdhalova a Kubikova výčtu mnemonických aktérů (2014: 12-14), zahrnujícího mnemonické bojovníky, pluralisty, popírače a vizionáře, se státní mnemopolitika jednoznačně zaměřila na výše jmenované

pozice bojovníků.⁶ Velká většina obyvatel, kteří zprvu ztělesňovali antikomunistický konsensus a zavržení socialismu, však takto vyhraněné pozice nikdy nezaujímal a logicky začala mít pocit, že v nově převyprávěných dějinách pro ně není místo. Dějinami najednou hýbali dramatictí aktéři náležející k pólům oběť-viník, mezi něž Francois Mayer (2009) zahrnuje komunistické funkcionáře, normalizátory, disidenty, politické vězně a spolupracovníky státní bezpečnosti, zatímco „lidé bez příběhu“ (2009: 258) byli z dialektiky nedávných dějin vyhoštěni. V tomto zcizujícím efektu retroaktivní spravedlnosti zaměřené jen na vyhraněné mnemonické aktéry, můžeme spatřovat časné kořeny pozdější obrody širšího společenského vztahu k socialistické minulosti.

V rámci vztahu k minulosti redukovaného zákony a veřejným míněním na retroaktivní spravedlnost mnoho lidí naráz nemělo žádnou minulost: „stará“ minulost, tak, jak ji lidé prožívali před rokem 1989, byla zneplatněna, a v nové interpretaci socialismu nijak nefigurovali. Nejvyšší míru inkluze širších vrstev do nové verze minulosti představovalo rozmytí hranice kategorie viníků, zahrnutí různých strategií každodenního kompromisu pod pojem viny a poukazy na to, že „celý národ kolaboroval“ (Vaněk, 2009: 11). Velká část společnosti se tedy ocitla pod rozlišovací schopností nově převyprávěné minulosti zaměřené převážně na oběti versus viníky – v nejlepší případě do ní byla zahrnuta na straně viníků. Toto nové „přerozdělení“ minulosti můžeme vnímat jako jeden z důvodů toho, proč se objevila poptávka po „staré minulosti“, nepřefiltrované oficiální politikou paměti.

Dalším důvodem je neoddělitelnost paměti veřejné a soukromé minulosti. „Nelze přehlížet teorie, které poukazují na význam politického, historického a globálního náboje osobní paměti“ (Garde-Hansen, 2011: 37). V post-socialistickém kontextu se ukázalo jako nemožné odstranit jen politicky zkompromitované vrstvy minulosti a zbytek ponechat nedotčený. Socialistická minulost začala být pocitována jako mnohvrstevnatý zážitek, kdy zásah do něj není vnímán jako horizontální sloupávání plátů, ale spíše jako vertikální incize narušující tkáň napříč vrstvami. Zavrhování totalitního výkonu moci, nesvobody a ekonomické nefunkčnosti

⁶ Jako mnemoničtí aktéři typu bojovník se například projevili členové Konfederace politických vězňů v rolích účastníků veřejné debaty o znovuuvedení seriálu Třicet případů majora Zemana (dále jen 30PMZ) Českou televizí v roce 1999. Bernhard a Kubik mnemonické aktéry-bojovníky charakterizují názorem, podle nějž „problémy přítomnosti (a budoucnosti) nelze efektivně pojmenovat, dokud se celé společenství neusadí na správných základech zbudovaných podle pravdivé verze historie“ (2014:13). Právě tento přístup rozpoznává Kamil Činátl ve „vzpomínkové strategii uznání“, jedné ze strategií paměťové recepce reprízy 30PMZ (2014: 286). Zapojením do diskuse o repríze seriálu političtí vězňové usilovali o uznání svého boje proti komunismu a utrpeného příkoří. Za jednoznačný symptom toho, že uznání je skutečné a dostatečné, považovali stažení reprízy 30PMZ. Vysílání seriálu natolik obsahově i produkčně spojeného s bývalým režimem, považovali za zcela neslučitelné s kolektivní pamětí, která jim věnuje plné uznání.

se dalo vnímat jako apel na to, aby se lidé vzdávali i odpovídajících vrstev každodennosti, osobní, rodinné či kulturní historie. Různými revivalistickými postoji k socialistické minulosti tak může být vyjadřován i nárok na znovunabytí těch vrstev minulosti, které s sebou původně vzalo její ranně překotné zavržení.

Konkrétní praktiky rekonstituovaného kontaktu se socialistickou minulostí jsou předmětem mnoha analýz kulturních a paměťových studií, které používají různá dělení a kategorizace. Maya Nadkarni a Olga Shevchenko (2004: 498-503) zařazují mezi rané nostalgické praktiky už výprodej symbolů komunistické ideologie (například sochy a medaile). Poukazují také na pozůstatky socialistické každodennosti, kam řadí objekty socialistické spotřební kultury (např. maďarská limonáda Bambi, ruský nápoj Buratino a patřila by sem i česká Kofola nebo nanuk Míša), muzea a výstavy, televizní dokumenty a reprízy socialistických televizních pořadů. Za specifickou nostalgickou praktiku považují romantizaci socialistického habitu, včetně vzpomínek (ať už reálných nebo upravených rekonstruktivní pamětí) na srdečné a upřímnější mezilidské vztahy nebo lahodnější či dokonce zdravější potraviny. Vydělují také post-socialistickou nostalgii mladé generace bez vlastních vzpomínek na danou dobu a přesto si pohrávající s jejím stylem či módou v rámci postmoderní nezávaznosti. Mitja Velikonja (2009) sleduje spíše logiku formálních žánrů než funkčních praktik a jeho výčet respektuje přístup identifikace „míst paměti“ po vzoru Pierra Nory (1989). Nostalgická paměť se podle něj vyskytuje na „místech“, jako jsou „veřejné prostory, spotřební zboží, grafický design, populární kultura, veřejné události, stranická politika, pouliční kultura, umění, nová média a veřejné mínění (Velikonja, 2009: 540).

Strategie obratu zpět k socialistické minulosti interpretujeme jako postupně se formující odmítání diskontinuity prosazované oficiální politikou paměti některými částmi společnosti. Zatímco post-socialistická mnemopolitika implementovala diskontinuitu jako kýženou formu kolektivní paměti ve směru „shora“, tj. pomocí legislativních, politických a ekonomických struktur, „vzpoura“ proti oficiálně žádané diskontinuitě začala vzlínat ve směru „zdola“, z úrovně vznikající populární paměti socialismu.⁷ Formování populární paměti socialismu zdola vypovídá o potřebě znovu získat spojitou, kontinuální paměť a vymanit se z oficiální politiky diskontinuity. Kontinuita žádaná na rovině populární paměti má ve vztahu k oficiální

⁷ Jedna podoba kritiky sentimentalizujícího vztahu k socialismu považuje zálibu v artefaktech a kýčovitých obrazech socialismu čistě za produkt „průmyslu paměti“, zejména komodifikace a fetišizace minulosti na mediálním trhu (Poblocki, 2008). Toto bezesporu existující zužitkování a další stimulování „vůle k paměti“ socialismu (Eyal, 2003) následovalo až po té, co se začala hromadit v paměťovém jednání „zdola“.

paměťové politice nového post-socialistického systému rezistentní charakter a vyjadřuje potřebu obnovení kontaktu se socialistickou minulostí přicházející „zdola“.

Obnovování kontinuity s vlastní minulostí je zažíváno jako slast. Kulturní studia se inspiřují konceptem dvou slastí Rolanda Barthesa (1975) a jeho slast typu *plaisir* považují za kulturní slast, která je produkována, jestliže se prohlubuje vlastní identita prolamováním sociální kontroly (Fiske, 1987: 227). Osobní i kulturní identita je pevně propojena s minulostí – minulost je součástí, východiskem a materiálem identity. „Pokud bychom odpojili naše ‘já’ od paměti, došlo by k naprosté ztrátě ‘já’“ (Nussbaum, 2001: 177). Obnovování kontaktu s minulostí a zhušřování její paměti lze proto takřka vždy považovat také za identitní děj setkávání se se sebou samým, který je zdrojem kulturní slasti.

Souhrnně řeceno, populární paměť socialismu se ustavila mimo elitní diskurzy reglementované normami likvidace paměti a paměti likvidace a byla poskládána převážně z pokleslých kulturních forem, útržků socialistické každodenní estetiky a populární kultury. S prohlubováním důsledků post-socialistických ekonomických reforem a zhoršováním globální ekonomické situace se začal šířit afirmativní vztah k socialismu také do politických obsahů veřejného mínění a srovnávání současnosti s obdobím socialismu.

2. Post-socialistická nostalgie jako poptávka po kontinuitě paměti

Studie zabývající se výzkumy a analýzou projevů obnovy vztahu k socialistické minulosti je obvykle zařazují pod pojem „nostalgie“, respektive „post-socialistická nostalgie“ (Berdhal, 1999; Roberts, 2003; Nadkarni, Shevcenko, 2004; Ekman, Linde, 2005; Boyer, 2006; Velikonja, 2009; Reifová, 2009; Pehe, 2014; Kalinina, 2014, Pehe, 2020).

Užití pojmu „nostalgie“ pro různé formy ohlžení se za socialistickou minulostí není neopodstatněné. Částečně kopířuje terminologii debaty o západní filmové nostalgii po starých časech, zejména stylu a náladě amerických 50. let, která se rozvinula v rámci postmoderního pohledu nazpět a kompenzovala modernistickou orientaci na budoucnost, pokrok a originalitu jako „něco, co tu ještě nebylo“ (Jameson, 1984)⁸. Částečně je potom nostalgie od počátků dějin tohoto pojmu chápána jako logický důsledek každé závažné změny.

⁸ Frederick Jameson (1984: 66) v této souvislosti uvádí například filmy *Dravé ryby* (1983, rež. Francis Ford Coppola), *Americké graffiti* (1973, rež. George Lucaas) nebo *Chinatown* (1974, rež. Roman Polanski).

Výraz „nostalgie“ je spojením dvou řeckých slov *nostos* (domov) a *algia* (stesk, bolest) (Davis, 1979: 1) Nostalgie tedy původně označovala stesk po domově a objevila se jako psychiatrická diagnóza, kterou v 17. století zachytil švýcarský lékař Johannes Hofer u švýcarských horských myslivců odvelených do bitev daleko od domova. Vojáci, přivyklí emocionálně působivým scenériím alpských údolí, v cizině upadali do stavů melancholie, pláče, anorexie a myšlenek na sebevraždu (Pickering, Keightley; 2006: 922). Během dalších dvou století, zejména v souvislosti s akcelerací společenských procesů, došlo k potlačení psychiatrického obsahu a prostorové vázanosti nostalgie a prosadila se definice zdůrazňující stesk po idealizované minulosti. Časová dimenze převládla nad prostorovou, protože ve zrychlující se moderní, průmyslové společnosti nemusel návrat na stejné místo nutně znamenat návrat do stejné situace – pohyb v čase se stal zdrojem výraznější změny než pohyb v prostoru. „Nostalgie je reakcí na rychlost a závrať moderní temporality“ (Pickering, Keightley; 2006: 923). Zvláštním paradoxem touhy a stesku obsažených v nostalgii je podmínka nenaplněnosti. Nostalgická touha touží po minulosti jen potud, pokud je skutečný návrat do vytouženého stavu nedostupný. Nostalgie je tedy mnohem spíše pohráváním si, flirtováním a rozdrážděností než reálným sociálním požadavkem na obnovu minulých poměrů. Veronika Pehe přímo spatřuje v části českých post-socialistických filmových děl (Pelíšky, 1999; Pupendo, 2003; Občanský průkaz, 2010) rozpor mezi fascinací estetickou stránkou minulosti a odsouzením politického obsahu pod povrchem stylu (2020: 103).

Post-socialistická nostalgie se z tohoto pohledu dala očekávat jako důsledek razantní změny, která zavádí do jinak lineárních dějin dislokaci, rozděluje běh času a paměti na „předtím“ a „potom“. Citlivost vnímání post-socialistické nostalgie však zvyšují dvě specifické okolnosti: za prvé je mezi post-socialistickým „předtím“ a „potom“ prudce disjunktivní vztah a za druhé byla minulost z perspektivy přítomnosti hluboce a plošně zavržena. Neslučitelnost a odmítnutí minulosti však lze vnímat i jako stav, který potřebu návratu do minulosti posiluje. Také Pickering a Keightley uvádějí, že „čím více je minulost zavržována, tím více je v osobním životě i veřejné kultuře její význam vyzdvihován“ (2006: 925). V případě post-socialistické nostalgie je přímá úměra mezi intenzitou původního odsouzení a pozdějším oživením zájmu výrazná.

Hledání kořenů a smyslu post-socialistické nostalgie je ztíženo tím, že badatelé stejným pojmem pokrývají různorodé jevy. Nostalgie je vztahována střídavě buď jen k pozitivnímu hodnocení domnělých kvalit života v socialistické společnosti (socio-ekonomická nostalgie)

nebo jen k popularitě dobového stylu, módy a každodenní ikonicity, které zprostředkovává mediální a kulturní průmysl (kulturní nostalgie). Hlavním cílem této úvodní kapitoly je nabídnout výklad, v němž post-socialistickou nostalgii tvoří obě tyto formy, socio-ekonomická i kulturní nostalgie, souběžně a obě plynou z jim nadřazené paměťové potřeby kontinuity.

Studie aplikující pojem nostalgie na pozitivní hodnocení sociálních a ekonomických jistot socialismu většinou vycházejí z výzkumů veřejného mínění ve střední a východní Evropě, které přinášejí informace o rostoucím počtu lidí uvádějících, že za socialismu se jim žilo lépe (Tileaga, 2012; Ekman, Linde, 2005). Joakim Ekman a Jonas Linde podávají podrobnou analýzu této socio-politické nostalgie. Ta má podle nich čtyři dimenze: 1) politicko-ideologickou (kladné hodnocení minulosti je dáno politickou socializací a tím, že si lidé zformovaní socialismem neosvojili demokratické hodnoty a odmítají demokracii jako princip), 2) socio-ekonomickou (kladné hodnocení socialistické minulosti je dáno frustrací a hořkostí ze zhoršující se ekonomické situace tržního kapitalismu, lidé odmítají konkrétní podobu demokracie, která není schopná generovat přijatelné životní podmínky), 3) osobní socio-ekonomickou dimenzi (socialismus kladně hodnotí ti, kteří ze specifických, osobních důvodů nezvládli přechod ke kapitalistickému modelu), 4) dimenzi osobní biografie (socialismus kladně hodnotí ti, kteří změnu prožívají jako ztrátu identity a sebeúcty) (2005: 356). Statistickými analýzami vztahů mezi různými proměnnými autoři dokazují, že převládajícím důvodem sociopolitické nostalgie není nedostatek demokratického smýšlení zděděný z dob komunismu, ale že pozitivní hodnocení minulosti plyne z nespokojenosti se současností (2005: 370).

Zastánci důrazu na socio-politickou nostalgii nabízejí detailní klasifikaci, ale redukuje své pojetí na socio-ekonomické jevy a nezmiňují se o navazování vztahu se socialistickou minulostí v oblasti kulturních reprezentací a praktik. Tento postup – uvážíme-li, jak zřetelně a barvitě je v post-socialistických společnostech přítomna kulturní nostalgie – vede k podezření, že kulturní nostalgie je v tomto kontextu pokládána za pouhou „nadstavbu“ té socio-politické. Takový předpoklad by obnášel představu, že kulturní nostalgie – od uměleckých výstav rekonstruujících panelákové bydlení po okresní závody socialistických automobilových veteránů – nestojí za řeč, protože se v ní jen opakují stejné motivy a kořeny jako u socio-politické nostalgie. Subsumování kulturní nostalgie pod socio-politickou by však bylo zcela nesprávné – zvláště pokud by byla kulturní nostalgie vnímána také jako skrytý jazyk

touhy po návratu minulosti. Preference socialismu při odpovědích na otázku „Ve kterém z dvou režimů, jimiž prošla vaše společnost, se vám žilo lépe?“ v rámci výzkumů veřejného mínění však neznamena automatický souhlas s návratem komunistického režimu ani při posuzování z perspektivy socio-politické nostalgie. Podmíněnost nostalgie nedosažitelností předmětu touhy je známa už teoretickým uchopením nostalgie a krom toho zkratku od sentimentálního hodnocení životních jistot za socialismu ke schvalování návratu komunismu vyvracejí i empirická data. Výzkum STEM z roku 2013 uvádí, že 32 % Čechů hodnotí lépe bývalý režim, 46 % populace preferuje současný režim a 22 % lidí vidí oba režimy stejně. Počet lidí vyzdvihujících bývalý režim mezi lety 2012 a 2013 se tak zvýšil o 5 % (STEM, 2013). Současně si však 79 % Čechů explicitě nepřeje návrat komunismu a 89 % takovou možnost považuje za velmi nepravděpodobnou (Šubrt, Vinopal; 2012: 146). Většina lidí tedy nepovažuje současný režim za lepší, ale naprostá většina si přitom nepřeje návrat socialismu. Tento rozpor jen dokresluje povahu nostalgie: lidé s myšlenkou návratu zpět do socialismu spíše koketují, než aby měla podobu reálného požadavku ovlivňujícího jednání.

Některé texty naopak zcela ignorují socio-politickou nostalgii a chápou jako post-socialistickou nostalgii jen kulturní procesy odkazování k socialismu pomocí jeho ikon a indexů (Reifová, 2009; Boyer, 2006; Godeano-Kenworthy, 2011; Pehe, 2014).⁹ Za projevy kulturní nostalgie jsou považovány obsahy a artefakty, které zřetelně zdůrazňují vnější tvář doby a do minulosti se vracejí prostřednictvím reprodukce nebo rekonstrukce jejího stylu a estetického kódu. Studium kulturní nostalgie se obvykle staví k nostalgickým obrazům minulosti elitisticky odmítavě. Ikonické a indexikální zachycení socialistické minulosti bývá vnímáno jako „socialistický kýč“ (Czepczyński, 2008: 136) nebo fetišizace či reifikace dějin (Poblocki, 2008). Zobrazování minulosti, které klade důraz na sentimentální formu, je připisována apolitická, falešně líbivá interpretace minulosti vedoucí ke kolektivní amnesii. Z komplexních historických, politických a sociálních procesů zbývají pouze povrchní fragmenty; klipy, které mají oslovovat spíše emoce než racionální historické vědomí.

⁹ Toto rozlišení vychází z tradiční piercovské definice ikonických znaků, které se k označované realitě vztahují na základě podobnosti, a indexů, které jsou částmi označované reality (Chandler, 1987:38-43). Ikonickým označením socialistické minulosti jsou tak například filmové, televizní a fotografické obrazy pojednávající o minulosti, ale vytvořené z pozice současnosti. Televizní pořady, filmy a fotografie pocházející přímo z minulosti mohou mít naopak charakter indexikálního znaku, jsou její součástí a metonymicky k ní ukazují tak, jako kouř nad tratí ukazuje na přítomnost lokomotivy. Zcela jednoznačně jsou pak indexy socialistické minulosti zachované předměty každodenního užití a všední estetiky, předměty spotřební kultury, móda, vybavení bytu, apod.

Tato kritika se přímo či nepřímo inspiruje odsouzením nostalgie u Fredrica Jamesona. Jameson chápe nostalgii jako součást postmoderní mentality představující „kulturní logiku pozdního kapitalismu“ (1991). „Opravdový, autentický vztah k minulosti je podle Jamesona téměř nemožný, protože jsme ztratili smysl pro své místo v dějinách a jsme uzamčeni v nekonečném sledu bezedných přítomností“ (Pickering, Keightley; 2006: 923). Minulost je podle Jamesona (1991) využívána pouze jako zdroj stylů, které jsou bez hlubší znalosti kanibalizovány a kombinovány v pastiších. Tímto vztahováním se k minulosti ubývá historického vědomí a přibývá prázdného historicismu (1991: 65). Katalog nostalgických simulakrů, které odkazují pouze k tomu, jak se minulost jevila zvnějšku (a to ještě s vážnými distorzemi), nás nemůže zavést do hloubky skutečných historických procesů. Ty pak zůstávají nedostupné a podléhají zapomnění. Když Jameson (1991: 66) píše o tom, jak se „zoufalý pokus přisvojit si ztracenou minulost láme pod železným zákonem střídajících se mód a ideologie nastupujících generací...“, snadno se vybaví asociace s post-socialistickou mentalitou, která běžně uvažuje o rozdílu mezi „osmdesátkama“ a „devadesátkama“.

Takto zkarikovaná minulost, argumentuje kritika kulturní nostalgie, znemožňuje rozklíčování politických sil určujících povahu minulosti a znemožňuje také jakékoli politické čtení minulosti z perspektivy současnosti – minulost odtud vystupuje jako doba lidí v kalhotách nemožného střihu, nikoli jako politický projekt. Například Velikonja (2009: 537) chápe nostalgii jako „nekritickou glorifikaci minulosti bez ohledu na to, jaká doopravdy byla“ a ignorace toho, „jaká minulost doopravdy byla“ zde odkazuje k apolitickému přístupu k minulosti; vztahu, v němž odhlížíme od skutečných politických poměrů.

Některé studie kulturní nostalgie nadto spojují amnesii a apolitičnost těchto praktik prvotně s komerčními motivacemi institucí kulturního průmyslu. Podle Kacpera Poblockiho stojí za post-socialistickou nostalgii „nově vznikající ekonomický řád, v němž hrají hlavní roli znaky, zbožní fetišismus, komercializace kultury a reklama, což se manifestuje v tom, že politiku nahradila ekonomika“ (2008: 188).

Kritický pohled na kulturní nostalgii jí vytýká, že degraduje historii na chytlavě zveličený styl, a tím se soustřeďuje převážně na textualitu kulturní nostalgie. Stížnosti na apolitičnost, amnesii a komerční charakter nostalgických produktů automaticky předpokládají, že přístup čtenářů, diváků a uživatelů nostalgických textů bude analogický postmoderním analýzám jejich sémiotické podstaty. Skeptické analýzy stavějící se ke kulturní nostalgii jako k textualitě, která nemá žádný referent a odkazuje jen k sobě samotné, nenechávají prostor

pro možnost, že publika i v této formě kontaktu s minulostí mohou nacházet význam, a dokonce z nich čerpat nebo do nich projektovat politické (ve výše uvedeném významu pojmu „the political“) pohnutky. Právě post-socialistickou nostalgii, jako součást populární paměti socialismu, je třeba zasadit do kontextu jednání „obyčejných lidí“ – jen tak, při komparaci jednání vzlínajícího zdola a oficiální paměti politiky přicházející shora, vynikne rezistentní a antihegemonická povaha post-socialistické nostalgie. Kulturní nostalgie operující s hyperbolickou obrazností minulosti je, řečeno terminologií Svetlany Boym (2008), „reflexivní“ nostalgie. Boym, nejcitovanější autorka studií o post-socialistické nostalgii, rozlišuje vedle „reflexivní“ také „restorativní“ nostalgii – druhý typ usiluje o obnovení minulosti v přítomnosti, zatímco první typ je kontemplativní a usiluje o navázání „dialogu“ s minulostí bez ambicí na její vzkříšení (2001: 49). Post-socialistická kulturní nostalgie – mediálně, kurátorsky či pouličně šířené upomínky socialistického koloritu – vykazuje znaky reflexivního typu: je ironická či cynická, hravá, formulovaná z odstupů, recesistická. Nedokonalost oblíbené klasifikace Svetlany Boym je v tom, že restorativní nostalgie se prakticky vyskytuje zřídka (ani příznivci socialismu frustrovaní z výkonu kapitalistické společnosti si návrat socialismu nepřejí) a teoreticky je dokonce vyloučena, protože pokud se nostalgie skutečně pokouší o obrození minulosti, nejde už o nostalgii, ale o politický program.

Je také třeba konstatovat, že některé extrémní praktiky kulturní nostalgie lze chápat skutečně jen jako žonglování se symboly nebo dokonce praktiky podporující status-quo. Do této kategorie spadají návraty do minulosti s cílem ji zesměšnit, degradovat a evolucionisticky ukázat, jak byla oproti současnému stavu zaostalá či nedostatečná. Veronika Pehe (2014), inspirována Paulem Graingem (2002) a Lynn Spigel (2001) tuto kategorii označuje „retro“ a upozorňuje, že „retrospektivní obeznámenost s minulostí vytváří dojem ironického odstupů a současně i morální nadřazenosti“ (Pehe, 2014: 106).

Tato práce je založena na pojetí, v němž jsou socio-politická i kulturní nostalgie dvě různé (a různými nositelskými skupinami artikulované) formy téže paměťové potřeby, potřeby kontinuity. Tento přístup synteticky přiřazuje socio-politickou i kulturní nostalgii ke stejné motivaci. Motivací k obnovení kontinuity není touha po možnosti vrátit se do socialismu, ale touha po možnosti si jej „smět“ pamatovat a migrovat ve vzpomínkách spojitě tam a zpět. Sociopolitická i kulturní nostalgie jsou z tohoto pohledu dvě strany jedné mince, dva způsoby ustavování kontinuity, která je, jak bylo výše řečeno, zdrojem slasti. V případě socio-politické

nostalgie je zdrojem slasti z kontinuity konzumace označovaného, její nositelé se ve vzpomínkách vracejí k reálným úsekům společenského provozu a jistotám, které z něj plynuly. V případě kulturní nostalgie je zdrojem slasti z kontinuity konzumace označujícího, kontakt s obrazy minulosti, setkávání s jejími povrchy a zastupování znaky. Ani jeden z těchto způsobů kontaktu s minulostí není nadřazen nad tím druhým a ani jeden nepředstavuje (pokud není politicky zneužit) politickou ambici směřující k návratu komunismu. Obě dvě formy umožňují významotvorný přístup k minulosti v rámci emancipovaných recepčních nebo interpretačních praktik čtenářů, diváků a sociálních aktérů obecně, i když nenavyšují komplexní historické porozumění minulosti. Jak ale poznamenává Činátli k tématům probíraným v rámci sporu o reprízu seriálu 30PMZ: „Možná je trochu překvapivé, že většina těchto témat souvisela s minulostí a jejím případným hodnocením jen velmi volně“ (2014: 185). Toto zjištění přispívá k prohloubení stanoviska, že paměť se formuje v jiných procesech, než je opakování politických dějin. Vazba na minulost, potřeba být s ní v kontaktu a dodávat jí smysl, byť třeba za pomoci kýče, jsou z hlediska sedimentace paměti produktivnější než unikající ideál budování politicky a filozoficky poučeného historického vědomí.

3. Televizní diskurzy post-socialistické kolektivní paměti

Komunikační média, a zvláště obrazotvorná televize, nemají daleko k jakémusi provizornímu stroji času. Televize na omezenou dobu „přenáší“ diváky do vybraných momentů minulosti a nabízí autentické archivní obrazy nebo inscenované představy o minulosti. Způsob selekce archivovaných pořadů i způsob rekonstrukce v inscenovaných pořadech přispívají k tomu, co z minulosti přejde do kolektivní paměti. Od dob, kdy Halbwachs (2010) v 50. letech postuloval myšlenku paměti jako skupinového či sociálního jevu, se zásadním kanálem kontaktu mezi společnostmi a jejich minulostí a mechanismem prosívání minulosti na paměť, stala média. Televize (spolu s filmem) má v tomto procesu vzhledem k povaze audiovizuálního média mimořádné postavení, protože zprostředkovává minulost nejen jako ideu, ale i jako obraz.

Byť v posledních letech sílí shoda na tom, že televize je „dnes nejdůležitějším prostředkem, díky němuž se lidé seznamují s dějinami“ (Edgerton, 2001: 1), rozhodně to neplatilo vždy, a i dnes má tento úhel pohledu své oponenty.

Od počátků systematického studia mediální komunikace společenskými vědami byla média považována za nositele okamžitosti, aktuálnosti a zakonzervování časoprostorových

souřadnic do „ted' a tady“ – tedy za naprosto nevhodné prostředky pro zachycení dějin a vývoje událostí. Robert Ezra Park, člen Chicagské školy už ve 40. letech pokládal žurnalistiku ve vztahu k historii za podřadnou. Média vytvářejí jakýsi první náčrt dějin a pouze pokud je ověřen a proložen souvislostmi, platí, že „to, co je zprávou, se stane dějinami“ (Park, 1940: 676). S předpokladem, že média historické vědomí spíše likvidují, než by mu prospívala, se setkáváme do současnosti. Andrew Hoskins (2004: 110) považuje televizi za technologii podílející se na „kolapsu paměti“ a i po pětadesáti letech stále poukazuje na to, že televize je médium přítomnosti, do níž jsou fragmenty minulosti pouze zapletené.

Důraz na významný potenciál televize při propojování současníků s jejich minulostmi přichází od konce 90. let zejména z Velké Británie. Empiricky za rozvojem tohoto akcentu stojí digitalizace přinářející možnost zakládání velkého množství specializovaných kanálů. V roce 1995 se objevil History Channel (od roku 2008 History) a posléze začaly vysílat historické pořady na specializovaných kanálech i BBC, Channel 4 a ITV. Příkladem z českého prostředí je magazín Historie.cs na programu ČT24. Při systematizaci způsobů televizního zprostředkování interakce s minulostí je třeba rozlišit specializované historické pořady explicitě zaměřené na seznamování diváků s historickými událostmi, osobnostmi a procesy a pořady, které nepatří k historicky vzdělávacím žánrům a vstupují do formování kolektivní paměti nepřímo.

Zkoumáme-li explicitě definované historické pořady, analyzujeme, jak pracuje televize v roli „historika“ (Gray, Bell, 2013; Dillon, 2010). Na explicitě historické pořady se nahlíží z hlediska věcné správnosti, kvality a hodnověrnosti zdrojů nebo heuristické práce v archívech, přesto k tomu přistupují ještě vlivy z nitra televizního průmyslu. „Reprezentaci národní minulosti na obrazovce si lze představit jako palimpsest nebo krajinu paměti, která je tvořena vrstvami produkce, obsahu či estetiky a recepce“ (Gray, 2013: 81) Podrobovat skrutiniu absolutní věcné přesnosti a historické věrnosti paměťově relevantní pořady, které nemají charakter historicko-informativního žánru (například většina televizní dramatické tvorby nebo reality TV), by bylo naopak dogmatické. Nároky na autenticitu se však na paměťové televizní pořady přesto kladou, stejně jako historici vždy fetišizovali historickou správnost ve filmu. Dílo reprezentující minulost je poměřováno s historiografickým protokolem, který spravuje historická věda, a odklon od historiky uznávané verze minulosti v jejich očích snižuje hodnotu díla. Robert Sklar popisuje tuto roli historiků ve filmové kritice pojmem „historická policie“ (Sklar, 1997). Přenos kontroly historické správnosti z historicky vzdělávacích pořadů na

paměťové pořady je však nejméně šťastnou variantou, která kritizuje to, co je méně podstatné (oslabený realismus) a ignoruje to, co je přínosné (mnemonická stimulace).

Potenciál paměťových pořadů bez historiografické ambice tkví spíš ve schopnosti probudit či aktualizovat vztah k určitým úsekům minulosti a kolektivní zájem připisovat jim významy z perspektivy přítomnosti (jinými slovy, vzpomínat na ně) než v podání co nejpřesnějšího odrazu. Historiografická věrnost může být oslabena například silnou narativizací minulosti (jako např. v seriálu „První republika“, ČT, 2014, rež. Biser A. Arichtev, Johanna Steiger Antošová) nebo naopak podrobným historickým vhladem, ale autorsky podbarveným (jako např. v seriálu „České století“, ČT, 2013, rež. Robert Sedláček). Narativizace i autorská interpretace jsou postupy, které oslabují historiografickou neutralitu, ale přispívají k tomu, jak intenzivně s těmito pořady pracuje populární a veřejná paměť. Při posuzování mnemonické produktivity televizních pořadů nejde ani tak o autentičnost, ale o funkčnost (Anderson, 2001: 23). „Důležitější než to, abychom byli postaveni před historií, je to, co jsme schopni si zapamatovat a jakou roli to hraje v našich životech“ (Frisch, 1990: 16).

Televizní paměťová kultura je často kritizována za zpronevěru historické přesnosti. Místo na šíři mnemonického užití se pozornost zaměřuje pouze na textualitu. Reprezentace jsou označeny za povrchní, zkreslené, kýčovitě či nostalgické, což jsou vlastnosti, které nutně musí vést k sociální amnézii. Usuzovat z textů na jejich společenské užití, je však metodologicky chybné. V reakci na popsany textualismus badatelé v oblasti mediálních a paměťových studií i soudobých dějin upozorňují, že je třeba vzít v úvahu skutečné konzumenty paměti a dát slovo analýzám recepce (Bourdon, Kligler-Vilenchik, 2011: 34). Studium toho, jak si lidé pamatují a vzpomínají „spolu s televizí“, osvětluje vliv televize na formování kolektivní paměti mnohem jasněji než kritika historické správnosti televizních textů.

Česká televizní kultura po roce 1989 se potkává s ustalováním vztahu k socialistické minulosti minimálně dvěma televizně-specifickými způsoby. Tak jako kolektivní paměť po celé toto období osciluje mezi diskontinuitou oficiální mnemopolitiky a populární slastí kontinuity, i televize obsáhla dva analogické diskurzy vztahu k minulosti: komemorativní a nostalgický.¹⁰ Komemorativní diskurz zahrnuje televizní tvorbu uctívající památku obětí komunistického režimu a pranýřující viníky, přidává se k zavrhování minulosti a paměťové potřeby kontinuity

¹⁰ Vymezení těchto diskurzů je založeno na zohlednění dramatické a dokumentární tvorby. Televizní zpravodajství nebylo vzato v úvahu; představuje samostatný předmět výzkumu, který by zajisté přinesl zcela svébytné kategorie.

neoslovuje. Estetická forma pořadů komemorativního diskurzu je umírněná, je podřízena obsahu sdělení a úsilí o realističnost. Nostalgický diskurz je tvořen pořady, které se vyhýbají problematice extrémních mnemonických aktérů, jako jsou oběti, viníci, zrádci nebo spolupachatelé a zaměřují se na habitus socialistické každodennosti. Forma je postavena na roveň obsahu nebo dominuje – estetice vévodí vizuální důraz na vzory, tvary a barvy reprezentující socialistickou každodenní kulturu vtělenou do povrchů socialismu (bytových doplňků, nábytku, módy, spotřebního zboží). Nostalgické texty často obsahují pobídky k ironickému či recesistickému čtení.

K oběma diskurzům je třeba dodat, že zařazení individuálních pořadů k té či oné kategorii nelze provést ad hoc a natrvalo. Význam individuálního pořadu pro krajinu paměti, jak uvádí Ann Gray (viz výše) je výsledným součtem záměrů, představ a praktik z oblastí produkce, reprezentace i recepce. Například u archivních pořadů je reprezentace daná a zdánlivě zafixovaná zhotovením a uzavřením díla v minulosti, ale přesto podléhá i v současnosti změnám významu na základě toho, do jakého kontextu (například díky para-textům jako jsou marketing, reklama či popisky na DVD nebo v televizním programu) je televizními profesionály zasazena nebo na co kladou důraz diváci v průběhu recepce. Stejný pořad, seriál *Třicet případů majora Zemana*, byl tak na ČT1 v roce 1999 reprízován v rámci komemorativního diskurzu a v roce 2001 znovu uveden na TV Prima jako součást nostalgického diskurzu. Repríza 30 PMZ na ČT1 měla silný náboj diskontinuity vyjádřený doprovodnými diskusemi a dalšími rámuujícími tvrzeními zástupců ČT, jak je podrobně popsáno jinde (ČinátI, 2014: 177-202; Pehe, 2014)¹¹. O dva roky později byl seriál, který zprvu někteří aktéři paměti vnímali jako dehonestaci utrpení politických vězňů, uvozen šprýmovnými televizními trailery intertextuálně propojující příběh o majoru Zemanovi s odlehčujícími produkty populární kultury, jako jsou seriál *Přátelé* nebo filmy o Vinnetuovi. Producenti jej tedy uvodili ironií a přesunuli do nostalgického diskurzu, ačkoli se na původní reprezentaci nic nezměnilo.

Televize jako „stroj času“, tedy technologické přemostění mezi přítomností a minulostí, má ve srovnání s jinými médii bezkonkurenční postavení díky možnostem pracovat s televizními archivy. Minulost tedy není nutné jen rekonstruovat v současnosti a vytvářet ikony co

¹¹ Diskurzivní ukotvení reprízy 30PMZ v diskontinuitě paradoxně některým účastníkům veřejné rozpravy nestačilo, vyžadovali mnohem silnější diskontinuitní rámec a za něj pokládali jen úplné zrušení reprízy (ČinátI, 2014: 181).

nejpodobnější historické skutečnosti. Televize má díky archivaci pořadů z minulých dob možnost prezentovat minulost formou jejích indexů – obrazů minulosti, které byly v dané minulosti přímo vytvořeny. Toky pořadů z televizního archivu do programu a zpět jsou neopomenutelným indikátorem procesů kolektivní paměti. Zobrazení minulosti ikonickým znakem v současnosti a její zhmotnění indexikálním aspektem pocházejícím přímo z minulosti rozlišil Philip Rosen (2001), když v kontextu kinematografie psal o „preservacionistickém“ a „restauracionistickém“ přístupu. Zatímco preservacionismus chce minulosti představit pomocí původního, nezměněného předmětu, restauracionismus chce minulost upravit renovací do působivější podoby (2001: 52). Reprízování pořadů z televizních archivů využívá princip indexikality, kterému Rosen (2001: 127) připisuje zvláštní naléhavost. Indexikální pojetí socialistické minulosti prostřednictvím autentických televizních pořadů (nebo jejich částí) zaujímá významnou pozici v komemorativním i nostalgickém diskurzu. Pozici speciálních indexů minulosti měly v televizním vysílání po roce 1989 tzv. trezorové filmy, které Československá televize spoluřízená ÚV KSČ nezařazovala do vysílání. Tento posun zakázaných filmů z trezoru do archivu a z archivu do vysílání po roce 1989 dokládá fakt, že archiv má různé chronologické vrstvy, do nichž jsou vepsány dobové oficiální politiky paměti. Ilustrují se tím také slova Steva Andersona: „Studium proměny minulosti v paměť se ze všeho nejvíce podobá archeologii – cílem není jen odkrýt něco, co bylo pohřbeno pod zemí, ale objasnit, jak a proč se na tom usadily nové vrstvy“ (Anderson, 2001: 23). Do televizního komemorativního diskurzu tak vstoupily z „trezoru“ filmy jako „Ucho“ (1970, rež. Karel Kachyňa), „Skřivánci na niti“ (1969, rež. Jiří Menzel), „Smuteční slavnost“ (1969, rež. Zdeněk Sirový), „Den sedmý, osmá noc“ (1969, rež. Evald Schorm, Jan Kačer), aj. V rámci komemorativního diskurzu bylo stejně důležité zpřístupnit umělecké hodnoty těchto filmů, jako odčinit fakt, že je předchozí režim diskriminoval.

Další významnou kategorií pořadů se statusem indexu minulosti v komemorativním diskurzu byly naopak reprízy autentických propagandistických dokumentů nebo pořadů na pomezí dokumentu a publicistiky. Odvysílání autentického archivního materiálu, který odkazuje přímo k době vzniku, dokumentuje dobové patologie a principy konstrukce ideologických sdělení. Na rozdíl od zpřístupnění trezorových filmů není podstatou komemorace odčinit nespravedlnost, ale zpětně oslabit viníky jejich podrobným odhalením. Na televizních obrazovkách se po roce 1989 objevily například tyto filmy (respektive jejich ukázky): „Atentát na kulturu“ (ČST, 1977, rež. Ladislav Chocholoušek), „Jablko sváru“ (ČST, 1973, rež. M.

Pavlinec), „Vlastenci bez masky“ (ČST, 1969), „Říkají si nezávislí“ (ČST, 1989, H. Hackenschmied; V. Tůma) nebo „Kamelot“ (ČST, 1989, rež. K. Kučera).

Protneme-li dvě dosud nastíněné dimenze, tedy paměťový status pořadu ve vztahu k (dis)kontinuitě dějin (komemorativní a nostalgický) a sémiotický vztah televizního znaku k realitě socialistické minulosti (ikona a index), dostaneme hrubé rozčlenění televizních diskurzů post-socialistické kolektivní paměti (spolu s nejvýraznějšími příklady):

	ikonický	indexikální
komemorativní	současné (vznik po 1989) rekonstrukce socialistické minulosti na principu diskontinuity <i>Např.: Přítelkyně z domu smutku, Zdivočelá země I-IV, Kousek nebe</i>	dobové (vznik před 1989) socialistické pořady produkčně užitě v kontextu diskontinuity <i>Např.: trezorové filmy, propagandistické dokumenty</i>
nostalgický	současné (vznik po 1989) rekonstrukce socialistické minulosti na principu kontinuity <i>Např.: Vyprávěj I-V, Retro, Zlatý časy</i>	dobové (vznik před 1989) socialistické pořady recepčně užitě v kontextu kontinuity <i>Např.: reprízy „normalizačních seriálů“ diváky vnímané nostalgicky</i>

Podle Williama Uricchio (2010) se televizní tok vyznačuje „heterochronicitou“. „Televize, stejně jako knihovna nebo muzeum, je místem, které nasává všechny časy, a samo stojí mimo čas; televize je temporální agregát – kumulace vizí, vkusů, forem a idejí shromážděných na jednom místě“ (2010: 30). Televizní vysílání svádí do jednotného prostoru televizního toku pořady s nejrůznější temporalitou – od zpráv, které jsou symptomem nejaktuálnější současnosti, přes příběhy založené na reprezentaci minulosti nebo časovém posunu do budoucnosti (Reifová, 2016). Televize tak podporuje citlivost pro vnímání běhu času. Pořady, které se ikonicky nebo indexikálně vztahují k uplynulým událostem a dějům, přispívají ke společenskému zpřesňování hranice mezi tím, kam ještě sahá současnost, kde začíná minulost a jaké pocity svědectví minulosti vyvolává. Toto ověřování je důležité zvláště

v případě, že společnost trvale kolísá mezi tím, zda si svou minulost chce pamatovat nebo raději zapomenout.

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STRUČNÝ SOUHRN OBSAHU PUBLIKOVANÝCH ODBORNÝCH STATÍ

Tato kapitola přináší stručný výtah obsahů jednotlivých předložených studií v češtině. Studie jsou ve druhé části spisu prezentované pod svými původními názvy a s úplnými bibliografickými odkazy. Pokud má studie více autorů, je definován autorský podíl předkladatelky. Studie jsou zařazené v původní podobě, včetně formálních záležitostí, které vycházejí z předpisů vydavatelů. Forma poznámek pod čarou, bibliografických odkazů v textu i za textem, přítomnost abstraktu a výčtu klíčových slov v každé stati odpovídá publikované verzi. Tento přístup vede k jisté nejednotnosti ve formální úpravě statí, ale je výsledkem rozhodnutí prezentovat studie co nejautentičtěji. Jako přílohy habilitační práce jsou také zařazeny titulní strany publikací a první strany tištěných verzí předložených studií.

Watching socialist television serials in the 70s and 80s in the former Czechoslovakia: a study in the history of meaning-making

European Journal of Communication, 30(1): 79-94

Článek shrnuje výzkum diváctví tzv. normalizačních seriálů a zaměřuje se na problematiku paměti sledování televize v případě politicky zkompromitovaných pořadů, jejichž propagandistický obsah je nekompatibilní se současným dominantním systémem politických hodnot. Hlavním předmětem zájmu je otázka, jak v současnosti doboví diváci normalizačních seriálů vzpomínají na politická sdělení seriálů a průběh jejich sledování? Metodologicky je výzkum příspěvkem k historickému zkoumání televizních publik, jemuž je věnována minimální pozornost. Pozornost je nadto zaměřena na to, jak si lidé pamatují významy, respektive ideové obsahy vyvolané sledováním televizních seriálů v minulosti. Důležitá je také orientace na výzkum na televizních publik v nedemokratických podmínkách, která narušuje rozšířenou představou, že „aktivní publika“ lze předpokládat pouze v demokratických mediálních systémech, zatímco televizní diváci v nesvobodných společnostech jsou letargické oběti převládajících ideologií.

V teoretickém úvodu článek přináší analýzu normalizační apatie a za pomoci terminologie Chantall Mouffe (the politics x the political) konstatuje, že česká společnost v období normalizace nebyla přepolitizovaná, ale naopak trpěla nedostatkem smyslu pro politické otázky u široké veřejnosti. Sledování politicky angažovaných seriálů ve vzpomínkách jejich

diváků je dále zkoumáno jako potenciální pobídka k reflexi jinak ignorovaných otázek nadindividuálního zájmu

Výzkum byl založen na analýze dat sebraných technikou sedmi focus groups se čtyřiceti narátory. Skupinové rozhovory proběhly v roce 2012 v Praze, Středních Čechách a Brně, každý trval přibližně 90 minut. Během každého rozhovoru byly promítnuty krátké ukázky ze seriálů „Nejmladší z rodu Hamrů“ (ČST, 1975, rež. Evžen Sokolovský), „Žena za pultem“ (ČST, 1976, rež. Jaroslav Dudek) a „Okres na severu“ (ČST, 1980, rež. Evžen Sokolovský). Výzkum zjistil a dále v kontextu paměti socialismu interpretoval důraz na shodné tvrzení diváků uvádějících, že o politických obsazích propagandistických seriálů „vůbec nepřemýšleli“. V situacích, kdy sledování seriálů nebylo definováno jako explicitě kognitivní aktivita (Co jste si o seriálu mysleli?) však diváci reportovali několik různých druhů intelektuální reflexe seriálů v době jejich sledování (emocionální reakce, veřejné konverzace, domácí ironie, exkorporace). Popření kognitivního zpracování seriálů při dobovém sledování bylo proto interpretováno jako převyprávění minulosti pamětí přemostující politický zlom mezi socialismem a post-socialismem („memory over the dislocation“). Politicky angažované televizní seriály z období normalizace narátoři definují jako symptomy dnes zavržené minulosti a nepřipouštějí, že pro ně mohly být předmětem seriózní mentální aktivity (přemýšlení), ačkoli v jiném kontextu (neakcentujícím kognitivní zpracování) o myšlenkových procesech vyvolaných sledováním seriálů hovoří.

The way we applauded: How popular culture stimulates collective memory of the socialist past in Czechoslovakia – the case of the television seriál „Vyprávěj“ and its viewers

In A. Imré, T.Havens and K. Lustyik, eds. *Popular Television in Eastern Europe during and since Socialism*, pp. 199-221. New York: Routledge.

Kapitola v knize přináší výsledky výzkumu diváků televizního seriálu „Vyprávěj“ (ČT, 2009-2013, rež. Biser A. Arichtev). Hlavním záměrem výzkumu bylo odhalit, zda a jak seriál motivuje diváky ke vzpomínkám na socialismus.

Teoretický rámec kapitoly je věnován problematice post-socialistické nostalgie a její funkce v procesu paměti socialismu. Post-socialistická nostalgie je definována jako diskurs, který mediuje kontakt mezi minulostí a současností. S ohledem na výsledky výzkumu se však úvod také věnuje konceptu kulturního traumatu a argumentuje ve prospěch uznání post-

socialistického kulturního traumatu jako další, méně známé podoby post-socialistické paměti.

Výzkum byl založen na analýze dat z osmi focus groups zahrnujících 42 narátorů. Skupinové rozhovory se odehrály v roce 2010 v Praze a u respondentů byla sledována generační charakteristika (respektive osobní paměť socialismu v dospělém věku). Analýza výsledků přinesla zjištění, že diváci sledují seriál se zaměřením pozornosti na konkrétní výjevy odkazující k minulosti či obrazy, části obrazů nebo scény, v nichž je zobrazení minulosti výrazně „zhuštěno“. Tyto úseky byly pojmenovány „retroznaky“ („retro-signifiers“). Diváci se pozastavovali nad retroznaky dvěma způsoby: buď je užívali jako spouštěče vzpomínek odlučujících se od narace nebo je užívali jako indikátory správnosti narace. Jako retroznaky si diváci vybírali ze seriálu vizuální elementy (předměty denní spotřeby, oblečení, nábytek, zařízení bytu, např. rudé karafiáty), typy postav (např. omezený a stranicky aktivní nadřízený), ritualizované praktiky (např. průvod na 1. Máje) a historické události (např. srpen 1968). Kromě nostalgických užití retroznaků byla však při analýze dat objevena také přítomnost kulturního traumatu, a to v tvrzeních, která se týkala reakcí na politický zlom prožívaný jako průrva v integritě vývoje společnosti. Narátoři uváděli tři důvody významu kontinuity s minulostí: preventivní kontinuitu (minulost se třeba si pamatovat, aby se neopakovala), historiografickou kontinuitu (minulost je třeba si pamatovat, aby mladá generace měla kompletní pojem o dějinách), každodenní kontinuitu (minulost a přítomnost se vlastně zas tak moc neliší, každodenní život za socialismu nebyl patologický a tuto kontinuitu bychom neměli přehlížet). Kulturnímu traumatu nasvědčovala také tvrzení, která se vztahovala k nejistotě respondentů týkající se nejasné hranice mezi „viníky“ a „oběťmi“ socialismu. Kulturní trauma obyčejných lidí z nich vystoupilo jako trvalá oscilace mezi pozicemi oběti a (spolu)viníka a neklid plynoucí z absence jednotné překlenující narace, která by trvale vyvinila široké vrstvy či tzv. mlčící většinu jako nevinné oběti.

Rerunning and „rewatching“ socialist TV drama serials : post-socialist Czech television audiences between commodification and reclaiming the past

Critical Studies in Television, 4(2): 53-71.

Článek se zabývá problematikou repríz televizních seriálů z období normalizace ve vysílání českých televizních stanic po roce 1989. Metodologicky je založen na zpracování rozsáhlé

databáze domácích televizních seriálů vysílaných v premiéře nebo repríze Československými a českými televizními vysílateli v letech 1959-2014.

Článek v úvodu vysvětluje roli televizních seriálů ve vysílání socialistické televize a charakterizuje ji pojmem „dominantní spekularita“ Collina McCabea a poukazuje na význam seriality jako pravidelně se vracející narace pro jakékoli pojetí komunikace sledující zejména účinky na publikum, ať už z komerčních nebo politických důvodů.

V empirické části článek kvantitativně vyjadřuje zastoupení repríz socialistických televizních seriálů po roce 1989 a zdůrazňuje, že až do konce sledovaného období v roce 2005 jejich podíl ve vysílání každý rok představuje kolem 50 % všech odvysílaných domácích seriálů a s postupujícím časem neklesá. Jako emblematické události znovuuvedení socialistických seriálů na televizní obrazovky jsou přiblíženy reprízy seriálu Třicet případů majora Zemana na ČT1 v roce 1999 a na TV Prima v roce 2001. Proces opadnutí masivních protestů v tomto mezidobí je charakterizován pojmem Zygmunta Baumana „adiaforizace“. Kromě kvantifikace zařazování socialistických seriálů výzkum také sleduje vývoj tzv. ideologického indexu seriálů a zjišťuje, že tento index v průběhu času stoupá – tedy že čím vzdálenější v čase je socialismus, tím ideologicky nasycenější socialistické seriály se televizní vysílatelé odvažují zařazovat. Zatímco v roce 1991 byl průměrný ideologický index všech reprízovaných socialistických seriálů 1,87, v roce 2003 to bylo 2,89. (Ideologický index byl stanoven pomocným výzkumem formou ankety mezi experty na základě replikace metodologie, kterou použil v roce 1940 Edward Suchman při kategorizaci děl vážné hudby podle kvality). Tento proces je vysvětlen nárůstem ochoty vnímat tyto pořady ironicky v rámci post-socialistické nostalgie nahrazující etické a estetické odmítání počátku 90. let. Kvantitativně je také popsána míra obeznámenosti české populace se socialistickými televizními seriály a praktiky opakovaného sledování („re-watching“), což vychází z reprezentativního šetření CVVM „Naše společnost“ z listopadu 2007. Byla sledována publika pěti vybraných seriálů a zjištěno, že těch, kteří se na tyto seriály dívali před rokem 1989 a při jejich obnovených reprízách po roce 1989 se k nim vrátili, je více, než těch, kteří už se na reprízy v nových časech nedívali.

Czech Ugly Katka: global homogenization and local invention

In K. Akass and J. McCabe, eds. *TV's Betty Goes Global: From Telenovela to International Brand*, pp. 189-205. London: I.B. Tauris.

Kapitola v knize vychází z diskurzní analýzy české adaptace kolumbijské telenovely „Yo Soy Betty, la fea“ (RCN, 2001) na seriál „Ošklivka Katka“ (Prima TV, 2008). Hlavním záměrem je rozkrýt, zda a jak se významová struktura post-socialismu jakožto kulturní formace promítla do televizního textu české adaptace.

Úvodní část kapitoly se věnuje produkčním detailům seriálu Ošklivka Katka a jeho narativnímu půdorysu, respektive rozložení děje mezi bohatou rodinu majitelů módní firmy Medunů a chudou rodinu Katky s nezaměstnaným otce a matkou provozující skromný koloniál. Teoretický rámec zasazuje českou adaptaci kolumbijské telenovely do debaty o kulturním imperialismu a ukazuje, že tok z periferie na periferii je dalším argumentem proti předpokladu, že v mezinárodní komunikaci vlivná centra na Severu a Západě kulturně okupují slabé kulturní kolonie na Jihu a Východě. Jako hlavní protiargument je ovšem zmíněn koncept obchodu s televizními formáty namísto hotových produktů. Televizní formát otevřený domestikaci a indigenizaci a televizní franšízová kultura znemožňují vysvětlit mezinárodní televizní trh jednoduše jako imperialistickou nadvládu silných hráčů; fungují spíše na principu „glokalizace“.

Empirická část kapitoly v návaznosti na to zkoumá, nakolik česká lokální adaptace globálního formátu kopíruje post-socialistické významotvorné logiky. Diskurzní analýza přináší zjištění, že v globální i lokální verzi seriálu funguje tzv. „řetěz ekvivalence“ (pojem Chantale Mouffe). Vnější krása je asociována s vnitřní ošklivostí a to vše je asociováno s bohatstvím, zatímco vnější ošklivost je asociována s vnitřní krásou a to vše je propojeno s chudobou. Post-socialistická adaptace však do globálního řetězce ekvivalencí přidává nový, lokálně-specifický článek: krásný, ale bezcharakterní svět bohatství je propojen s kapitalismem a ošklivý, ale dobrosrdečný svět chudých je asociován se socialismem. Tyto dodatečné post-socialistické artikulace se projevují v tom, jak jsou obě rodiny zasazeny v historickém čase, jaká práce je mezi ně distribuována, jaký mají životní styl a jakou uznávají estetiku. Jediným spojovacím prvkem mezi oběma světy je hlavní hrdinka Katka, která představuje prvek jakéhosi utopického kapitalismu. Postava Katky funguje jako médium transakce, díky níž se do každého z obou světů dostává to, čeho je v něm nedostatek: do ošklivého/dobrého světa přechází krása (Katka, která byla ošklivé káčátko, se promění v krasavici) a do krásného/bezcharakterního světa přechází dobro (povrchní playboy Tomáš si bere příklad s Katky a polepší se).

Between politics and soap: the articulation of ideology and melodrama in Czechoslovak television serials, 1975-89

In *P. Goddard, ed. Popular Television in Authoritarian Europe, pp. 91-106. Manchester: University of Manchester Press.*

Kapitola v knize soustřeďuje výsledky narativní a produkční analýzy méně známého socialistického televizního seriálu „Muž na radnici“ (ČST, 1976). Ukazuje, jak je příběh vystavěn ze dvou dějových linií a popisuje jejich vzájemné vztahy. Ideologická linie je tvořena elementy veřejného, pracovního, politického a obvykle mužského světa; melodramatická linie je tvořena elementy citového a vztahového, obvykle ženského a rodinného světa.

Úvodní část propojuje téma a prostředí seriálu, v němž se obě dějové linie odvíjejí, s ideologickými principy řízení a kontroly v Československé televizi, konkrétně s institutem ideově-tematických plánů. Námět a prostředí jsou v tomto smyslu koordinovány s dobovým politickým programem komunistické strany. Seriál pojednává o sporech při nové výstavbě ve městě Starý Kunštát, během nichž se ukáže jako ideově správné podporovat asanaci historického centra a budovat nová sídliště. Stejně jako v seriálu, i v Československu na počátku 70. let byla důležitým bodem normalizace výstavba sídlištních bytů poskytujících nivelizované, ale vyšší standardy bydlení. Ideologická dějová linie je tak přímo provázána s agitací ve prospěch komunistického plánu.

Empirická narativní analýza hlavních posunů děje jednotlivých epizod znázorňuje, že ideologická a melodramatická linie jsou spolu provázány a proplétají se, ideologické linii je však dána preference tím, že v ní události posunující děj mají své příčiny, zatímco do melodramatické linie se promítají jen jejich důsledky. Souběh obou linií je vysvětlen také jako jeden z možných faktorů ovlivňujících oblibu socialistických seriálů v době jejich uvedení i při jejich reprízách v 90. letech a po roce 2000.

Watching socialist television serials in the 70s and 80s in the former Czechoslovakia: a study in the history of meaning-making

Bibliografický záznam publikované stati¹:

Reifová, I. (2015) Watching socialist television serials in the former Czechoslovakia: a study in the history of meaning-making. *European Journal of Communication*, 30(1): 79-94.²

¹Titulní strana publikované stati viz Příloha 1

² Irena Reifová-autorský podíl: 100%

Watching socialist television serials in the 70s and 80s in the former Czechoslovakia: a study in the history of meaning-making

Irena Reifová

Abstract

The aim of this article is to map out and analyze how the viewers of the communist-governed Czechoslovak television understood the propagandist television serials during the so-called “normalization”, the last two decades of communist party rule after the Prague Spring. It strives to show peculiarities of the research on television viewers’ capabilities to remember the meanings and details of hermeneutic agency which took place in the past. The article argues – in contrast to the mainstream historiography which claims full depoliticization of Czechoslovak people as a consequence of post-Prague Spring disillusionment – that the uses of popular culture provided niches in which the political could be experienced. The role of reproductive memory in remembering the viewers’ experience buried under the grand socio-political switchover is also illuminated and used to coin the concept of “memory over dislocation”.

Keywords

popular culture, television serials, Czechoslovak normalization, life-story research, collective memory, post-socialism

This article seeks to challenge a tacit assumption that instrumental and interpretive autonomy of media use can only be looked for in the democratic environment. It turns the time back to the 1970s and 1980s in the state-socialist Czechoslovakia and strives to illuminate how the television viewers understood the socialist television serials, the Czechoslovak legendary television of the period. Its goal is to map out the meaning-making processes stimulated by television programmes that packaged ideological credos of the Communist Party as popular television narratives. What is even more important, though, is to show that these programmes sensitized viewers’ meaning-making potential at all and that

the spectators did not simply swallow the propagandist hook without any modification or re-appropriation.

This is not an attempt to pulverize or relativize the goals and methods of the Communist Party's propaganda. The article rather argues that production and reception were "linked but distinctive moments" (Hall, 1980: 107) even in the circuits of culture within undemocratic society in Communist Party-governed Czechoslovakia.

The existing conceptual apparatus of audience studies derives predominantly from the research that was done on media audiences in democratic, capitalist circumstances. Unregimented, liberal media culture seems to be a primary condition for meaningful enquiry into the audiences as it is exactly political freedom and market operations which allow scholars to assess the audiences either as citizens or as consumers, the two most examined subject positions in contemporary audience studies (Dahlgren and Sparks, 1991; Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995). Nonetheless, the audiences in undemocratic conditions were never made part of this narrative.

Studying media audiences in non-democratic conditions challenges not only the assumption that the interpretive autonomy of the user can only be found in democratic societies, but also the more general tendency to think of audiences in terms of activity in contrast to passivity. The study of audiences' meaning making in non-democratic settings pushes us to reflect on these taken-for-granted dichotomies that dominate our thinking about audiences, and encourages us to offer more nuanced analytical and conceptual distinctions.

The article will first present the methodological lessons on an enquiry into the historical audiences to which this research leads. This part will elaborate on the inadequacy of the passive vs. active dichotomy in the case of non-democratic audiences, intricacies of doing memory studies over dislocation and the question of memorability of meanings within life-story methodology. In the second part the actual study of the audiences in the state socialist Czechoslovakia in 1970s and 1980s will be put forth.

1. Methodological considerations: history, memory and meanings

Methodologically speaking, this research is a study in the history of meaning making processes. It has two main points of departure. Firstly, it proposes that totalitarian popular culture was used in a hermeneutically prolific way and seeks to examine political readings of the socialist serials by the television audiences of the period. Secondly, it differentiates

between actual historical meaning making processes and the retrospective reconstruction of these processes. It assumes that viewers' memory of how they understood propagandist television in the socialist past is massively affected by the drive to re-evaluate the past in post-socialist collective memory.

The research is grounded in analyzing respondents' memories of watching the socialist serials collected by the focus group interviews.¹ The sample was composed of 40 narrators in seven focus groups (one in-depth interview with a specific respondent was also done). The selection of narrators was controlled for age, active viewing of the socialist serials during so-called "normalization" and declared attitude to the state-socialist system in Czechoslovakia. Narrators were born in 1955 or earlier; only people who were at least 20 years old in 1975, when the first propagandist television serial was aired, were selected. Narrators were grouped according to their attitude towards the communist system into six groups with no specific attitude and one group with oppositional attitude. Interviewing was done in a semi-structured fashion according to a prepared list of topics. (The script listed question-based topics in the following order: How did your television room look like in the 1970s and 1980s?; Did you like to watch the Czech television serials in the 1970s and 1980s?; Did you watch the political scenes in the serials?; What did you think about the political content of the serials back then?; How did you feel about the political content of the serials?; Did you talk about the political scenes with anybody? In the second part of the interview narrators watched three samples and provided free associations which were opened by the question: Do you remember this serial? Do you remember its main character?) The interviews took place during 2012 in the central part of the Czech Republic (including Prague) and in Brno. The interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes each, and video samples taken from the three socialist serials were used as artifacts and incentives.² The focus groups were recorded and transcribed.

¹ The focus group method was selected because some narrators were older people over 70 and the group discussion stimulated their memories. Another reason was that the issues connected to state socialism still have polarizing effects among Czechs and consequently lively discussions could be expected. The focus groups are better suited for fructifying these conditions than other interviewing techniques.

² Samples of the following serials were used: 1) *The Youngest of the Hamr Family* [*Nejmladší z rodu Hamrů*], ČST 1975, written by Jaroslav Dietl, directed by Evžen Sokolovský: the story covers the collectivization of the land in the early days of the communist regime in the 1950s; 2) *The Woman Behind the Counter* [*Žena za pultem*], ČST 1977, written by Jaroslav Dietl, directed by Jaroslav Dudek: the story covers one year in the life of a shop assistant, Anna Holubová, and the everyday traffic in the supermarket in Prague; 3) *The District in the North* [*Okres na severu*], ČST 1980, written by Jaroslav Dietl, directed by Evžen Sokolovský: the story covers the professional struggles and family life of the regional Communist Party Secretary Jan Pláteník. The sample was

1.1 Audiences' agency and popular hermeneutics under the non-democratic conditions

Ideologically charged television serials were introduced into the programming of Czechoslovak Television after the collapse of the liberation process in 1968 and the advent of so called "normalization". It is this category of television drama that was used as an object and artifact in the memory-inciting interviews presented in the second part of the article. Normalization is a name commonly given to the period of twenty years between 1969 and 1989 which followed the Prague Spring. It was characterized by the restoration of the communist party rule prevailing before the reform period led by Alexander Dubček.

The period of "normalization" is a rather unlikely choice for a study that wishes to explore people's agency. This study focuses on audiences' hermeneutical agency, i.e. viewers' capability to read the socialist serials autonomously and generate interpretations and uses which significantly deviated from the intended propagandist meanings. Normalization, which brought about the re-establishment of an unadulterated totalitarian regime, is overwhelmingly studied in terms of specifying the power of the state socialist structures. Human agency is overlooked as a quality which naturally atrophied under the pressure of the tyrannizing structures. Moreover, it does not fit into the post-socialist grand narrative which assumes the totally stupefying effects of the domineering socialist structures at its centre. Looking for the indices of autonomous hermeneutic agency within the conditions of normalization brings a new stimulus into academic writing on non-democratic audiences which has been for a long time preoccupied with the power of structures and indoctrinating effects of propaganda (Fidelius, 1998; Kabele and Hájek, 2008; Jareš et al., 2012). A rare example of an enquiry into the historical audiences within a government-controlled media system is a study by Meyen and Nawratil (2004) who interviewed former GDR spectators about their viewing habits in the past. The authors, however, almost neglected the impact of the memory work on the accounts provided by the narrators.

The research presented in this article studies how television viewers used politically blatant programmes (socialist television serials) to connect to the publicly relevant themes and to

constructed to embrace the serials covering different professional environments, i.e. agriculture, services and industry, because setting the serials in diverse working conditions was a staple of Czechoslovak Television's production of serials. Another principle of the sample construction was covering the two main thematic lines into which the Czechoslovak serials can be organized: *The Woman Behind the Counter* represents the escapist line and *The District in the North* illustrates an explicitly propagandist line (Reifová, 2008: 301).

understand the existing political order in the private corners of their existence, in their television rooms. The main goal is to find out if the socialist television serials inspired the viewers to reflect on existing political reality; if they functioned as stimuli in a meaning making process. We subsume all these activities – reading popular culture texts, understanding them, interpreting them and using the experience as input in a process of assessing reality – under the concept of popular hermeneutics. Popular hermeneutics refers to the methods and results of understanding popular texts by ordinary people in an intuitive way. (The similar concept of “ordinary hermeneutics” was applied in the research on lay people’s interpretations of the Bible by Andrew Village [2007]).

Obviously, the totalitarian, undemocratic character of the social conditions impacted on extensity and intensity of popular hermeneutics in reading of the political meanings. Yet it would be inaccurate to judge the non-democratic audiences as automatically passive because production of meanings is relevant even if it does not feed into immediate social action. Practices of popular hermeneutics performed by non-democratic audiences thus further question the canonical distinction between active vs. passive audiences – they especially show its inadequacy as a singular dimension of audience assessment. On one hand, non-democratic audiences are active because they are involved in the processes of popular hermeneutics; on the other hand they cannot be classified as publics. According to Sonia Livingstone, “public refers to a shared understanding or inclusion in a common forum” (Livingstone, 2005: 17) and these forms of collectivity hardly existed outside of oppositional circles in Soviet-bloc countries. The paradox of active audiences who are still not publics can be more suitably addressed with a two-dimensional model by Nancy Fraser who differentiated “strong” and “weak” publics depending on the potential for opinion formation and decision making (Fraser, 1992: 134). Totalitarian audiences are weak as far as they do not have any space for political decision-making but some opinion formation in terms of making of political meanings (e.g. inspired by popular television) is possible (although circulation of the opinions is restricted or deformed).

1.2 Memory over the dislocation

The overall methodology of this research could be defined as the sociology of the past based on life-story research. It analyses the extracts of life-stories that respondents produced

when they were invited to talk about memories of their watching political scenes in the socialist serials.

The most disturbing concern of the studies grounded in life-story methodology is the one about memory work. This type of research has been notoriously criticized for working with something as biased and unreliable as memory although memory studies scholars tend to anticipate potential criticism themselves. Alistair Thomson enlists multifarious doubts about memory as a data-mining tool. According to him, memory deteriorates in old age, gets affected by nostalgia or influenced by the narrator's and interviewer's personalities – and above all – it gets replaced by reconfigured versions of the collective or retrospective memory (Thomson, 2011: 79). Jerome Bourdon in his account of memory as “the double agent” also stresses that “memory is reconstructive; it constantly re-elaborates the past” (Bourdon, 2011: 63).

Distortions and reconstitutions of memory are by and large accepted as indisputable facets of the memory work which apply to all remembering subjects in all circumstances. Nonetheless, this research still requires a more nuanced perspective which allows us to understand that intensity of reconstructive tendency is crucially connected to dis/continuity of memory. The discontinued memory which has to handle a transformative rupture, dividing the life course into incompatible parts, is necessarily even more reconstructive and certainly it reconstructs the past in a specific way. Such a memory can be defined as a memory over the dislocation. It is exactly this type of memory which is dealt with in this research. The past of which narrators talked is separated from the present by the political and social switchover in 1989 – in other words by “dislocation”. Jakob Torfing defines it as a total fracture of all familiar social dimensions, as “a destabilization of a discourse that results from the emergence of events which cannot be domesticated, symbolized or integrated within the discourse in question” (1999: 301). Memory is even more fragile and agile if it stretches over dislocation and such specificity has to be taken into account in the phase of interpretations.

The second methodological challenge of this research originates in its focus on the history of meanings. It constitutes an issue of memorability of meanings and reliability of these “hermeneutic” memories. Can people reconstruct what they were thinking in the same way they reveal what they were doing? And how does the researcher work with memories which cannot be verified with the help of complementary archives?

Life-story research is usually event-based; it collects life stories or narrations of particular historical moments which revolve around specific events – and its records can therefore be checked. To give an example, oral history developed formalized “guidelines to assess reliability of recorded memory” (Thomson, 2011: 79). On the contrary, research into the hermeneutic dimension of historical audiences strives to reconstruct meanings which used to be in people’s heads. Working with this type of memory is an exceptionally precarious assignment because the researcher is dependent on one category of sources and has little to corroborate what the narrators claim. Although these challenges are rather novel and they do not have any systematic solution, an auxiliary technique of assessing the remembered meanings was tried in the course of this research. It was preceded by an awareness that the reliability of memory of meanings can only be scrutinized with the logic of falsification. We can never prove that the narrator remembers correctly (i.e., that there is minimal impact of the particular dislocation) but we can pin down the signs that he/she is replacing memory with a dislocation-affected construct. There are two categories of the warning signs that were applied throughout this research: contradictions in narrators’ claims and uses of ahistorical language.

2. Ordinary people depoliticized?

The former totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe are often thought of as extremely political social systems, thoroughly permeated with an ideological agenda set by the party line on all levels. Paradoxically, the main pathology of Czechoslovak normalization was not excessive concern with the political issues but essential disinterest of the people in all aspects of public and political life. We can further refine the argument by incorporating Chantal Mouffe’s distinction between “politics” and “the political”.

“...by ‘the political’ I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by ‘politics’ I mean the set of practices and institutions through which order is created, organizing human existence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political.”

(Mouffe, 2005: 9)

With the help of the above-mentioned piece of political analysis we can conclude that the normalization period in state-socialist Czechoslovakia was suffering from the profusion of politics but total dissipation of the political in lives of ordinary people. Together with Karen

Dawisha (2005) we could say that in Czechoslovakia after the Prague Spring, communism as a “lived system of ideas” – especially the formal ideas deriving from the original Marxism-Leninism – melted in the air and kept surviving only in the rhetoric of the party officials. The deliberative public sphere practically ceased to exist – definitions of and solutions to the public affairs were set by the Communist Party’s directives and not meant for broad negotiation. Under normalization the population was divided into several main strata: the privileged nomenclature (Communist Party officials and members of their social cliques), the repressed or disprivileged dissidents, the semi-dissidents also called “the grey zone” (e.g. sympathizers of the political opposition, fans of underground culture, individuals with non-conformist life styles, values, outlooks etc.) and the vast majority of ordinary people with no specifically manifested attitude towards Communist Party rule (Otáhal, 2002: 53).

The lethargic mentality, which was a determining ‘spirit’ of normalization, stemmed primarily from the aggregate of ordinary people who withdrew from any kind of public engagement. Everything functioned as if there was a tacit trade-off: on the one hand the regime provided a basic caricature of consumer society, on the other hand people agreed to show fake support to the regime.

“Ideology was slowly becoming irrelevant. The regime did not insist that people must believe in it; it was sufficient for it to accomplish its rituals and claim public support. The population’s main interest was in consumerist orientation and goulash socialism.”

(Otáhal, 2002: 60)

The unashamed hypocrisy from the side of the normalization establishment (not speaking about the content of the communist doctrine and its freshly remembered refusal to undergo any reform) led many people to give up on any participation in decision-making processes.

If there is one thing frequently remembered as a phenomenon emblematic of the normalization retreat into private territories and the abandonment of public affairs, it is the Czechs’ habit of travelling to their countryside houses for weekends (Librová, 1996; Otáhal, 1994; Kalinová, 1998; Bren, 2002). 25% of the population living in the cities and 17 % of the population from smaller towns had a second weekend home in the second half of the 1980s (Bičík, 2001: 48). Every Friday in the early afternoon the motorways from larger cities became congested with Škoda and Žiguli cars heading to the weekend places. Many Czechs treated their weekend houses as their alternative life projects that received energy,

creativity and invention for which the people could not find a place in their professional life or travel plans.

To the present, historians identified only two social groups which resisted incorporation into normalization privatism and detachment from community affairs: the political opposition and the underground culture. In these circles, fragments, traces or equivalents of civic engagement, democratic thinking and public connection were registered. The dissident philosopher Václav Benda emphasized the citizen-centered and deliberative nature of the opposition subculture by coining the concept of “parallel polis” as early as 1980.

To wrap up the available evidence: *doing* politics was fully monopolized by the Communist Party elite (in the mutilated form rooted in the codification of the Communist Party’s leading role) and *thinking* of the political was only appealing to the oppositional groups. In other words, politics was the business of the Communist Party and the political was a domain of dissidents and alternative culture practitioners. The ordinary people (the part of the population which did not pronounce any specific attitude towards the existing order) seemed to be an odd body: emptied, depoliticized, privatized and seduced by meager socialist merchandise.

3. Propaganda and romance: communist popular television after the Prague Spring

The broader production environment in Czechoslovak Television during normalization reverberates in the qualities of Czechoslovak socialist television serials. State television had the position of an important element in the ideological party apparatus and it was reinstated and further strengthened after 1968. On the level of television supervision and control, direct interconnection with the bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was crucial. The television organisation was subject to both internal and external supervision. On the internal level, top positions in television management were taken by loyal Communist Party apparatchiks after 1968. On the external level, Czechoslovak Television was co-conducted and co-censored by cells of the Communist Party itself. The so-called ‘ideological theme plan’ – the main biannual scheme of television programming policy – was continually being refined by the Mass Media Department (See Cysařová, 1999; Reifová, 2007; Bednařík, 2013).

In this milieu, the concept of extending dissemination of the communist vision of society beyond news and documentary, into the serial television drama, originated. Popularization

and narativization of the Communist Party's policy through the drama serials was a strategy of the television management for making the normalization television more attractive in reaction to the appeals from the Central Committee and viewers' letters asking for a livelier rendition of the socialist life (Bren, 2010: 123–124).

Between the years 1971 and 1989 Czechoslovak Television produced and aired 139 domestic drama serials. Their narratives almost always intertwined ideological and romantic storylines (Reifová et al., 2009). Ideological storylines weaved together narrative elements drawn from public – predominantly profession-based and male – layers of socialist life; they told stories of struggles for communist ideals in industry, agriculture, health care, education or party administration. Romantic storylines embraced the elements understood to be a part of the everyday, private, feminine sphere of relationships, family and care for others. Articulation of the ideological and the romantic storylines resulted in complex textures serving both purposes: agitating for the socialist order while still providing some invitations to the pleasure-seeking viewer.

The above described category of television serials was tremendously popular throughout normalization. According to quantitative audience measurement ('family diaries', as they were known in those days), the standard audience share of primetime serials in the 1970s and 1980s oscillated between 80-95 per cent of television viewers, and this remained stable through the two decades (Reifová, 2009). The numbers were substantially influenced by the fact that Czechoslovak Television had a broadcasting monopoly and operated only two channels.

4. Qualitative analysis of focus group interviews

The main goal of the research was to find out how the viewers reflected on the socialist serials in the period of normalization and if they used these politically engaged narratives to connect to the themes of public relevance. Did this genre stimulate otherwise de-politicized viewers to sink deeper into the surrounding political realities and give precision to their political opinions? The orientation of potentially looming political meanings did not play a part in processing of the data – narrators' agreement or disagreement with the ideology in the content did not matter. The main concern was to determine if the serials used to play any role in provoking viewers' political imagery, even if only furtively and momentarily.

4.1 Cognitive reactions

In the memories of the narrators, watching socialist serials was fully deprived of any cognitive processing. Watching these serials is remembered as a thing that occurred automatically, without reflection, as an element of an everyday routine. To watch or not to watch was not the dilemma for the majority of narrators; they watched it automatically, but minimized intellectual involvement. Josef's account is a good example of this prevailing reaction: *"I wasn't thinking while watching the serials because it simply didn't interest me. It is like having something else in your head. I paid no attention to the scenes from political meetings where the Bolsheviks decided that this cow has to give more milk"*.

The two main arguments that narrators used to explain their cognitive absenteeism in watching the serials referred to the sociopolitical background. The first one can be labeled "political anaesthesia". The narrators revealed that staying tuned in the flow of the regime's persuasive communication was difficult because it thoroughly penetrated all social communication. The result was lowered capacity (not speaking about desire) to perceive the messages, incapability to discern separate arguments within the surfeit of propaganda and general insensibility towards the political discourse. Karel explained how he perceived the political messages: *"Outright agitation, the same slogans rubbed in over and over again – this was simply our everyday reality. And you know what is interesting? In those days I took it to be normal; it did not leap in front of my eyes so much"*. This was also confirmed by Marie: *"Ideology was not the issue to think about because it was everywhere around us."*³

The second reason mentioned was the feeling of having no control over things, a sense of powerlessness. Incoherent viewing was connected to the awareness that a thoughtful focus on the political sequences would not make any difference; creating opinions was useless activity as there was no "market" for people's opinions. This subcategory can be framed as "deficit of agency". Míla described feelings of powerlessness, when she said: *"It was better to watch it this way, better than letting it eat you, better than feeling sad and hurt. Because ... we could not do anything about it, it was the way it was"* and Milada mentioned similarly: *"When I saw the things on television I was thinking that I will not change it anyway and consequently did not give it a thought"*.

³ These two quotes are taken from the student pilot study which took place in 2010 as a part of the Media Research class at Charles University in Prague.

Some, mainly female, narrators mentioned their life stage as a reason for withdrawal from reflecting on political issues in the serials and in the society. They referred to their focus on starting families and growing children who were small in early normalization. (Family was the most important locus within normalization privatism [Havelková, 1993]. The early years of normalization saw a remarkable baby-boom, which was a demographic sign of a retreat into the private sphere. The total fertility rate in 1974 was the highest since the post-war years.)

The only departure from the general denial of cognitive involvement was the use of propagandist sequences in the serials as an analytical material. Some narrators recalled that they watched the serials as a way of “studying the enemy”, .i.e. the Communist Party ruling establishment. They tried to do their own private analysis of propagandist techniques and protect their notion of the divide between reality and its ideologically distorted version. Pavel was one of those who revealed purposeful uses of cognitive functions: *“I watched, as I say, only for study purposes. But some of them were simply too repulsive even as a study material”*. Jan gave a more detailed account of the same motivation: *“Talking about The Thirty Adventures of Major Zeman⁴, I was interested to find out how they shape the reality, how they present it to the audiences. Before 1968, my dad was a head of the psychology department at the university and I wanted to figure out how these people think. So I watched it carefully and learned a lot about the world we lived in.”* The third narrator who mentioned this approach was Mikuláš: *“At least eighty per cent of the population watched these serials and I was simply interested in the method of their propagandist work, how they form these people...”*

All narrators who mentioned the study reasons for some intellectual involvement in watching the serials had an oppositional attitude towards the political regime, and one was a member of the dissident circles.

4.2. Non-cognitive reactions

The narrators gave a list of other forms of viewing practices in relation to the socialist serials. However they did not classify these practices as intellectual activities, nor agreed with this

⁴ *The Thirty Adventures of Major Zeman*, [Třicet případů majora Zemana], ČST, 1975, written by Jiří Sequens at al., directed by Jiří Sequens. The series was a story of the communist detective Jan Zeman divided into thirty episodes representing thirty years of his service at the national security corps. The series was inspired by real historical events and was an attempt to re-interpret history from the Communist Party perspective.

interpretation when it was offered to them in the fashion of a “devil’s advocate question” (Michiello et. al., 1990: 124). Therefore these reactions, which the narrators excluded from cognitive reflection, were grouped together within the category “non-cognitive reactions”.

Narrators fluently revealed **emotions** which they felt as a result of watching the socialist serials. They were predominantly sadness, irritation and hatred. Václav responded to this topic: *“Watching it was suffering, a bit, sometimes...The piece about collectivization of the lands, I do not remember the title; it was difficult for those who lived in the countryside.”* Sváťa’s account is also a case in point: *“I can give you an example from the serial Woman Behind the Counter. My mammy worked in the supermarket in those days. When they showed these opulent, rich stocks in the serial’s supermarket, we were all laughing – and she cried. She kept saying: I can’t look at it, I can’t see these lame lies.”*

The negative emotions which the serials raised had different intensities, from mild annoyance to open hatred. The feelings of open hatred (which was even translated into aggressive behaviour in one case) were, as well as “studying the enemy” in the category “cognitive reactions”, typical for the viewers with oppositional attitude. Mikuláš provided an intense example of hatred: *“I played in the band. Once we were at some festival and we met Kaiser and Lábus there, the two actors who played in Thirty Adventures of Major Zeman, in the episode about hijacking the plane. I felt real hatred to these actors so I came down from the stage, came near and gave them a kick. All the guys then did the same thing, it was crowded and we were stealthily kicking their asses and shins.”*

As the serials unreeled, people used to talk about the newly broadcast episodes in their **conversations**. Talking about new episodes of the serials was one of general everyday routines applying throughout various social groups and environments. Conversations related to the serials occurred in family circles or at work. Some narrators confirmed that talking over the episode broadcast in the previous evening was the first thing they did after they arrived at work. Narrators who worked as manual workers reported less self-censorship in discussing the political sequences of the serials, as compared to the narrators who worked in administration. Antonín, who was a member of the communist parliament during normalization, remembered that his colleagues gave him the nickname Plateník after the main character of the regional Communist Party Secretary from the serial *The District in the North*. He said: *“The guys from the factory used to give me a hard time. When I came in the*

morning, they gathered around me and snapped at me: What a silly thing your comrades did in the last episode again ... But I almost looked forward to these moments."

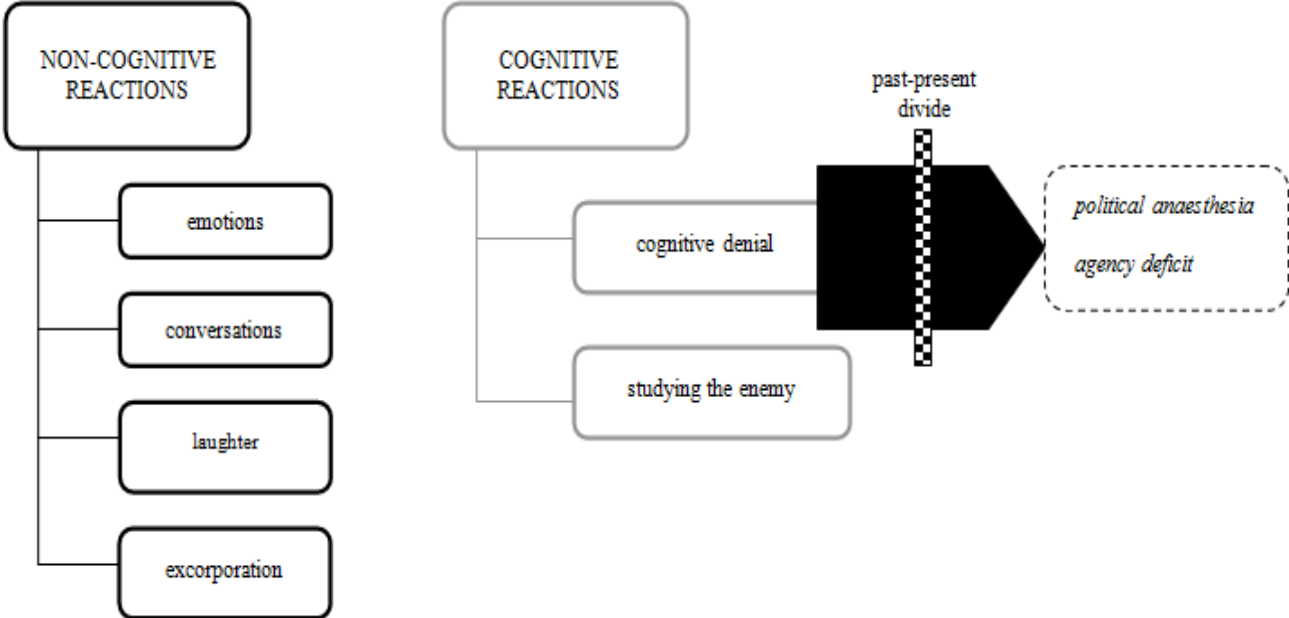
Suppressing the political sequences and focusing on the newest developments in the romantic parts of the plots was however much more obvious practice. It was summarized by Anna: *"It was normal gossiping. One came to work and the debate started: what about the main heroine last evening and what about him, what kind of bollocks somebody said, if she looked pretty or impossible, and so on..."*

Very often the narrators mentioned **laughter** as their reaction to propagandist sequences in the serials. They described the laughter as ironic and in some cases laughter was combined with ironic comments to the television. (Laughter here overlaps with conversations – ironic talking back to the television is the intersection of the two practices.) Milada contributed to this issue: *"It was malicious, ironic laughter. Sometimes my husband added a comment to the plot, like: Now you really explained it, thank you. It was a way of diminishing the tension."*

Laughter was either a compensatory or surrogate practice helping the viewers to eliminate tension or replace a less desirable alternative. The narrators noted that laughing helped them to avoid becoming angry. Ironic laughter associated with watching the socialist serials is nonetheless different from ironic viewing which was diagnosed by Len Ang (1985) in the case of Dallas audiences. In the case of viewers of the socialist serials, laughter was an emergency practice, which they did not enjoy.

A couple of times narrators rehearsed explicitly oppositional practices (a protestant priest who said he preached against the propagandist serials in the church) or practices of **excorporation** defined by John Fiske as the "process by which the powerless steal elements of the dominant culture and use them in their own, often oppositional or subversive, interests" (Fiske, 1987: 315). Both examples of excorporation were inspired by watching *The Woman Behind the Counter*. Olga said that the next morning after the first episode was aired she and the group of her friends went to their local supermarket, asked for a Customers' Book and (in a joking manner) wrote a written complaint saying that this supermarket should be supplied as well as the one on television. Marie remembered that the exterior of the television supermarket was located at Praha Smíchov and on the way back from a bar she and her friends banged on the door and yelled: "Let us in, here you have everything and other places have empty shelves".

Figure 1: Typology of narrators' reactions



4.3 Unthinkable thinking

When asked about forms and intensities of reflection on the political parts of the serials, the first choice of answer in the absolute majority of cases was: “But we did not think about it back then”. The denial of any cognitive involvement was the golden thread unreeling throughout the research. It emerged soon that it is mainly the signifier “thinking” which functions as a stopper of further musing.

The dichotomy of cognitive vs. non-cognitive reactions became the central categorical pair feeding in more nuanced subcategories which are rendered visually on Figure 1. Cognitive reactions encompassed either cognitive denial or – solely in the case of narrators who had an oppositional attitude to the communist establishment – employment of cognitive functions to study the socialist serials as a source of knowledge on the methods the regime used to communicate with its citizens. The category of “non-cognitive reactions” encompassed all other reactions the narrators revealed after they had refused cognitive processing of the political scenes in the serials. They retrieved their affections (mostly negative); conversational references to the serials within the everyday situations; moments of bitter, ironical laughter and scattered behavioral reactions in carnivalesque style.

It is absolutely indispensable that the interpretation of the results takes into account potential traps and pitfalls of narrators' remembering of the socialist past, specificities of remembering the past stored behind the socio-political rupture and supposable reconstitution of the memories under this influence. This methodological step is visualized by the past-present divide in Figure 1. As was explained earlier, memory is always reconstructive – it mediates over time and suffers from all distortions that any mediation involves (and a few of its own). Nonetheless, in this research we want to narrow our attention to the modifications brought about by the dislocatory impact of socio-political change in 1989. From this perspective, signs of dislocation-affected reconstruction of memory accumulated mainly around the category of cognitive denial. These signs – contradictions in storytelling and uses of ahistorical language – appeared mostly when the narrators talked of their cognitive disengagement.

Contradictions refer to discrepancies in narrators' account of reasons for abandoning cognitive response as a possible reaction to the socialist serials. They mentioned loss of sensitivity to the political rhetoric caused by surfeit of clichés in the public space (labeled as political anaesthesia) and loss of motivation to develop opinions caused by their detachment from any decision-making acts (labeled as agency deficit) as the main reasons. Simultaneously narrators easily admitted that they joked and talked about the serials and laughed at them. In other words, they retrieved activities (labeled as non-cognitive reactions) which necessarily did involve some level of cognitive processing as well, but narrators would not mention them when asked about cognitive processing directly. Emotions, too, were totally detached from any cognitive accompaniment in the narrators' accounts. Nonetheless, Liesbet Van Zoonen collected evidence based on neurosciences' theory of affective intelligence proving that emotionality is inseparable from rationality (2005: 65).

Another sign of narrators replacing memory with its adjusted counterpart affected by dislocation was a use of ahistorical language, i.e. the language containing lexical units which were not part of standard vocabulary in the past they were talking about. These are the examples of the symptomatic language: "it was a regular call for collaboration" (Mikuláš), "the ideology was everywhere" (Anna), "I was an anti-communist rebel, you know" (Sváťa), "of course, the serials were conformist to the regime" (Josef), "I was kind of sorry when I saw people who were enthusiastic about the regime" (Pavel). When giving reasons for their

political lethargy, the narrators used vocabulary showing the analytical distance from the totalitarian conditions which they simply did not have when it was in a full swing. The language indicated they had been revealing what they think now, not how they experienced the reasons for withdrawal from political thinking in the days of normalization. Dana Gabl'asová in her research on linguistic attributes of life-story interviews covering normalization arrived at the same experience and recorded one of her narrators confirming this theory: "Communist regime, ... it is not the way we put it back then" (Gabl'asová, 2009: 97).

Uncovering the phenomenon of cognitive denial is the principal finding of this research. Nonetheless, it is even more important to ask the question when the denial occurred. It is at this point where we can relate the findings to the interpretation of memory operations in the countries of Eastern Europe. There are signs that dislocation-affected memory intruded on the way that the narrators rendered their cognitive relations to the serials more than other subcategories. It is likely that the socialist serials received more cognitive attention during their screenings in normalization than the narrators confessed to in the present moment. The idea that the socialist popular culture might ever have been worthy of thought seems to be utterly unthinkable in the present day. The category of cognitive denial is very likely to be shaped by a retrospective re-evaluation of the past. This memory figure may follow from retrospective negative judgment of the political situation of the time and a sort of "retrospective shame". In case of denying cognitive involvement in the socialist serials, narrators substitute parts of their memory with a reconfiguration compliant to the new neoliberal hegemony which takes reprobation of the socialist past as one of its defining characteristics.

5. Conclusion

The research certainly discovered ways in which the socialist television serials catalyzed viewers' sense of the political in the Czechoslovak society. Political themes in the serials represented an opportunity to contemplate the ideal social and political order or – much more often – to be reminded about the anomalies of life in an undemocratic society. This awareness is today only very rarely remembered as a product of cognitive activity. Yet the evidence allows us to conclude that the denial of cognitive processing of the socialist serials,

especially their political scenes, is likely to follow from the way the collective memory of the socialist past was manufactured by the new neo-capitalist order.

A lethargic and fully depoliticized silent majority is taken to be an indisputable constant in the Czech history of normalization. This research took a closer look at the day-to-day experience of the notorious normalization apathy and found out that there were gaps in the assumed political indifference of the citizenry. The majority was certainly silent, but it does not mean that it was brainwashed or insensitive. It seems that political imagery was not fully paralyzed during normalization and that some non-discursive forms of experiencing the political were dispersed throughout everyday life, rather unappreciated by neither the existing scholarship nor the actual social actors themselves.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful for the support of the project P17 PRVOUK UK FSV IKSŽ and wishes to thank Iva Baslarová and Anna Batistová for their assistance with organizing the focus groups.

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The way we applauded: How popular culture stimulates collective memory of the socialist past in Czechoslovakia – the case of the television serial „Vyprávěj“ and its viewers

Bibliografický záznam publikované stati¹:

Carpentier Reifová, I., Gillárová, K. and Hladík, R. (2012) The way we applauded: How popular culture stimulates collective memory of the socialist past in Czechoslovakia – the case of the television seriál „Vyprávěj“ and its viewers. In A. Imré, T.Havens and K. Lustyik, eds. *Popular Television in Eastern Europe during and since Socialism*, pp. 199-221. New York: Routledge.²

¹ Titulní strana publikované stati viz Příloha 2

² Irena Reifová-autorský podíl: 33,3%

The way we applauded: How popular culture stimulates collective memory of the socialist past in Czechoslovakia – The case of the television serial ‚Vyprávěj‘ and its viewers

Irena Carpentier Reifová, Kateřina Gillárová and Radim Hladík

Popular television has some distinct privileges in representing the past. As Irwin-Zarecka asserts, it frames collective memory in at least two important ways: exposure, since “for many people, television offers the main, if not the only information they have about a great number of historical events”; and claims to historical accuracy, as “television presents us with reality-based drama, docudrama and document where the strength of writing, visuals, and faithfulness to detail all combine” (Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 155–156). These mnemonic capacities of television make it a worthwhile object of study in countries like the Czech Republic, which arguably still try to come to terms with their state socialist legacy.

For the analysis of how television programming intervenes in the formation of post-socialist identities, we are going to look at parallelism of different forms of remembering the past. We do not strive to put forward any particular ‘genre of memory’ (e.g., amnesia, nostalgia, displacement, collective guilt) nor any specific social enclave (former dissidents, intellectuals or alternative culture practitioners). Our main goal is to examine how memory (interrupted by the politics of a thick line after 1989) is secured by the “semiotic power of people” (Fiske 1987, 236) and how practices of reading popular culture are involved in this process. We are interested in the ways which ordinary people use to regain the sense of continuity by fostering different genres of memory and in the ways the mnemonic function of popular television can stimulate this process.

1. Post-Socialism and Memory Studies

As the prefix ‘post’ suggests, state socialism still survives in Central and Eastern Europe, at least to the extent that we continue to designate it as a post-socialist space. It remains alive in personal and collective, private and public, dominant and marginalized narratives of the past. The continuing relevance of the past in the present constitutes the essence of collective memory (Halbwachs 1992) that transforms landscapes and mediascapes into countless places of memory (Nora 1989). Cultural and collective memory ensure, for better or worse, that the new identities emerging from the turmoil of fundamental socio-political

transformations not only adhere to novel practices and institutions but also take root in the imaginary of the past.

The burgeoning discipline of memory studies has, to considerable extent, managed to empower narratives of the state socialist past that lack the sanction of scholarly historiography and yet remain formative of both social bonds and animosities among social groups and nations. However, memory studies so far have not arrived at a consensual account of the principles of commemoration, remembering and forgetting that help post-socialist Europe make sense of the state-socialist experience. As the coiner of the term 'collective memory' Maurice Halbwachs (Halbwachs 1992) predicted, the very multiplicity of groups in which individual members of society participate seems to preclude a unitary formation of memory. Gil Eyal suggests, however, that more is at stake than simply the dispersed ways in which we think collective memory to operate. In his words:

The sense of a crisis of memory, and the diagnosis of too much or too little memory, are generated not by the universal nature of human memory but by a historically specific will to memory, a constellation of discourses and practices within which memory is entrusted with a certain goal and function, and is invested, routinely, as an institutional matter, with certain hopes and fears as to what it can do. It is always against this goal that memory is measured and found wanting. (Eyal 2004, 6–7)

In light of these remarks, we find it advisable to refrain from sweeping statements on the workings of memory in the post-socialist context that diagnose it one-sidedly in terms of trauma, nostalgia, amnesia or in another pathological or functional variety of remembrance. Instead, we prefer to assume from the outset that collective memory consists of a wide repertoire of practices and discourses whose variants may be conducive to different results of remembering and forgetting. Specifically, we will give an equal consideration to the two main concepts that are most commonly summoned in order to describe the bearing of the state-socialist past on the post-socialist present: nostalgia and (cultural) trauma. Although these concepts tend to be mutually exclusionary—with nostalgia making the past an object of longing, while trauma conceiving of it as a haunting image—we conducted a qualitative research of television audiences that suggests their discursive coexistence.

2. Post-Socialist Memory and Nostalgia

In the Czech Republic as well as in many other post-socialist countries recollections of the socialist era have been on the agenda since the early 1990s, when the first measures of transitional justice—such as restitutions of nationalized property or disqualification of former elites from the state administration—were discussed and implemented (see e.g. Teitel 2000, Přibáň 2002). With the inevitable unavailability of proper historiographical accounts, collective memories dominate the representation of the past and have been constitutive of Czech political arena (Eyal 2003).

To date, the most complex account of the diverse ‘registers’ of collective memory on which Czech social actors draw in order to construe their positive self-image has been presented by French sociologist Françoise Mayer. In her work, *Češi a jejich komunismus* (Czechs and Their Communism; Mayer 2009), she shows that among Czechs there are in fact a number of distinct renditions of the past, which can be traced to particular social groups. She documents the quick shift of official memory from the concept of national ‘integration’ to ‘decommunization.’ However, official memory fails to be decisively hegemonic. Other competing discourses of remembrance include the narrative of ‘betrayal’ among the members of the former ruling Communist Party, while the ‘memory for identity’ dominates among the supporters of the CP’s post-socialist successor. The political prisoners of the Stalinist era tend to remember the past in terms of ‘resistance,’ whereas the later dissidents of the Normalization era (1969–89) prefer its legalistic condemnation. Distinct registers of memory can be also identified among intellectuals and historians. Mayer, however, chooses to leave out one register from her analysis. The blind spot of her treatise is in fact quite significant and consists of the vast and ever-growing archive of popular and media culture, which she only mentions in passing, with a disdain for the presumed triviality of the products of the cultural industry: “The enthusiastic reception [of mass culture artifacts that represent the state-socialist past] can probably be best explained by the fact that they offer a nonpolitical view of history and thus return the past to all those people ‘without a story’” (Mayer 2009, 258).

Such assumptions imply that the texts of popular culture cannot sustain the critical work of memory; and thus the recollections of the past by such means only generate an uncritical remembrance of a nostalgic type. The nostalgic discourses usually refer to the socialist past either directly (better to say indexically) by recycling individual tokens of an authentic

socialist culture or indirectly (symbolically) by producing new representations of the past. To put it simply, nostalgic discourses either present the preserved parts of the past (e.g. pop singers or actors who became popular in socialist times as epitomes of the era) or they represent 'them' (e.g. contemporary feature films going back to the days of socialism) (Dominková 2008).

Nostalgia, "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed, [...] a sentiment of loss and displacement" (Boym 2001, xiii), has over the course of modernity acquired temporal as well as spatial sense. It now often counts among threatening emotions of post-modern Western life and many times it has been theorized as such. Fredric Jameson, for instance, sees nostalgia films as emblematic of the period of late capitalism, which erodes a sense of history: "The nostalgia film was never a matter of some old-fashioned 'representation' of historical content, but instead approached the 'past' through stylistic connotation, conveying 'pastness' by the glossy qualities of the image." (Jameson 1991, 19) Linda Hutcheon (1998), however, suggests post-modern irony as an antidote to the arresting effects of nostalgia. Jameson, in actuality, also recognizes that there is a utopian impulse operating even in nostalgic artifacts (Jameson 1990, 229). The problem with nostalgia lies in its renunciation of history, which according to Jameson amounts to giving up the only way to actually pursue the utopian impulse. This inbuilt subversion in the nostalgic longing of the very means for realizing a utopian goal constitutes the defining aporia of nostalgia. Svetlana Boym attempts to address this duality by distinguishing conservative "restorative nostalgia" from a more critical "reflective nostalgia," which is able to connect "historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past" (Boym 2001, 49).

Some post-socialist discourses mediating between the past and the present, of which popular culture genres create a considerable part, were demarcated and explicated by cultural scholars as post-socialist nostalgia (Enns 2007, Boyer 2006, Volčič 2007, Reifova 2009). Post-socialist nostalgia cannot be fully subsumed under postmodern nostalgia as it is experienced in the West. Although post-socialist nostalgia started to grow in the environment influenced by a convergence of post-socialism and postmodernism, it also resonates with a modernist vision of history, of which state socialism was probably the last big project (Ray 1997). The specificity of post-socialist nostalgia stems from the fact that it strives for an integration of memory divided by the social rupture in 1989 (more precisely, futile but compulsive attempts to attain integration) in the sense of including the 'forbidden'

past in a larger historical continuity. Post-socialist nostalgia is a memory-compensating nostalgia; it helps to restore the memory that was disintegrated by the break between the socialist and neoliberal capitalist systems. In response to Mayer's judgment discussed above, it can be said to be a vindication of the status of stories that have been forgotten in many official and some scholarly records. Hence, the compensation of memory in post-socialist Czechoslovakia via the mnemonic function of popular culture is partly of an anti-hegemonic nature.

The official, dominant discourses of economics and politics in the 1990s, inaugurated by the state authorities, political representatives or judiciary, were firmly grounded in the logics of disjunction, a divorce with the socialist past. Most social subsystems were built anew to be totally different from the past, as in privatization in the economical sphere or lustration in elite human resources. The past was defined as something that should be replaced with a better present—and if not fully erased, then only because capacity to remember the old faults increases the chance that they will not be repeated in the future. The past was simply defined by the dominant discourses as a loose end, which should have stayed loose, not as an object to which the society should reconnect. The logics of disjunction became hegemonic in the early transformational years of the 1990s. Michael D. Kennedy argues that the idea of a profound historical rupture lies at the core of 'transition culture.' He remarks with regards to its treatment of the past: "Transition's tradition tends to draw more on capitalist experience from across the world than it does on any nation's socialist past. Socialism is something to be escaped, repressed, and destroyed" (Kennedy 2002, 13). The societal turnover from state socialism to capitalism settled conditions for a new anti-hegemonic struggle—one that is about gaining less restricted access to the past; about nurturing collective memory which would embrace broader repertoire than just an uncompromising denouncement of the past. That is why we think that the first attempts to compensate for displaced memory took place in the demiworld of popular culture, below the radar of transition's proponents, and not in more highly valued elite cultural areas. Popular culture remains one of the principal sites where its consumers can experience (nostalgic) links to the socialist past without having to face public reproach.

3. Post-Socialist Memory and Cultural Trauma

Apart from nostalgia, the concept that many other scholars find fruitful in explaining how post-socialist societies relate to their own pasts is the one of cultural trauma—in spite of its bad reputation as a culturalist buzzword. According to Jeffrey Alexander, “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander 2004, 1). Many skeptical queries appeared in connection with this definition. Is trauma an event or rather the way it is remembered? (Eyerman 2004, 62; Caruth 1995, 4). Can trauma be cultural at all? Can it be collective in a sense of having a new quality going beyond a summary of individual traumas? (Joas 2005, 372). Should non-violent events be also included into the category? (Kansteiner 2004, 206). And then there is a group of thinkers who feel that taking the concept of trauma not only beyond the borders of medicine and psychoanalysis, where it originated, but also mainly outside of the discourse on Holocaust, is a sacrilege and causes inflation of the concept’s value.

While working with the concept of cultural trauma it is important to stay away from simplifications such as confusing cultural trauma with “an aggregate of individual traumata” (Carpentier 2007, 251, see also Kansteiner 2004, 209). It is clear that cultural trauma is not a summary of disconnected, personal reminiscences about approximately the same period. It must have an added quality of collectivity—shared clusters of meanings associated with the particular traumatizing event. But it should also be said that symptoms of cultural trauma are only accessible via individual stories and personal voices. The memories of individual survivors are an inevitable source of data, which of course have to be further selected and processed. General demonization of all uses of the personal in cultural trauma research thus makes little sense.

In spite of all the discontents, it seems that some sort of collective shock (Sztompka 2000, 457), shattering or paralysis is generally accepted as at least a partial element of cultural trauma. Radical social changes (together with many other events, which can be of natural or social origins, momentary eruptions or long-term processes, violent massacres or discursive pressures) such as the turnovers of social systems in Central and Eastern Europe, meet this condition. We find it inspiring to look for indices of cultural trauma in the viewer’s recollections provoked by the retrospective television serial. If the trauma is supposed to be

cultural it must penetrate the general public and television-induced remembering provides an insight into exactly this layer of memory.

What is exceptionally troublesome about post-socialist cultural trauma is that it cannot be easily located in one single site. Piotr Sztompka reduces this question to the social and economic insecurities of newly established capitalism. "The event greeted with greatest enthusiasm by most people, has resulted, for some time and for some groups, in traumatic experience known as the pains of transition (e.g. unemployment, status degradation, impoverishment, rise of crime)" (Sztompka 2000, 458). We think that there are at least three types of "conducive conditions" (Smelser 1962, 22) for post-socialist cultural trauma. First, there are the new instabilities mentioned in Sztompka's above quote. Second, it could also be activated by the occurrence of embarrassing or anxious life situations in totalitarian socialism. And third, a mere disruption in the continuity of everyday, personal lives and workings of social institutions could also constitute it. It is most likely that it is not an 'either/or' case, but that all these processes run alongside one another and compose post-socialist cultural trauma together. It is not only a sequential (Sztompka 2000, 453), but also a multilayered phenomenon.

The collapse of state socialism inspires us to see this kind of cultural trauma more as a dislocation (temporary lapse of determining power of structure) than as Alexander's 'horrendous event' with clearly devastating consequences. Dislocation, a concept introduced by Ernesto Laclau (who rephrased Gramsci's 'organic crisis'), explains mainly a discursive divide between 'before' and 'after' the traumatic event. Dislocation refers to the rupture in the order of the things as it was fixed by the now shattered discourse. In his reading of Laclau, Torfing understands it as "a destabilization of a discourse that results from the emergence of events which cannot be domesticated, symbolized or integrated within the discourse in question" (1999, 301). Technical and methodological bias embedded in the dislocation approach avoids evaluative insights into the difference between the 'before' and 'after' and enables us to see ambiguities of dislocations. Looking at the dislocatory dimension of cultural trauma (if it has one) helps to see that, "dislocatory events on one hand threaten identities, on the other hand they are foundations on which new identities are constituted" (Laclau 1990, 39). From this perspective it cannot be overlooked that dislocation may have destructive as well as productive aspects (Critchley and Marchart 2004, 207). As far as some segments of the post-socialist cultural trauma can be seen as a

dislocation, we are interested precisely in the tension between its destructive and productive side. The popular urge for the restoration of memory (not the least by use of popular culture, including television) falls into the productive category. For many years television was condemned for being 'presentist,' having a bias for immediacy and thus nullifying history. Only recently television was exculpated from this kind of sinning. According to Mimi White "history, duration and memory are as central to any theoretical understanding of television's discursive operations as liveness and concomitant ideas of presence, immediacy, and so forth" (White 1999). We would like to argue (and take an advantage of) that television not only makes history an important part of its programming, but is also indispensable in stimulating (and thus cocreating) collective memory. It provides 'the food for memory' and its bias towards personalization, narrativization and iconicity makes the process of memory creation accessible to diverse groups of viewers. We can also say that the higher the cultural diversity is on the input of the collective memory, the more beneficial it is.

4. Television as a Mnemonic Medium

In order to explore the adequacy of concepts of nostalgia and cultural trauma to representations of the state-socialist past in post-socialist popular culture, we completed a study of a successful retrospective television program. The guiding principle of the analysis was not a search for one-way media effects but instead a focus on the viewers' use of media contents for making meaning of the past. With this purpose, we examine how the retrospective television serial *Vyprávěj* (Tell Me How It Was; Czech Television, 2009–10) facilitates recollection and thinking about the socialist past. The research took the form of focus groups in which the viewers talked about their use of *Vyprávěj* as a mnemonic device that helps them to deal with the cleavage between the socialist past and the capitalist present. The visual sociology approach informed the study (Banks 2007): we used the TV serial partly as audiovisual elicitation from the research participants within the focus groups. This technique—among others—should be an effective tool to generate the feelings associated with certain contexts, and provide data enriched with the abstract layer of emotions.

Vyprávěj is a hybrid comedy-docudrama serial. It presents the story of an ordinary family whose fictive everyday life is intertwined with real political events and their consequences.

The show was produced by the public broadcaster Česká televize (Czech Television) as a program commemorating the 20th anniversary of the fall of the state socialist regime in 1989. The narrative is packaged in four seasons. The first two seasons (covering the periods 1964–75 and 1975–85) have already aired, while the seasons covering the periods 1985–95 and 1995–2005 are forthcoming. Among the serial's defining characteristics are the shifts between the enacted plot and the documentary parts and the heavy dependence of its visual aspect on pedantic fidelity to the period's lifestyle. The average rating of the serial per episode in 2009 was 1.3 million viewers. It is an above-average result even in primetime and qualifies *Vyprávěj* as a great favorite with viewers. It was extremely popular with female viewers (women constituted up to two thirds of the spectatorship) and also achieved good results with the young audience in the age segment of 25–34.

The audience research took place in May 2010 in Prague, the Czech Republic. We organized eight focus groups chosen from viewers who had independently written to Czech Television about the serial. The population of the study thus consists of respondents who cared to express their appreciations of the serial, complaints regarding supposed inaccuracies, questions, etc., to The Audience Center of Czech Television. On our request, the Center sent an email to addresses in its database describing the concerns of our research and eliciting participation in the qualitative audience survey.

The final sample thus represented active viewers, fans who apparently like to share their opinion with the producers as well as with scholars. There were 42 respondents in total, of which 23 were female and 19 male. The groups were controlled for age and organized into two clusters: the first one consisted of young people who do not have any personal adult experience with socialism; the second included the participants who do have personal adult experience with socialist everyday life; and two of the groups were mixed with regards to age of the respondents.

We conceived of the processes of memory reproduction through the serial *Vyprávěj* as a constant activity of comparing the retro-signifiers (signifiers that signal the particular text as being of the past) with the stock of knowledge that the audiences have available to them. In this respect, Pierre Sorlin speaks of "historical capital," which the audience needs to possess in order to understand a particular narrative as a representation of the past (Sorlin 2000, 37). In our case, it may be more appropriate to refer to this stock of knowledge as 'memory capital.' Kansteiner's scrutiny of the processes of collective memory highlights two different

positions: “memory makers” and “memory consumers” (Kansteiner 2002, 180). In this context the revision of his typology suggests itself: on the one hand, we have memory producers, but on the other hand, there are memory prosumers (productive consumers), who use their stock of knowledge in encounters with the mass media representations that they consume. The memory prosumers of *Vyprávěj* used retro-signifiers in two ways: retro-signifier as a trigger and retro-signifier as a reality indicator.

The first role refers to the situation when the retro-signifier generated reconnection with one’s personal memories from the state-socialist past. In this case the participants liberated themselves from the narrative of the series and started to narrate their own stories. This “aberration” in reading (Eco 1979, 141) took basically two forms. The first form stimulated subjective memories that were connected relatively closely to one’s private stock of knowledge and thus were not shared with others participants. The second form engaged the viewers with collective memories, by which we mean more encompassing stories shared by all participants.

In their second role, the retro-signifiers functioned as indicators of true or false elements in the series. In this case, the participants remained committed to the text and confronted it with their stock of knowledge. In a sort of interpretational conflict, the participants proclaimed the serial to be a truthful representation of reality if it corresponded to their stock of knowledge and a misrepresentation if it contradicted their knowledge. Typically, this occurred with factual types of information. However, there was a sub-genre of the text that was excluded from this principle: the documentary section. The serial consists of two types of text: the predominantly fictional section (the story of the family) and the minor documentary one. The participants perceived this latter text as inherently true. According to them, the documentary perfected the representation of the past, making it appear ‘the way it was.’ The inclusion of period footage was accepted as a general factual framework—the ‘historical capital’ in which the viewers had a share—of the fictional plot, which in turn was the point of personal identification with the audiovisual text; the part of the serial that allowed the viewers to re-experience, relive their own past. Compared to the fictional plot, which was perceived as a dynamic and open text, the documentary section figured in the focus group as a static element, a given content that is not to be discussed. One participant, for example, commented on the screening of documentary clips from the serial in the following way:

MFG 8 [commenting on the documentary section]: Such was the general opinion, or whatever was valid. Whereas the family, which was there, it lived its own life and, overall, it was as if it was not aware of the period, it was not aware of politics. So it was kind of a great contrast and it was a kind of refreshing moment in the serial.

Besides the two roles of retro-signifiers, we also identified their organization into four basic categories. The scale proceeds from the physical and concrete signifiers that tend to appear with higher frequency to the most abstract ones that exhibit lower frequency. All of these categories can function in both of the aforementioned ways. The categories can be labelled in this order:



Figure 1: *Organization of retro-signifiers*

The first term embodies all of the visual elements that showed up in the series and served as indexical traces (Rosen 2001) of the state socialist past. The objects of daily use such as clothing, design, furniture and appliances were the most frequent case. The other ones, which were specific to the time period, belonged to the category of ‘socialist symbols,’ e.g. a pioneer scarf or a bouquet of red carnations. An image of the latter in a clip inspired one participant to make a comment in the course of which he obviously relied on the collective memory of others in the group:

MFG 1: Those terrible red carnations, right?! Nowadays, I probably do not know anyone who would like carnations. And besides, the oath of the pioneers, you said it perfectly. I myself had to recite at the People’s Committee of Prague 10, I remember that very well.



Figure 2: *The scene from the second sample used in the focus groups. Jarka reads her poem at the International Women’s Day meeting to glorify socialist womanhood.*

While the first category of retro-signifiers functioned both as a narrative trigger, i.e. a signal for association of personal memories, and as a reality indicator, the other three categories were biased toward the function of the narrative trigger and motivated the participants to tell the stories about their own past. With increasing levels of abstraction, they were less likely to be subjected to a challenge or a critique within the group of discussants.

The second category centered on certain characters, particularly on their stereotyped features. In comparison with other categories, this type of retro-signifier was somewhat more often used as a generator of personal narratives. Thus, for instance, the character of a shop floor party official in the serial inspired this recollection of a real world person:

MFG 2: A shady character. It reminds me of my boss at that time. [...] He spelled “fish” with “y”, but he was a manager and a Member of Parliament, right?! So it was very difficult to work with him, difficult to work with him, for real, and he was also very dangerous.

The third category covers ritualized practices such as queuing or marching in a Labor Day parade. These retro-signifiers were quite often coupled with objects that were symbolic of

socialism. Thus this more abstract category of retro-signifiers combined with the rather concrete category of the visual elements. A female discussant recalled a scene from the series in which people line up in front of a store as an instance of this category:

MFG 1: For example, the fridge. Personally, I have never had to queue for a fridge but I know exactly that this is what our parents used to tell us, the way in which one had to queue for bananas, so one also had to queue for those fridges.

Historical events represented the highest level of retro-signifiers. This fourth category is underrepresented in the serial in comparison with the two previous narrative-triggering categories. August 1968, the month of the occupation of Czechoslovakia by five of the Warsaw Pact armies, which put an end to the reformist movement known as the Prague Spring, is an example of such a retro-signifier that was included in the televised text and triggered remembrance on the part of the viewers.

MFG 3: When I used to go to school, my dad once checked out my notes from the civics class, it was in the seventh grade, and it caught his attention, so he read them, and there it was briefly described, what it was, that it happened.



Figure 3: *The scene from the third sample used in the focus groups. The Dvořák family and their friends astonishedly listen to the radio announcement about the self-burning act of the student Jan Palach in 1969.*

Each category of retro-signifiers has its specific language. Also, it was articulated in a manner differentiating one from each other. We highlighted the expressive formulations and were able to group them into three modes of enunciation: 1) nostalgia, 2) morality, 3) experience/expertise.

The first mode, nostalgia, attempts to describe the case of memories that were reproduced through emotional means of expression and mostly by using first-person singular or plural. This discourse was characteristic of the usage of retro-signifiers as a mnemonic trigger and encompassed all of the categories of retro-signifiers.

MFG 1: Hearing [the song] “Bratříček” reminds me of Karel Kryl. I recall, when we were at the weekend house, our parents opened a bottle of wine and we listened to the tapes, that one was noisy, God knows how many times it had been copied, so this is something that is deeply ingrained in me. It even evokes nice feelings in me because it was simply nice. Weekends with the family, this comes to my mind.

The next mode is close to expressions of ‘nostalgia,’ at least in the sense that in both of these modes the participants assume a role of the narrator. However, in the ‘morality’ mode, unlike in the mode of ‘nostalgia,’ the narratives of the discussants called forth collective and shared memories rather than private ones. The more abstract categories of retro-signifiers were employed in this mode of discourse. Also, the typical means of expression in this case was the third person in either singular or plural.

MFG 1: It worked so that everybody was pushed into joining the party, and so those who didn’t want to join, they had to face sanctions such as: “What about your boy—he wants to go to college.” Like the kids couldn’t get into a school and such. So under this regime people had to constantly think about whether to sign up and keep their mouth shut and let the kids study or not to sign up, keep their pride, but the kids, right, garbage men and such. It

worked, the pressure was probably normal in those times; it was exerted onto people who had not joined the party yet.

When the retro-signifiers functioned as a reality indicator and thus were confronted with a person's stock of knowledge, the participants tended to take on the role of critic or expert. Whereas in the two previous cases (of nostalgia and morality) the participants took over the narrator role from the text, in this third case, they would move away from the text and position themselves on its outside. In addition, the 'morality' and 'nostalgia' modes were more connected to emotional means of expression, whereas the mode of 'experience/expertise' was shaped by factual and evaluative vocabulary. The mode was thus identified by the usage of verbs that express value judgments and are conjugated in the first person singular.

MFG 1: That was completely wrong, I think, it was the biggest mistake that I have noticed in it, and it had to do with the Nuselský Bridge and those R-1 trains, the construction of the subway, the R-1 trains, and the underground tram [...] Firstly, that was simply set in a wrong time, I think, the dramaturgy failed with this one, I think that there was a difference of three years when compared to the facts, and secondly, I think that it was—I do understand that they wanted to make it attractive for the viewers, but they overdid it.

No doubt, these three modes of enunciation were interconnected. For example, if the participants used retro-signifiers as triggers and took on the roles of a nostalgic or a moralist, they tended to present their subjective memories as objective ones—they would speak of 'the way it was.'

MFG 3: [...] all the women were celebrating and all the men were drinking like fish, everything was subordinated to MDŽ celebration.

When faced with other participants' narratives and memories with contrary claims, they would defend their own truth and take recourse in the enunciative position of an expert or an experienced witness. However, as the discussion progressed, the memories that were

originally perceived as taken for granted and objective became more relative and subjective in their rendition.

M1/M2 FG 2:

M2: I was born in 1963, my mom got married sometime in 1960, and she had the stiletto boots, the synthetic leather ones, she had those stiletto boots.

M1: But later, certainly later.

M2: Certainly before I was born. Because she had those when she was frequenting dance lessons with dad.

M1: Because I have photos...

M1/M2 FG3:

M1: And another thing that bothered me personally, there was a girl who wore the same skirt I've bought in a shop recently, a dotted one. So I told to myself...

M2: But the fashion is repeating!

M1: I know but I told to myself it was not possible.

M2: Besides, eighties are in...

The 'experience/expertise' mode was activated when older participants defined themselves as such to the younger viewers who did not have an authentic experience with communist times. Even though the older participants considered the serial to be an important didactic tool, they still had a tendency to emphasize the incapacity of the youngsters to read the serial 'the right way.' Thanks to their lived experience, they would perceive themselves as the rightful experts of the textual interpretation.

MFG 8: After all, if I had experienced something, I therefore have a source of knowledge in what I had seen, like, it didn't concern the regime directly. For example, the corrupted deeds that you couldn't see, those can't be included in a family TV series. Then one family would be a target of every wrongdoing and that wouldn't be credible. And, precisely, the documentary footage, it provides a framework, it follows a certain topic, so that they [the young ones] simply realize in what ways the regime was unlawful. Why the times are better today and so on.

On the other hand, the younger participants would sometimes counter similar claims based on their experience with claims based on expertise. Their expertise did not derive from authenticity; instead, they would refer to external authorities. Significantly, however, they would not appeal to the authority of historiography. While the senior participants supported their arguments by using narratives of their subjective or collective memories, the junior ones used the style of speech reminiscent of mass media. The phrase ‘I think,’ often accompanied by the clause ‘my close relatives said,’ were the typical means of expression in this instance.

M1/M2 FG 8:

M1: I think that even the party membership had to be based on a voluntary principle because you can't have a party in which you force the people to participate in the power [...].

M2: But that isn't true. Well, I think that you have some distorted information [laugh] or actually some distorted ideas. So.

M1: Why do you think that it was different, or do you...

M2: Well, I know it from my own experience. And from the stories of my close relatives.

‘Nostalgic’ and ‘moralist’ roles were more readily accepted by the cluster of older participants. Relegating communist ideology to the background opened up a way for them to recount their childhood and teenage lives. In contrast to other television programs in which the political regime is foregrounded, the *Vyprávěj* serial allowed them to experience the pleasure of reconnecting with the past. They were not forced, either by the textual composition of the serial, or by the administrators of the focus group, to defend the positive emotions that they attached to childhoods spent in the state socialist period—a period typically presented as inherently bad in normative, post-socialist representations.

MFG 8: It affects me more than the politics. The politics, the documentary, it is very distant. And it can't even be named properly, not even understood, let alone captured somehow, so why should I care. I'm interested in what affects me, in the things that I have to deal with, and there it was in the story.

To sum up, in our research we found out that the retro-signifiers—ranging from physical objects through characters and ritualized practices to events—offered by the television serial *Vyprávěj* did not function simply as clues of historical time; rather, they were used by audiences as mnemonic devices for generating their own subjective or shared memories. The remembrance thus stimulated occurred in different modes, which were expressed by the roles of a nostalgic, a moralist, or a (lay) expert. The more abstract the retro-signifiers were, the less likely they were to be used as reality indicators and the more likely they were seen as taken-for-granted aspects of the past. The mode of experience/expertise was typical for the young participants' rhetoric. It was also utilized by the senior participants to establish themselves as more knowledgeable in front of younger viewers. However, it is important to underscore the tentative status of our observations regarding a possible generation gap. The database at our disposal included only a limited number of younger viewers. The latter provide the producers of the serial with significantly less feedback. This could be either due to the younger cohorts' lesser interest in watching the serial, or to their reluctance to share their opinions and fandom.

5. Indices of Traumatized Memory

A considerable part of the respondents' comments reflected an experience of cultural trauma. This category encompasses comments which relate to new social insecurities brought about by capitalist society, but mainly to disruption of biographical/institutional continuity (dislocation) and feelings of embarrassment/stress about life in totalitarian socialism. Most relevant parts of the comments were those untangling the coping strategies that people use to reconcile themselves with the embarrassing or unsettling flashbacks and incorporate these recollections back into the memory.

The respondents hinted at three separate reasons for keeping the collective memory active in the sense of overcoming the rupture between the present days and the socialist past. They can be summarized as: 1) preventive continuity, 2) historiographic continuity, 3) everyday continuity. Preventive continuity is the least controversial form of the memory-compensating approach and as such it has been part of the post-socialist mentality since the beginning of the 1990s. It recognizes the relevance of uninterrupted memory as prevention against the return of totalitarian socialism.

MFG1: To me, it is really important that these days shall not come back, I mean the communists who ruled here...

Preventive continuity is close to historiographic continuity, although the latter refrains from making moral judgments and objectifies the period of socialism as an inseparable stage of history.

MFG4: It is important for the young generation because it is becoming part of history. So they should know, because it is a piece of our history.

The most refined and nuanced meanings were included in the respondents' comments about the continuity of everyday life. They felt that the socio-political rupture between the past and the present had been overly generalized to the extent that it also affected the integrity of everyday life. The respondents indicated a two-way nexus between seemingly detached periods of the past and the present in the sphere of the everyday: in some respects, the past was not so different from the present, and in others the present is even permeated with the past. Very often, respondents voiced their opinion that everyday actors in totalitarian socialism took their living conditions for granted as a given social environment, very much like contemporary people understand their social realities nowadays.

MFG4: The last 20 years brought enough information about all the bad things that happened. To do justice, it should also be said that people were living their normal lives in those days too. Brutality, prosecution, penalization, these things impacted on one part of population. The majority of the people tried to conduct their normal lives even in those days. Under communism, we did not live in the trees; marching under the red flags wasn't our daily bread. Normal human affairs were also on the agenda, such as television shows.

MFG5: I was happy to be a pioneer. I took it for granted.

Moderator about S2: How would you feel if it were you, participating in the International Women's day celebration?

MFG3: Mhm, I'm not sure, maybe we wouldn't think it to be anything special or even be able to see that it was totally [...] crazy.

Another connection between the past and the present is seen in the transference of some habits (assumed to be socialist deformations) into the capitalist system.

MFG4 [about S1]: Comrade Karpíšek is exactly the young career-oriented person who was told: "stick with us and you will be well off." They taught him what to say, what words one should use. It is absolutely normal today in any sales company. If you go for a sales person position, they teach you the ways in which to move and speak. Absolutely normal today...



Figure 4: The scene from the first video sample used in the focus groups. Comrade Karpíšek (left) recruits Mr. Dvořák (right) to become a member of the Communist Party.

A rich source of data indicating cultural trauma were the comments in which respondents rehearsed their feelings of embarrassment or anxiety during totalitarian socialism. Alternatively, they interiorized the feelings of the serial protagonists.

Moderator: Did you consider the scene picturing the bus trip to Austria to be funny?

MFG2: Not at all, I was really sympathetic with the characters, so that the custom officers would not find any illegal stuff.

MFG2: I feel strange about crossing borders to this day. Today, one doesn't even have to present a passport and yet I still feel fear and get goose bumps.

A concept that gets referenced often in scholarly reflection on the aftermath of state socialism is the guilt for collaboration or silent agreement with the CP rule. The entire 1990s discourse on decommunization, to a great extent, dealt with a redistribution of the guilt for “the widespread injustice of the communist regime, imprisoning people for stating publicly their political views opposing the policies of the Communist Party and the regime in general” (Marada 2007, 91). Guilty feelings (as well as shame, flagellation, metaphoric schizophrenia and embarrassment) were indeed present in our respondents' comments, although not in a straightforward form. Guilty feeling presupposes the existence of a perpetrator—partial or full acceptance of such a role and a stigma left on the cultural memory. In Czech post-socialist culture the position of a perpetrator—the symbolic figure guilty of and responsible for the crimes of totalitarian socialism—was never fully determined. Who is to be blamed? The CP top executives? All members of the Communist Party? The entire silent majority? As far as the position of a perpetrator is a no man's and everybody's land, it is open to being assumed (or imposed upon) by wide range of actors. The process of consenting to the role of perpetrator may, indeed, include or induce cultural trauma—Bernhard Giesen coined the concept of ‘trauma of perpetrators’ to refer to a similar development in post-Nazi Germany (Giesen 2004, 115). However, our data disclose a more complex structure of guilty feelings in the traumatic memories of socialism than is usually assumed. We found symptoms of guilty feelings fidgeting with a role of perpetrator in an unusually delicate way. Uncertainty permeating the identity on the move between roles of a victim and a perpetrator can be demonstrated by comparing the two following quotes:

MFG7 [about S1]: My father was forced to enter the Communist Party. They came to talk to him about his daughter (it was me) having good school results and if it would not suit her to go to the high school? So after this, kind of, blackmail and persuasion he had to agree to become a party member.

MFG3 [about watching the episode capturing the Labor Day parade with her 9-year-old daughter]: [...] and I tell her, go sit and watch, look at Husák, look at the way we applauded him.

In the first statement the discussant clearly sees her father as a victim. On the contrary, the logic of the second statement is based on a deeply embedded duality. The respondent seems insecure about who exactly should be an object of the gaze: the communist President Husák or those who applauded him? Who should be tightly observed: the communist apparatchik or 'us,' the obedient, anonymous mass? Where is the borderline between perpetrators and mere victims in the film scene? The comment reflects people's potential collaboration and shows that the position of a perpetrator resists being bounded to the top communist officials. Consequently, the identity of the respondent as an ordinary person, who applauded when told to do so, moves on the victim–perpetrator scale and hardly ever rests in peace. In this case the respondent compulsively invites her daughter to pay attention to the conforming behavior of the older generation. It can be interpreted as an act of masochism and flagellation, as if it could undo the shame. In the above sketched comparison, cultural trauma of an ordinary man is visible as a permanent ambivalence and oscillation. It points to the never-ending stumbling from guilt to suffering and back; to the discontent following from not having one overarching narrative which would safely redeem the ordinary people as innocent victims.

6. Conclusion

As we argued in the introduction, the post-socialist collective memory of the state-socialist past does not lend itself easily to one principle. The statements of the participants in the focus groups reinforce our notion of the complexity of remembrance. In virtually all the cases, the kind of remembrance that was stimulated by viewing and discussing clips from the *Vyprávěj* television serial reminds us of a memory presumption process that appears to be more of a patchwork of personal needs and textual offerings rather than a single mnemonic practice.

Nostalgic renditions of the past were commonly observed. Their manifestations were often explicit, as when the older discussants acknowledged a sense of longing for the past,

although they would clearly define the desired past in terms of childhood and memories of the family and avoid the political context. The existing theories of nostalgia seem to be correct in the sense that nostalgic remembrance did not seem to engage a deeper sense of historicity of either state socialism or private capitalism, nor did it inspire an appeal to change history's course. The nostalgia did appear 'reflective,' but less in a sense attached to it by Svetlana Boym, i.e. a type of nostalgia "more concerned with historical and individual time, with the irrevocability of the past and human finitude" (Boym 2001, 49). The viewers quite simply exhibited awareness of the nostalgic sentiment in their recollections by spelling out the bygone nature of the past in question; so perhaps we could speak more precisely of a case of 'reflected' nostalgia. Furthermore, the analysis of relevant statements supports the claims that nostalgia adheres to commodified kitsch and stereotypes, as they tend to be elicited by the less abstract retro-signifiers.

Nostalgic discourse itself does point to aspects of the past over which our discussants express a sense of loss. We deem the ado about the post-socialist nostalgia to stem from the (disrupted) continuity of collective memory and (eroded) integrity of everyday life. In this light, nostalgia is just one of the secondary reactions to a primary distress: it is as though an excess of official memory and historiography (Hladík 2009) results in the 'lack' of everyday memory. The moralizing mode of discourse appears to be an intermediary position, a moment of reflection on nostalgia as well as a precursor to the dilemma of assigning guilt in traumatized remembrance. If some scholars see post-socialist popular culture of remembrance as a space for people 'without a story,' we tend to see it as space of many stories, private and collective ones, for which the narrators seek a forum. Their trauma is truly cultural—not traceable to an essential event, not stimulated by experienced horrors, not even reducible to economic distress—in that it stems from the impossibility of seamlessly integrating the past with the present by means of acceptable narratives. To the extent that serials such as *Vyprávěj* bear witness to these unrecognized stories, they have a therapeutic element and perhaps even political ramifications. However, there seems to be no prescription for a proper type of remembrance, no easy exit out of post-socialism.

Our research has confirmed the relevance of popular television in the formation of collective memory and showed that the medium's mnemonic dimension has a particular role to play in the context of a post-socialist country like the Czech Republic. We followed the discourse of viewers of the television serial of mixed genres, and found that the way in which they

articulate singular forms of remembrance, such as its traumatized or nostalgic type, turns them into complex negotiation of the meaning of the state-socialist past.

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Rerunning and „rewatching“ socialist TV drama serials : Post-socialist Czech television audiences between commodification and reclaiming the past

Bibliografický záznam publikované stati¹:

Reifová, I. (2009) Rerunning and „rewatching“ socialist TV drama serials : Post-socialist Czech television audiences between commodification and reclaiming the past. *Critical Studies in Television*, 4(2): 53-71.²

¹ Titulní strana publikované stati viz Příloha 3

² Irena Reifová-autorský podíl: 100 %

Rerunning and ‚rewatching‘ socialist TV drama serials: Post-socialist Czech television audiences between commodification and reclaiming the past

Irena Reifová

When propagandist TV serials from the socialist era reran on Czech television in the late 1990s and early noughties, something unusual happened. A genre happily consigned to oblivion when democracy replaced totalitarianism was resurrected on television as well as DVD. Both public and private broadcasters incorporated socialist TV serials into their schedules, as millions tuned in to watch dramas depicting an allegedly idyllic society. Viewers, in turn, responded with ambivalence – oscillating between affection and disgust. Broadcasters scheduled communist television-produced TV serials more than 200 times after 1989, some rerun in primetime with significant ratings of around two million viewers.

Reasons for resuscitating the socialist TV serials are varied. The ability of television to mediate between past and present is central, as recently highlighted by the fruitful encounters between television studies and memory studies.¹

Economics is another factor, as reruns reduce programming costs. TV serial fiction is not the only type of content to which rerun practices apply; repeated screenings are also an important scheduling strategy for Czech Television. In 2006, for example, 57 per cent of content on Czech Television comprised of reruns, increasing to 60 per cent in 2007.² As Jonathan Bignell says: ‘[...] increased demand for programme content on the increased

¹ Since its beginnings in the 1970s, television studies has witnessed a shift from understanding television as a space of history simplification and amnesia to viewing television as an instrument of ‘extremely active and nuanced engagement with the construction of history and [...] shaping of cultural memory’ (Steve Anderson, ‘History TV and Popular Memory,’ in Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, eds, *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memories in the Media Age*, University of Kentucky, 2001, p. 20). The old concept of ‘collective memory’ coined by Maurice Halbwachs in the interwar period was revived (Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis Coser, *On Collective Memory*, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 22) together with Pierre Nora’s notions of ‘sites of memory’ (*lieux de mémoire*) and ‘environments of memory’ (*milieux de mémoire*). Nora’s definition allows for television to be tackled as a primary site of memory but he accuses modern institutions, including the media, of the ‘eradication of memory by history’ (Nora, ‘Between Memory and History: *les Lieux des Mémoire*,’ *Representations* [Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory], 26, 2000, 7– 24). More optimistic reworking, however, bridges memory studies and active audience studies. From this vantage point, ‘memory studies provide a way of looking at historical reception, what people remember from history, and the ways it is made useful in their lives’ (Anderson, ‘History TV and Popular Memory,’ p. 20-1).

² Czech Television Annual Report 2007,

http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/radact/vyrocní_zpravy/prilohy_07/vysilani_ct_v_grafech_57.pdf, accessed 16 March 2009.

number of contemporary channels makes the repeating of past programmes a notable feature of the schedules'.³

Nonetheless the most powerful way of understanding scheduling and the (re)watching of socialist TV serials is post-socialist nostalgia. Post-socialist nostalgia adopts a postmodern attitude and fills it with peculiar content and practices. The return of the communist-produced TV serials can be interpreted as a backlash to the years immediately following the political transformation in 1989, when suppressing the discredited totalitarian past and a thick dividing line profoundly shaped the Czech public sphere.

At the end of the 1990s, scholars and critical thinkers diagnosed a nostalgic structure of feeling being witnessed across the entire former Soviet bloc: in cinema, German culture started its 'Ostalgie' rendezvous with pre-unification socialist GDR;⁴ post-Yugoslav countries developed Yugo-nostalgia typically associated with wartime reminiscence;⁵ Hungary went through a phase of nostalgic praising of amateur cultural figures;⁶ and Polish and Slovenian urban spaces started to house new cafeterias, and bars and clubs were styled in the socialist 'plastic' aesthetic. The reappearance on Czech television of Czechoslovak TV serials produced in the 1970s and 1980s (under the totalitarian regime) belongs to these diverse, and often unpredictable, (re)articulations. This article seeks to document, contextualise and account for the rerunning, as well as enthusiastic '(re)watching', of the so-called 'normalization'⁷ TV serials in the Czech Republic after 1989, as an example of a nostalgic television practice. Based on data retrieved from the Czech Television Archive, as well as from period television guides, it focuses on how and why these TV serials produced under an undemocratic socio-political system were reintegrated into the scheduling policies of the new television channels after 1989, and considers, in turn, the (dis)pleasures for viewers.

³ Jonathan Bignell, *An Introduction to Television Studies*, Routledge, 2008, p. 42.

⁴ Anthony Enns, 'The Politics of Ostalgie: Post-socialist Nostalgia in Recent German Film,' *Screen*, 48, 4, 2007, 475-91; Dominic Boyer, 'Ostalgie and the Politics of the Future in Eastern Germany,' *Public Culture*, 18, 2006, 361-81.

⁵ Zala Volčič, 'Yugonostalgia: Cultural Memory and Media in the Former Yugoslavia,' *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 24, 2, 2007, 21-38; Nicole Lindstrom, 'Yugonostalgia: Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia in Former Yugoslavia,' *East Central Europe*, 32, 1-2, 2005, 227-38.

⁶ Maya Nadkarni, 'The Master's Voice: Authenticity, Nostalgia, and the Refusal of Irony in Postsocialist Hungary,' *Social Identities*, 13, 5, 2007, 611-26.

⁷ 'Normalization' is the name commonly given to the period between 1969-89, following the curtailment of reforms stemming from the 1968 political liberalisation movement, which would become known as the 'Prague Spring', and the subsequent restoration of totalitarianism.

Insights into past times and televising history are of course not peculiar to post-socialist television. 'During the 1990s, in Britain as elsewhere in Europe, the production and broadcasting of history programming made for television increased exponentially.'⁸ History channels emerged with the proliferation of cable channels in the 1980s, and narrowcasting and niche marketing, supported by digitalisation, has furthered the process. The rise of history television makes visible a postmodern impulse. It is about a hybridisation of fact and fiction and sometimes articulates an expert knowledge with participatory common sense. Nonetheless, it is argued here that history television programming does not only consist of the shows and documentaries *explicitly* dealing *with* history. Programmes produced *in* history and subjected to selection procedures for rerunning are also *implicitly* mediating the past and present. I am especially concerned with how the communist-produced TV serials were chosen, and transformed on, Czech television channels, and what it says about the particular cultural dynamics in play. The general assumption is that these reruns of socialist TV serials are not only about sentimental time travel but also about travelling in a dichotomised political history. The reruns take the television audience back to a time that became, within the new neo-liberal paradigm of the early 1990s, subject to taboo and forgetfulness. Television thus facilitated the process of memory sedimentation and reconfiguration; and it helped its viewers appropriate the past in a less demonised way.

1. Before and after: two different regimes, two different media systems

The above mentioned discontinuity concerns the media system as well. Setting the basic profile of the totalitarian television landscape and comparing it with post-socialist conditions is thus necessary. It is important to emphasise the discontinuity, which permeates many domains of the television industry as well as shedding some light on how surprising it was when the television channels in a neo-capitalist society adopted the practice of rerunning the socialist TV serials.

Czechoslovak Television (Ceskoslovenská Televize) was a significant element in an ideological party apparatus under the communist regime. Media and culture institutions were organised in accordance with the Leninist conception of the 'means of communication', which openly supported a partisan definition of media, placing emphasis on agitation and the communist

⁸ Ann Gray and Erin Bell, 'History on Television: Charisma, Narrative and Knowledge,' *The European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10, 1, 2007, 113-33.

dialectic. On the level of television supervision and control, direct interconnection with the bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was crucial. Surprisingly though, personal, idiosyncratic interventions from individual communist party bureaucrats also had a strong influence on the specific social domain – it was not only guidelines set down by elected communist policy-makers and the party élite that mattered. Jiří Kabele asserts that the communist party apparatus showed qualities of clan organisation.⁹ Politics were inseparable from bureaucracy, the latest version of ideological directives was modified at random and only the ‘initiators’ knew of the most up-to-date changes.¹⁰ The organisation of television was subject to both internal and external supervision. On the internal level, top positions in television management were taken by loyal communist party apparatchiks after 1968. (Ordinary television employees used to associate managers mainly with their party identity; the definition of managers as television professionals was thus weakened.) On the external level, Czechoslovak Television was co-conducted and co-censored by cells of the communist party itself. The so-called ‘ideological theme plan’ – the main biannual television scheme of programming policy – was continually being refined by the Department of Mass Media (administrative level of the Central Committee), as well as finally approved by the Ideological commission (political body within the Central Committee).

After the political changeover in 1989, freedom of speech was re-established and the abolition of a state monopoly in radio and television broadcasting became an immediate priority. Following years of a state-planned economy, free market principles would shape the transformation of the media system. Privatisation and minimal state interference became the two central pillars of such change;¹¹ and it was hoped that free market competition would guarantee programming quality.

Law No. 491, passed in 1991, facilitated a transformation in the broadcasting system and replaced the former state monopoly with a ‘dual system’ combining public service with a strong private component. Czechoslovak Television (Czech Television since 1992) was legislated as a public broadcaster supervised by the Czech Television Council; and two

⁹ Jiří Kabele, ed, *‘Výklady vládnutí v reálném socialismu’* [tr: ‘Interpreting Governance in Real Socialism’], 2004, Matfyzpress, p. 47. (Translation mine.)

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Milan Šmíd, ‘The Czech Media Landscape,’ in Georgios Terzis, ed, *European Media Governance: National and Regional Dimensions*, Intellect Books, 2008, p. 339.

private terrestrial broadcasters won licenses to operate: TV Premiéra (later TV Prima) in 1993, and TV Nova in 1994. Funding for public television consisted of a viewer's fee (collected independently from the State budget), limited advertising revenues and profits from other business activities. The private broadcasters became solely dependent on selling audiences to advertisers and subsequently the ratings measurement and ratings-driven programming became the leading commercial principal. In the 1990s, TV Nova positioned itself as being Central and Eastern European's television tiger, taking a 70 per cent share in primetime. TV Nova was licensed as a Czech investor (CET 21 Ltd.) but soon the majority stake in its key production segment was purchased by US investment capital, CME (Central European Media Enterprises). Prolonged disputes between TV Nova former CEO Vladimír Železný (who has been likened to a Czech Silvio Berlusconi) and CME resulted in arbitration and, in 2003, the Czech Republic had to compensate CME 353 millions USD. The initial production strategies for the newly founded private broadcasters concentrated mainly on developing commercial newscasts; television fiction, prior to 2000, consisted of inexpensive US series/serials (*Dallas* [1978-91], *Dynasty* [1981-89], *Melrose Place* [1992-99], *Baywatch* [1989-2001], *Knight Rider* [1982-86], *Beverly Hills 90210* [1990-2000]) and a few Latin American telenovelas (*Esmeralda* [1997] and *Manuela* [1991]).

2. Television serial production during the Czechoslovak 'normalization'

To better appreciate the theoretical and cultural incongruities of the post-socialist television landscape it is important to understand the original position of the television serials produced and broadcasted by Czechoslovak Television in the 1970s and 1980s. Television fiction with its emphasis on drama serials was a staple part of the propagandist vision, disseminated through ideological theme plans during the 'normalization' period. Socialist TV drama serials were predominately set in a so-called 'socialist presence', a consequence of explicit political directives coming from the Central Communist Politburo.¹² Communist television ideologists at this point unintentionally adopted Theodor Adorno's position on the (pseudo)realism of television: „The culture industry grins: become what you are, and its

¹² For instance, the ideological theme plan (ITP) for 1984-5 reads: 'The main goal of the editorials was to show a contemporary hero as an active designer of the socialistic present and communist future.' APF ČT, Archive of Programme Funds, Czech Television, f. VE2, inventory no. 352. Also the ITP for 1985-6 says: 'The effort must be aimed at the ideological and artistic quality of the contemporary issues as the base for television dramatic production.' APF ČT, f. VE2, inventory no. 134.

deceit consists precisely in confirming and consolidating by dint of repetition mere existence as such, what human beings have been made into by the way of the world. The culture industry can insist all the more convincingly that it is not the murderer but the victim who is guilty: that it simply helps bring to life what lies within human beings anyway."¹³

This stance assumes that television makes visible everyday existence as common sense, affirming the status quo and strengthening existing dominant social conditions, while rendering the idea of change redundant. Contemporary setting of Czechoslovak propagandist serials was clearly an important element of its 'dominant specularity' as defined by Colin MacCabe in his elaboration of the 'classic realist text'.¹⁴ Realism – supported by degenerated and simplified fragments of Marxist and Leninist theories of art – was understood to be a 'safe' code; one which indeed prevented 'dealing with [the] real as contradictory'.¹⁵ Serials translated the communist party scheme not only into temporal settings but also into other narrative dimensions as well – especially plots, spatial settings and characters. The basic principle of telling stories in instalments with suspensions and reintroduction of the narrative flow also mattered. As Robert C. Allen puts it, the episodic layout increases the chances of generating regular audiences, which is of interest to any effects-driven concept of communication, whether dissemination of commercial or political message is at stake.¹⁶

Czechoslovak Television aired domestic drama series and serials 283 times from its beginnings in 1959 until the political transformation of 1989: 54 per cent (151 cases) of programmes were first screenings and 46 per cent (132 cases) were reruns. The number of 'normalization' TV drama serials (i.e. those produced between 1971-89) is 139. In this period the two channels of Czechoslovak Television broadcast on average 1.97 hours of TV drama per week with its minimum in 1974 (0.67 hours per week) and maximum in 1989 (3.96 hours per week). (See Table 1.)

¹³ Theodor Adorno, 'Prologue to Television,' in Henry W. Pickford, ed, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 55.

¹⁴ Colin MacCabe, *Theoretical Essays: Film, Linguistics, Literature*, Manchester University Press ND, 1985

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁶ Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas*, University of North Carolina Press, 1985, p. 19.

Table 1 *First Screenings and Reruns in 1959-2005*¹⁷

	first screenings	reruns	total
before 1990	151 (54 per cent)	132 (46 per cent)	283 (100 per cent)
after 1990	89 (22.3 per cent)	311 (77.8 per cent)	400 (100 per cent)
Total	239	440	683

To review the peculiarities of the Czechoslovak TV serial format, several factors need mentioning: mainly, some generic oddities, the number and length of episodes, authorship and screening times. As Arjun Appadurai and other scholars stress, in contemporary globalised cultures, works of imagination cross, blend and enter into reciprocal relationships.¹⁸ Genres and formats have taken this route and started to hybridise in a process of commercial and creative exchange, within both financial and cultural economies.¹⁹ Contrary to this process, and described by Albert Moran and Justin Malbon, production of television serials developed in isolation behind the iron curtain.²⁰ ‘Normalization’ serials are therefore difficult to classify using the usual sub-genre categories used to define dramas made in the more open production environments of the United Kingdom and United States in the 1970s and 1980s.²¹ A basic difference between series and serials applies to Czechoslovak production, though the form of a serial ‘which comprises a series of episodes whose narrative episodes resist closure and continue to the next episode(s) within the sequence’ prevailed.²² More subtly, though classic genre specification

¹⁷ Figures based on data collected from the main national television guide, from 1959-2005. It changed its title over the decades, and is today called *The Television Weekly*.

¹⁸ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

¹⁹ John Fiske, *Television Culture*, Routledge, 1987, pp. 311-13.

²⁰ Justin Malbon and Albert Moran, *Understanding the Global TV Format*, Intellect Books, 2006.

²¹ Robert J. Thompson does not consider the majority of world television productions of those days to be ‘quality television’. (Robert J. Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER*, Continuum, 1996.) But in spite of this it must be noted that quite active Czechoslovak television serial production in the 1970s and 1980s was for political reasons developing without any connection to fundamental, genre-defining serial/series which had already been running or just entered the small screens, such as *Charlie's Angels* (1976-81), *Dallas* (1978-91), *Doctor Who* (1963-89; 2005-present), *Gilligan's Island* (1964-67) *I Love Lucy* (1951-57), *M*A*S*H* (1972-83) or *Star Trek* (1966-69). Quoted as listed in Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, eds, *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 258-62.

²² Angela Ndalians, ‘Television and the Neo-Baroque,’ in Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon, eds, *The Contemporary Television Series*, Edinburgh University Press, 2005, p. 84.

cannot usually be transferred, perhaps with the exception of some categories identified by Glen Creeber and his division of television fiction into soap operas, series, anthology series, serials and miniseries.²³ Soap operas and sitcoms were absolutely unknown in Czechoslovakia. Similar reluctance to diversify is reported by Angeliki Koukoutsaki in the case of Greek television drama: 'The term "series" is used spontaneously in oral discourse to characterize all kinds of fiction programmes: soap operas, comedies, etc.'²⁴ The same can be said of how the term 'serial' (seriál) is used and understood in the Czech language. Any kind of episodic television fiction is referred to in Czech using the word 'serial'. Those studying television narratives distinguish between 'series' and 'serials'. However this is the exception, as those working in television usually do not make such a distinction. This lack of differentiation in terminology has been previously recognised as a symptom of the national cult of seriality.²⁵

Czechoslovak Television broadcast politically charged drama serials exclusively in primetime slots while daytime series were non-existent, except for children's programmes.²⁶ It was normal for serials to have ten episodes and run for one season, or 'sequence'.²⁷ This format was later extended to 13 episodes, the first example of this being *The Youngest of the Hamrs* [*Nejmladší z rodu Hamrů*] in 1975. Serials with 13 episodes also had an avowedly political purpose. Only one episode was broadcast per week and four 13-episode serials stretched across the entire year. This arrangement guaranteed that fresh propagandist fiction reached TV viewers each and every week. In this model (one episode of a premiere serial per week), episodes normally ran for about 60 minutes long, and the soap- or sitcom-style length did not exist at all. The average length of a primetime Czechoslovak 'normalization' episode was 58 minutes; the longest ran for 120 minutes. The pre-production phase of serial drama for

²³ Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen*, bfi Publishing, 2005, p. 8.

²⁴ Angeliki Koukoutsaki, 'Greek Television Drama: Production Policies and Genre Diversification,' *Media, Culture & Society*, 25, 6, 2003, 715–35.

²⁵ Irena Reifova, 'Cult and Ideology: Serial Narratives in Communist Television: The Case of the Czechoslovak Television Serial Production of 1959-1989,' in Nico Carpentier, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Maren Hartmann, Peeter Vihalemm, Bart Cammaerts, Hannu Nieminen and Tobias Olsson, eds, *Democracy, Journalism and Technology: New Developments in an Enlarged Europe*, Tartu University Press, 2008, pp. 295–306.

²⁶ Only the episodes broadcast in primetime were re-shown the following day during the daytime. This corresponds to the hours of factory workers, who often did shift work in the low-performance, state economy. The workers who could not watch an episode of a particular serial drama in the regular primetime slot were intentionally given a chance to watch it the next day.

²⁷ With the exception of *The Hospital at the Outskirts*, the first season was screened in 1978 and the second season (co-produced with Norddeutscher Rundfunk) in 1981.

state television was organised around the author. Only a single creative writer took responsibility for the script at every stage. State television neither knew of, nor did it aspire to apply, a more efficiency-oriented and industry-based model of assembly-line writing (chief writer, story-line writers, dialogue writers) as is used in contemporary TV production in the West.²⁸ Furthermore the single authorial voice translated into the dominance of a single, linear storyline. The dramatic arch spanned over the entire season and did not close until the last episode. Constituent episodes had open ends, although not open enough to allow for 'cliffhangers'. The main storyline was kept on a single course with the narrative heading toward a tight closure without any possibility for re-opening it in future.

Illuminated here is how and why television serial fiction was penetrated by the communist-party-as-a-leading-force. There is in fact a link here between the closed, serial narrative form of the Czechoslovak 'normalization' serial and the 'classic realist text' as critiqued by MacCabe for bearing ideology in a readily acceptable dramatic form. It can only be speculated on how and for what purposes and pleasures erstwhile viewers used these TV serials. In this case, rating figures say less about the whole reception situation than they do at the present time. According to quantitative audience measurement ('family diaries', as they were known in those days) primetime serials in 1970s and 1980s attracted the majority of television viewers. The standard share oscillated between 80-95 per cent of television viewers, and this remained stable through the two decades.²⁹ The numbers were substantially influenced by the fact that Czechoslovak Television had a broadcasting monopoly and operated only two channels. The supply did not offer the possibility of channel hopping, and is a classic example of politically motivated streamlining of the audience.³⁰ However, ratings for TV serials remained high even in terms of reaching large proportions of the population.³¹

Escapism is one of the explanations for the popularity of these TV serials from the 1970s and 1980s. Escapism was pervasive, an important survival strategy amongst the population at

²⁸ Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas*, p. 48.

²⁹ One of the early serials, *The Youngest of the Hamrs*, had an 87 per cent share (episode 5, 1 July 1975). One of the latest serials, *Boys and Men*, also had an 87 per cent share (episode 8, 26 October 1988). Data provided by AOP ČT [Czech Television, Broadcasting archive].

³⁰ Ien Ang, *Desperately Seeking the Audience*, Routledge, 1991, p. 68.

³¹ For example, the reach of drama serials aired in the 1970s was about 60 per cent of the population for *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman*, about 70 per cent for *Muž na radnici* [*Man at City Hall*] (ČST, 1977) and about 75 per cent for *Woman behind the Counter*. APF ČT, f. INF, no. 122, 125.

that time.³² In the ‘normalization’ period, between 1969 and the Velvet Revolution and the coming of democracy in 1989, in which declarations of support for communist party politics were no longer sincere; it was a time that stimulated different kinds of withdrawal and ‘hide-and-see’ games. ‘Double-think’ – critical but silent thinking in private as opposed to conformist speaking in public – was common practice. By escaping into a private world, people strove to avoid the schizophrenic ‘double-being’, extend everyday individualism and diminish the risks of omnipresent surveillance. Escapism demonstrated itself in diverse ways: a baby boom at the beginning of 1970s, the flourishing of male technical do-it-yourself hobbies, related home workshop culture, pub beer-drinking culture, female engagement with alternative grocery economy and food supplies, expansion of out-of-town weekend cottage-dwelling. Regular and considerable attention paid to the television drama serials fits in with this broader context of social escapism. At least since Richard Dyer’s seminal article on utopia and entertainment, escapism has been understood as more than just a flight into one’s personal fantasy.³³ John Storey reminds us about the ‘relationship between social problems experienced by the audience and the textual solutions played out in the texts of popular entertainment’.³⁴ Escapism always has two sides: the escape is not only pointing to something but also motivated by disconnecting *from* something. It can be argued that the pleasure and social profit viewers could gain from watching ‘normalization’ communist TV serials exceeded mere escapism. One of the interpretations – with a reference to the notion retrieved from psychoanalysis by John Ellis – could be that the television drama serial helped audiences work through particular aspects of their mundane life.³⁵

3. Recycling Czechoslovak ‘normalization’ serials

The form and function of socialist TV serials (as described above) closely links them with the specific period in history: namely, the local production scheme developed in isolation in

³² Czech historian Milan Otáhal confirms that after 1968 large number of citizens ‘lost their interest in public affairs and gave up on democratic values; the private sphere became the space where they realised their potential. This politics resulted in an emergence of a specific cottager’s subculture. It was grounded in an escape to the countryside and enclosed in family circles. These tendencies further accelerated atomisation of Czechoslovak society.’ (Translation mine.) Milan Otáhal, *Politický režim v Československu* [tr: ‘Political Regime in Czechoslovakia’], 2004, p. 37,

http://www.usd.cas.cz/UserFiles/File/Publikace/Prirucka48_89.pdf, accessed 8 June 2009.

³³ Richard Dyer, ‘Entertainment and Utopia,’ *Movie*, 1977, 24, 2– 13.

³⁴ John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, Pearson Education, 2006, p. 107.

³⁵ John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty*, I.B. Tauris, 2000, p. 79.

Czechoslovak Television in the 1970s and 1980s.³⁶ It was detached from the international know-how of serial storytelling and its viability was connected to the timely demand for social escapism. Therefore, an inquiry into the revivalist viewing which started in the mid-1990s (and remains part of Czech television culture) is relevant. The perspective which takes 'repetition' to be an eloquent sign of nostalgia is of particular importance here, as it is in Susan Stewart's study, entitled *On Longing*, which defines nostalgia as 'the repetition that mourns the inauthenticity in all repetition'.³⁷

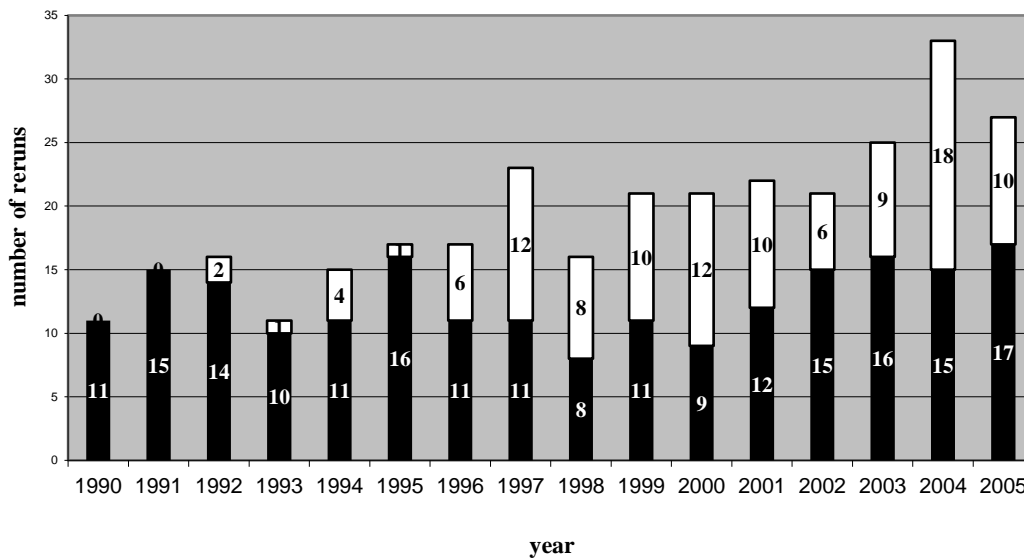
As evidenced by Table 1, repeated screenings of television drama serials increased threefold after the new political system was introduced in 1990. The first screenings and reruns were relatively balanced before 1990 (46 per cent reruns, 54 per cent first screenings). The economic situation of new Czech broadcasters translated into a remarkable rise in the proportion of repeated screenings. Between 1990 and 2005, first screenings represented approximately 22 per cent and reruns 78 per cent of all domestic drama series/serials broadcast on Czech television. Economic pressures after 1990, rather than politically motivated ones under communist rule, resulted in more emphasis being placed on repeated screenings.

Rerunning shows produced before 1990 was of course initially unavoidable. Television flow is always dependant to some degree on reruns (especially in the case of fiction) because production time exceeds broadcasting hours. However, the number of reruns of drama serials produced under socialism did not decrease after 1990. After 2000, 'old', 'socialist' serials represented more than 50 per cent of all repeated screenings. (See Graph 1.) Between 2000 and 2005, the television networks broadcast 14.5 drama serials produced before 1990 and 11 programmes produced after 1990 on an average per year.

³⁶ The literary and the production schemes were tightly connected to the prominent television writer Jaroslav Dietl.

³⁷ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Duke University Press, 1999.

Graph 1 Reruns of 'old' and 'new' serials/series in the television schedule after 1990



The presence of socialist TV drama serials became taken-for-granted and naturalised (in the sense used by Barthes³⁸) at the early noughties, when the series *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman* (*Třicet případů majora Zemana*, 1975) was rerun twice. The first rerun was on public Czech Television in 1999 and the second rerun was on private TV Prima in 2004.³⁹ The public broadcaster's decision to repeat the series about a loyal communist detective Major Zeman (Vladimír Brabec) for the first time since the end of communism became an issue of public interest and media fervour. The broadcaster, other media organisations and countless Internet forums positioned the rerun in the field of politics and presented it as an intrinsically ethical issue. The opposing argument was twofold: the rerun was viewed as an insult to former political prisoners, and fears were raised about biased interpretation of historical events and its influence over the audience. For example, the Confederation of Political Prisoners submitted a complaint against Czech Television, saying it was violating the

³⁸ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Paladin Grafton Books, 1986, pp. 129– 31.

³⁹ *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman* is considered the most striking example of an ideological television series produced by communist Czechoslovak Television. It tells the life-story of a loyal communist police officer who fights both criminal and political enemies of the socialist regime. Each episode is situated in a specific year of the nation's history, and in some cases episodes are devoted to real historical events but rewriting them in the interests of the communist party. The series was produced to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the police force, and the press department of the communist Ministry of Interior Affairs initiated its production. Jiřina Dvořáková, 'Jak se točil seriál Třicet případů majora Zemana' ['On Shooting the Series *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman*'], 2003, p. 91, http://www.abscr.cz/data/pdf/sbornik/sbornik1-2003/zeman_upr.pdf, accessed 24 March 2009.

law on propagating totalitarianism. 'State lawyers refused to prosecute, though, and a quarter of Czechs tuned in to the rerun of episode 1.'⁴⁰ The broadcaster launched a special website which was meant to boost feedback and provide a space for viewers' comments and questions. A joint round-table programme inviting historians, communist regime victims and propaganda theory experts accompanied each episode during its rerun. Its mission was to emphasise ideological depiction of real events and point the audience – in the style of Hartleyan 'peadocracy' – to the discrepancies between the series' version of history and actual historical records.⁴¹

After five years, in January 2004, the private channel TV Prima decided to rerun *The Thirty Cases of Major Zeman*. Yet the repeat attracted little attention. There was no public outcry; no politicising or moralising rhetoric surrounding the broadcast. One reason for this might relate to how TV Prima decided to promote the series. Its self-promotion was self-referential, whimsical and often jocular. The music referenced other works of popular culture, using in one promo the soundtrack from hit US series *Friends* (1994-2004) with the closing question: 'Will they be your friends?' Another promotional film referred to the *Winnetou* music with the text reading: 'Was Maj. Zeman a red gentleman?' A process of de-politicisation played a crucial part in the naturalisation of this socialist television series, turning it into a regular, non-controversial item of post-socialist television scheduling. Socialist popular culture thus underwent the process of 'adiaphorization', through which – as Zygmunt Bauman puts it – human acts are deprived of their moral dimension through 'the stripping of human relationships of their moral significance, exempting them from moral evaluation, rendering them "morally irrelevant"'.⁴² Bauman's description closely fits the dynamics of post-socialist consumption of socialist popular culture commodities, as is illustrated by the shift between the two reruns of the *Major Zeman* series. In five years, the serious, gloomy issue of public debate is turned into amusing entertainment. Wrestling the socialist television series from its original political and ethical context is an inevitable condition for 'socialist kitsch' consumption.

⁴⁰ Matt Reynolds, 'The Spy Who May Come In From the Cold World,' *New York Times*, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/24/movies/24spy.html? r=1&pagewanted=1>, accessed 24 March 2009.

⁴¹ John Hartley, 'Invisible Fictions: Television Audiences, Peadocracy, Pleasure,' in Gary Burns and Robert J. Thompson, eds, *Television Studies: Textual Analysis*, Praeger, 1987.

⁴² Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics*, Blackwell, 1995, pp. 133– 4.

4. Ideological index

In and through the ways contemporary Czech television promoted socialist serials in its schedules makes visible the enfeeblement of normative judgements as well as a weakening of an evaluative framework. But the ideological content of these programmes cannot be overlooked. After 1990, Czech television began to schedule more and more reruns of serials that epitomised socialist television and lifestyle from the 'normalization' period. Could we replace 'propagandist' with 'ideological'? Research presented below documents the trend as it seeks to construct an 'ideological index' for each serial.

At this point an explanation of what is meant by 'ideology' in the socialist drama serials is required. Let us be clear: I do not suggest that ideological tendencies are inherent in totalitarian cultural products and symbolic artefacts whereas those produced by societies with less explicit dominant structures do not carry preferred meanings. John Corner is right when he says how cultural studies let 'go of the idea that [ideology] is a historically specific "bad thing"...' ⁴³ However it is necessary to see the difference between constituted ideological practices in communist systems and less sturdy hegemonic practices in democratic ones. Informal ideologies (hegemonies in democratic societies) legitimate hierarchies in which dominant élites have privileged access to economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital but not to political capital by virtue of free elections and plurality of political parties. In totalitarian communist societies the situation is reversed. Here dominant élites possess privileged access to political capital but not to economic, cultural, social or symbolic capital. ⁴⁴ The official political and bureaucratic apparatus capable of transcending politically preferred motifs into a television fiction is an example of what is meant by 'privileged access'. Consequently, ideology is defined here as all meanings and respective narrative elements legitimating the lead role taken by the communist party in Czechoslovak society.

To minimise a systematic bias that could penetrate ideological analysis of hundreds of episodes if carried out by a single researcher, questioning informants was selected so as to pinpoint the intensity of the ideological messages in repeated television serials. ⁴⁵ In this

⁴³ John Corner, 'Ideology: A Note on Conceptual Salvage,' *Media, Culture, Society*, 23, 4, 2001, 525–33.

⁴⁴ Reifová, 'Cult and Ideology: Serial Narratives in Communist Television: The Case of the Czechoslovak Television Serial Production of 1959-1989,' p. 299.

⁴⁵ Mimi White, 'Ideological Analysis and Television,' in Robert. C. Allen, ed, *Channels of Discourse*, Routledge, 1992, pp. 121–52.

respect the research imitated the methodology legitimised by Edward Suchman.⁴⁶ 30 experts interested in television (media studies academics, television journalists, television professionals) were approached. They were presented with a list of repeated serials and asked to assign marks, which, in their opinion, characterised their ideological involvement.⁴⁷ Average ideological indexes for each of the evaluated drama serials and for the year they were made were thus acquired. These figures helped us to construct a line graph representing the development of ideological indices of repeated drama serials between 1990 and 2005. (See Graph 2.) The graph – mainly its line of trend – demonstrates how the ideological index increased in the years after 1990. In 1991, for example, the average ideological index was 1.87. According to the informants' evaluations, TV drama serials repeated in 1991 were close to the 'almost no ideology' category. An ideological index curve peaks in 2003 with the average ideological index of 2.89, which places the majority of this year's reruns close to the 'medium ideology' category.⁴⁸

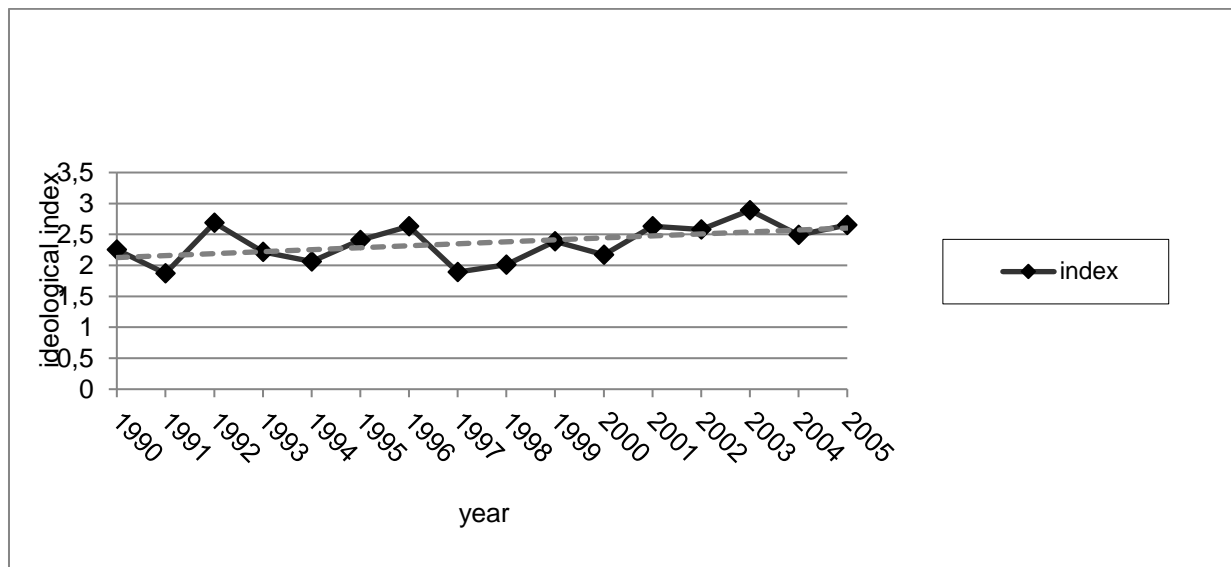
In general, it can be concluded that the Czech post-socialist television broadcasters gradually became more resolved to open their archives, with ever more ideologically loaded drama serials. Programmes, which would have been both ethically and aesthetically unacceptable shortly after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, became objects of viewers' value-free, amusing curiosity rather than being perceived as value-laden.

⁴⁶ In the beginning of the 1940s, Edward Suchman took over Theodor Adorno's part in Lazarsfeld's *Princeton Radio project*, which focused on the analysis of the radio broadcasting of classical music, namely symphonies. (Irena Reifová, 'Adorno a Lazarsfeld: Setkání skeptika s těšitelem' ['Adorno and Lazarsfeld: The Apocalyptic Meets the Well-Adjusted One'], *Sociologický časopis [Sociological Review]*, 1999, 35, 2, 181-91). Suchman intended to evaluate the musical sophistication of pre-selected composers. He asked the judges to label the composers by either plus (high quality) or minus (low quality). The obtained classification served as an instrument for further investigations of listeners' musical taste. Edward Suchman, 'Invitation to Music: A Study of the Creation of New Music Listeners by the Radio,' in Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton, eds, *Radio Research 1941*, Arno Press, 1979, p. 174.

⁴⁷ The informants responded to the following request: 'Do the serial dramas on a separate list contain the communist party ideology? Signify its extent by grades of this scale: 1 – no ideology, 2 – almost no ideology, 3 – medium ideology, 4 – high ideology, 5 – I do not know. What we ask for is your personal, subjective opinion.'

⁴⁸ Any serial drama could end up with index 4 at the maximum. These serial dramas were evaluated with 4 ('high ideology'): *Gottwald*; *Man at City Hall*; *Okres na severu [The Northern District]*, ČST, 1981; *Povstalecká historie [Partisan History]*, ČST, 1984; *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman*.

Graph 2 Increase of Ideological Index between 1990 and 2005



Look Who Is (Re)Watching?

But the politics of the television business and of reruns cannot explain the nostalgic practices of post-socialist cultures. ‘Re-watching’ is at least as important. But how widespread is the practice? How many viewers are actually watching these old TV serials, despite a contemporary television market offering a much wider choice?

For demographic and social reasons three models define Czech television viewers’ attitudes towards these socialist serials. One group only watched these programmes as post-socialist reruns (most are young, and did not watch television prior to 1990)⁴⁹; the second are those who watched the socialist drama serials under both political systems; and the third include those who followed the serials under the communist regime but refuse to ‘re-watch’ these programmes in the new television landscape. The categories in Table 2 indicate that assumptions about nostalgic practices are not merely a chic hypothesis but exist in a television reality. Almost 1000 respondents were questioned about the chronology of their socialist serial viewing. Five specific serials were selected; the reason for this was that the sample comprised of those programmes that were repeated after 1990 and gained high

⁴⁹ For instance, 64 per cent of viewers who did not see *The Thirty Cases of Major Zeman* until the 1990s rerun are between 15-29 years old. Source: *Our Society Survey*, 11, 2007, Centre for Public Opinion Research, Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

ideological indexes. The general, ‘side-effect’ finding was that the population were quite familiar with the socialist serials, which, in turn, can be understood as one of the key points in the contemporary Czech television experience.

Table 2 *When Did Viewers Watch the Drama Serials?*

series title	only before 1990	only after 1990	before and after	never	do not know	total
Boys and Men	187	78	175	493	122	964
	18%	7%	16%	47%	12%	100%
Engineer Story	332	50	166	436	71	964
	31%	5%	16%	41%	7%	100%
Hospital in the Outskirts	197	134	542	168	14	964
	19%	13%	51%	16%	1%	100%
Thirty Cases of Major Zeman	304	106	394	232	19	964
	29%	10%	37%	22%	2%	100%
Woman behind the Counter	393	37	191	394	40	964
	37%	4%	18%	37%	4%	100%

Source: ‘Our Society’ Survey, November 2007, Centre for Public Opinion Research, Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic

In all cases, more than 50 per cent of respondents knew the particular serials. Extraordinarily popular programmes like *Hospital in the Outskirts* (*Nemocnice na kraji města*, 1978; 1981) or *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman* represent a shared background for 83 per and 76 per cent of respondents, respectively. It was especially interesting to compare viewers who took the ‘second chance’ opportunity to watch the serials after 1990 (column ‘before and after’) and those who did not (column ‘only before 1990’). From this perspective the ‘re-watching audiences’ (‘before and after’) are not a minority if compared with those who only watched the serials before 1990. Viewers who did not take the opportunity to watch the reruns did not make up more than 37 per cent of respondents. In two cases ‘re-watchers’ cannot beat those who refused to see the repeats; however, they still represent about one fifth of respondents (*Engineer Story* [*Inženýrská odyssea*, 1980] and *Woman behind the Counter* [*Žena za pultem*, 1977]). In the other three cases, the number of respondents who decided to watch the reruns (compared with those who did not) are roughly the same (*Boys and Men* [*Chlapci a chlapi*, 1988]) or higher (*Hospital in the Outskirts*, *Thirty Cases of Major Zeman*). ‘Re-watching’ viewers – those who fall into the category ‘before and after’ – can be

described as 'continuing audiences'. They are those who decided to watch the same programmes again, but in a receptive situation which was structurally different.

5. Memory between production and consumption

The debate over a post-socialist popular cultural position brings casuistry to the model of collective memory sedimentation as sketched out by Wulf Kansteiner.⁵⁰ He defines collective memory as: '[...] intellectual and cultural traditions that frame all our representations of the past, the memory makers that selectively adopt and manipulate these traditions and the memory consumers who use, ignore, or transform such artifacts according to their interests'.⁵¹ Post-socialist consumption of socialist popular culture sets the scene on which the engagement of both main parts – memory producers and memory consumers – gets illuminated. An emphasis put on these two moments also suggests a dialogue with Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding circuit of cultural production.⁵² As this correspondence highlights, it comes as no surprise that the usual struggle between political economy and culturalism (among other things) shaped a post-socialist debate about mania for socialist entertainment. The political economy perspective focuses on the organisational motivations of 'memory producers' and is inclined towards an interpretation of a longing for the signs of the socialist past as a media-superimposed fashion. The Frankfurt School dictum is inevitably present with its emphasis on a commodification of the past and its sell-out in the interest of the market. In vulgar captivations, post-socialist nostalgia can be read as a mere audience-raising tactic, while as a more sophisticated concept it can be interpreted as a neo-capitalist logic translated into representations of the socialist past. „...[P]ost-modern textuality of *Sztos* and playfulness of *Segment '76*, deplored by the critics of 'nostalgia' were actually the harbingers of an emerging economic order where signs, commodity fetishism, the commercialization of culture, and advertising played key roles, and which manifested itself in the replacement of politics by economics.“⁵³

However simple or ingenious capitalist mechanisms are, this perspective concentrates on how memories of the past are turned into the capital that facilitates operations of the

⁵⁰ Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,' *History and Theory*, 2002, 41, 2, 179–97

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 180

⁵² Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding in Television Discourse,' in Douglas Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, eds, *Media and Cultural Studies*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2001, pp. 166-76.

⁵³ Kacper Poblocki, 'Economics of Nostalgia,' in Apor and Sarkisova, *Past for the Eyes*, p. 188.

present – such as fetishisation, reification or recuperation. The political economy-inspired vantage point explains the increased use of reruns as a pragmatic business decision, one made by television companies conscious of the market place and their position within it. The culturalist perspective on the other hand emphasises appropriations carried out by the ‘memory consumers’, and operates on the assumption that the collective memory formation is a non-linear process in which multiple agents utter complex articulations. More everyday-based, identity-related and less calculable profits and pleasures emerge as the issue. The political transition that took place in 1989 is a prime example of how seismic historical events intervene into everyday *longue durée* life, the dimension of which is stressed, for example, by Roger Silverstone in the context of television.⁵⁴ These kinds of interventions threaten the possibility of continuity and integrity of everyday life, the enduring part of the *longue durée*. Compensation may be sought for in ‘old’ television programmes. For, it is – as has been recognised by media memory studies – an efficient means for mediating between past and present, which can, in turn, be rearticulated as a space for negotiating present meanings of the past(s).⁵⁵ From this perspective ‘retrospective’ television and its ‘retrospectators’ – in the survey represented by those who watched the serials both ‘before’ and ‘after’ – represent a therapeutic attempt to reclaim the past and resuscitate that particular indispensable layer of a dispensable system.

With two sets of data suggesting that nostalgic practices are embedded in both the running and watching of socialist drama serial reruns, there are no grounds to privilege one of the perspectives sketched above. The evidence in fact demonstrates that encoding and decoding post-socialist nostalgia is a symbiotic terrain. Any strong disproportion between viewers’ and television’s activity was not found; reconciliation with a socialist past seems to have active media *and* active audiences.

6. When ‘Post’ prefixes cumulate: being postmodern in post-socialism ...

In 1688, Swiss doctor Johannes Hoffer diagnosed nostalgia⁵⁶ as a homesickness, a yearning for a place.⁵⁷ In modern times, the term has lost its exclusive spatial conceptualisation and is

⁵⁴ Roger Silverstone, *Television and Everyday Life*, Routledge, 1994, p.133.

⁵⁵ Barbie Zelizer, Reading the Past against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies,’ *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 12, 2, 1995, 214– 39.

⁵⁶ ‘Nostos’ means ‘home’ in Greek.

⁵⁷ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, Basic Books, 2001, p. 3.

redefined as a longing for times that will never return. Svetlana Boym quotes Walter Benjamin when explaining how progress triggers nostalgia: 'It is the first genuinely historical concept which reduced the temporal difference between experience and expectation to a single concept.'⁵⁸ Using this modernist idea of progress, time is (re)born as a project and a promise; while nostalgia is the other side. It is the price paid for conceiving time as an unreeling thread of improvement and the switching of expectations into experience. From this perspective, nostalgia is not necessarily associated with 19th century industrial modernisation, but refers to an emancipatory venture as such. It would be difficult to disprove that the collapse of communism and the subsequent period of transformation precipitated emancipation based on changing the obsolete and dysfunctional into something new and effective. Quoting Claus Offe, the collapse of communist regimes was 'an unprecedented, special case of rapid social change'.⁵⁹ The frequent saying that 'time has stopped for forty years' in former socialist countries also contains a reference to the assumption that time was set in forward motion again. Nostalgia in this context is not only associated with the 'grand' emancipatory project of modernity, but also with multiple, smaller changes, transformations or breaks which affect the concept of time – with people experiencing past, present or future as discrete from one another. Nostalgia goes hand in hand with discontinuity as such, not merely with the orthodox 'gap' between the traditional old world and the new modern one.

Simultaneously, nostalgia is enabled by the condition that humans cannot turn back time, that 'the Edenic' past will not return. The intensity of longing and the impossibility of gaining the object of desire are two sides of the same coin. Contrary to some normative voices in Czech society (usually coming from an anti-communist movement or from former dissidents), it is argued that post-socialist nostalgia – which currently circulates among the Czech population – is anything but a simplified desire to restore the 'old' totalitarian political order. 'Nostalgia is less about the past than about the present'; it is a strategy that enables us to take a closer look at the character of post-socialism as a social formation.⁶⁰ The fascination with genres and products from the socialist era is complex – and paradoxical.

⁵⁸ Walter Benjamin, quoted *ibid*, p. 10.

⁵⁹ Claus Offe, quoted in Karol Jakubowicz, 'Social and Media Change in Central and Eastern Europe,' *Javnost [The Public]*, 8, 4, 2001, 59–80.

⁶⁰ Linda Hutcheon, 'Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern,' in Raymond Vervliet and Annemarie Estor, eds, *Methods for the Study of Literature and Culture Memory*, Rodopi, 2000, p. 195.

Apart from a passion for old TV serials (and related DVD launches), it includes, for instance, the abiding presence of socialist pop-music stars, the release of 'bitter-sweet' film comedies set during the socialist regime⁶¹ and the revival of cultural objects from the socialist past, such as DIY home-art, fashion or design artefacts. All, however, bear the grin of irony, of sarcasm and cynicism combined with emotion.⁶² The broader context of reception – and reruns of television serials detailed in this article are part of that context – indicates that audience affection for 'socialist kitsch' is always present. The ironic face of post-socialist nostalgia is clearly concerned with style, surface and fashion. In sum, it is the signifiers of socialism that are the main trophy within the current trend for nostalgia. Unlike the political economy, which would explain such irony as part of a commodity logic defined by amongst other a Debordian 'spectacle', this article recognises a hunger for 'scalps' of post-socialism as a complex problem, rooted in a multi-(sometimes controversial) faceted mentality of the post-socialist period.

Post-socialist nostalgia contributes to an understanding one of the most complex characteristics of the period – namely, that post-socialism as a social stage is critically overdetermined by the synergy between several 'post' prefixes operating simultaneously. It was not only socialist doctrine that broke down at the end of 1980s. Shockwaves caused by the collapse of 'grand narratives' resonated across Western societies around the same time.⁶³ Thus post-socialist emancipation ironically enough embraced disillusionment with the very idea of emancipation. The former Soviet satellites got out from under the tutelage of totalitarianism in time to fuse post-socialism with postmodernity into an articulation which is impossible to disassemble into discrete elements with any ease. Nostalgic attachment to reruns of socialist television serials must therefore be understood from both perspectives. It is important to separate the post-socialist dimension, which is responsible for nostalgic social content, from the postmodern aspect, explaining the irony-based, commodification-open and bitterly cynical form.

⁶¹ Petra Dominková, 'We Have Democracy, Don't We?' in Apor and Sarkisova, eds, *Past for the Eyes*, pp. 215-43.

⁶² Maya Nadkarni argues that nostalgic post-socialist acts are not necessarily ironic. She focuses on the bizarre Hungarian fandom for the amateur, clumsy, naive singer and composer Benedek Uhrin, and presents it as an expression of 'campy', sincere, innocent admiration for the authenticity of a loser – authenticity being in her opinion a scarce commodity in post-socialist societies. Nadkarni, 'The Master's Voice: Authenticity, Nostalgia, and the Refusal of Irony in Postsocialist Hungary,' p. 618.

⁶³ Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Acknowledgement

The article is an output of a long-term project devoted to the study of television popular culture and Czechoslovak serials and series, 1959-2009, at Charles University of Prague, Centre for Media Studies (CEMES). As such it is a part of the research project, entitled 'Development of Czech Society in the European Union: Challenges and Risks (2005-2010)'. MSM0021620841.

Czech Ugly Katka: Global homogenization and local invention

Bibliografický záznam publikované stati¹:

Carpentier Reifová, I. and Sloboda, Z. (2013) Czech Ugly Katka: Global homogenization and local invention. In K. Akass and J. McCabe, eds. *TV's Betty Goes Global: From Telenovela to International Brand*, pp. 189-205. London: I.B. Tauris.²

¹ Titulní strana publikované stati viz Příloha 4

² Irena Reifová-autorský podíl: 98 %

Czech Ugly Katka: Global homogenization and local invention

Irena Carpentier Reifová, Zdeněk Sloboda

The original Columbian *Yo soy Betty, la fea* was adapted into a 73-episode serialization called *Ošklivka Katka (Ugly Katka)* in the Czech Republic. Eastern European region has been going through a process of transformation from an authoritarian regime to a liberal economy, since the late 1980s, and the post-socialist condition seems to be an influential discourse that affects how meanings are presently generated and fixed (Jakubowicz, Sukosd 2008). Implementation of the Columbian format combines social realistic leitmotif with fairy-tale and dramedy elements. As such it provides the opportunity to negotiate sensitive meanings concerning capitalism in post-socialist world. The story works with polarization and social differences and thus points to the dark side of the system which neoliberal hegemonies in Eastern Europe present as the only viable and desirable social project. The basic assumption is that while Katka may come from a domestic world that appears ugly but where the people act beautifully, her work environment looks beautiful but is populated with people acting in an ugly way. The challenging intersections of some of the most effective 'engines' of this format,¹ as well as the issues related to a post-socialist agenda are motivations for a focus on oppositions like work/unemployment; social inequality/mobility; small private business/large corporations. And Katka moves and mediates between these different worlds.

Drawing on the fact that 'ugliness' is conspicuously and frequently articulated in relation to the socialist past, our main question relates to how the meanings of 'ugly' and 'beautiful' are made visible within the narrative and how these meanings are linked to the broader post-socialist context of its reception. This framing is reinforced in an interview with the script editor of *Ošklivka Katka*, Valeria Schulczová:

¹ Morane and Keane (2008: 156) use the term 'engine' to refer to: 'innovations that have added value to television's bottom line at a time when conventional 'finished production' genres are losing audience support because of strong competition from personalized media technologies'. In our opinion the term can be applied to any licensed content production technology. In case of the format of *Ugly Betty* (as traded by RCN Television S.A.) the 'engines' may be e.g. the social positions of the main characters (lower class vs. high society) or the predominant environment (the fashion industry).

In the original story the rich people act differently and fit into different social structure. The Czech Republic is more egalitarian, it has strong middle class and a gap between the two ends of a social continuum is not so vast. The scissors of a social inequality had to be closed a little bit for the Czech version.²

To this end, our study explores the main narrative elements at work in indigenizing the story and domesticating cultural meaning. In drawing on the concept of ‘cultural proximity’, as emphasized by Joseph Straubhaar (2007: 197), it seeks to specify particular adjustments to the format with regard to the cultural and socio-historical context of contemporary Czech society.

***Ošklivka Katka*: the production**

The licence to produce and distribute an adaptation of *Yo soy Betty, la fea* was acquired by the Czech private broadcaster, Prima TV, from RCN Television S.A.³ Prima TV broadcast the Czech adaption, *Ošklivka Katka* between March 2008 and April 2009, in 73 episodes. It was aired two episodes at a time, each lasting 50 minutes, per week, in prime time at 8pm. In June 2008 broadcasting was interrupted because of a football championship and in July and August Prima TV re-ran some old episodes. The scheduling pattern of two new episodes per week was resumed at the end of August 2008, and in October 2008 TV Prima rescheduled *Ošklivka Katka* to be shown in prime time on Mondays only. The ratings for the opening episodes were some 900,000 viewers, but this was not sustained (dropping to approximately 550,000 viewers). As a result, Prima TV abandoned further production and cut the number of episodes from 200 to 73.

The story plays in two main environments: the poor Bertold family, living in a lower class neighborhood in Prague, and the wealthy, propertied Medunas, who are in the fashion industry. The Czech heroine, Katka Bertoldová (Kateřina Janečková), has a father Bertold (Václav Vydra) who used to work in a factory but when the story opens is unemployed. The mother Bertold (Jana Boušková) runs small, shabby grocery shop which is under their old-fashioned flat. Despite an excellent degree in economy, the desperately ugly, and

² Interview with the script editor Valeria Schulczova on 25 June 2009. Transcription of the interview – archive ir.

³ Prima TV is a generalist channel which was launched in the Czech Republic in 1993. The licence is held by the broadcasting company, FTV Prima Ltd., owned by the Swedish media group, Modern Times Group MTG AB (<http://mavise.obs.coe.int/channel?id=44#section-2> accessed 9 July 2009). Prima TV average rating in prime time in 2008 was 17,4 % (<http://www.ato.cz/> accessed 9 July 2009).

unattractive Katka loses her job in a bank because her superiors cannot compete with her intelligence. By a coincidence, she gets a job as a secretary in a fashion clothing company KM styl as an assistant to the handsome, young, director, Tomáš Meduna (Lukáš Hejlík). Tomáš is newly appointed and was elected by the board of KM styl with the support of his chic girlfriend, Marcela (Michaela Horká). The promotion makes him an enemy of his old rival, Daniel Konečný (Petr Štěpán), who also wanted this position. Old Meduna (Tomáš's father and founder of the company) (Ladislav Frej) passes the baton to the next generation and retires. Katka has to overcome many obstacles in the cruel world of glamour, mainly the second secretary Patricia (Olga Lounová), and a leading fashion designer Hugo (Lumír Olšovský), who constantly put her down for her looks and her ridiculous outfits. Despite these misfortunes, Katka slowly comes to be recognized as an indispensable, economics expert and "guardian angel" for Tomáš, whom she secretly loves, although he acts as a womanizer and a metrosexual dandy. Tomáš as a KM styl director mismanages the company and induces Katka to found a fictitious firm to cover his losses. Out of her hidden love, she agrees to do so. However he also starts to worry that the new company is getting too strong and Katka will take over his position. As prevention from this happening he pretends falling in love with her and starts an affair with her, clumsy and meaningless, because she only wants to protect him. Katka realizes fake nature of his emotions and feels humiliated. Meantime the father of Tomáš, old Meduna, finds out about her genuine intentions to help KM styl, establishes Katka the financial director and the fashion mentor appears who changes her personal outlook over night. Katka goes for her inauguration as newly born beautiful swan, Tomáš suddenly falls in love with her, now for real, and the couple gets together.

Ošklivka Katka as an element of the "glocalization debate"

Our inquiry into specific post-socialist 'vernacularization' of the format is an extrapolation of a more general dilemma about a relationship between local invention and global homogenization of media products travelling in globalized flow(s).⁴ It is widely recognized that globalization can endorse contradictory tendencies and produce diversity as often as homogeneity. Roland Robertson, with his treatise on "glocalization", was among the first to popularize this point (Featherstone, Lash, Robertson, 1995: 25-44). David Morley and Kevin

⁴ Format, according to Moran (2005: 296), is the „set of invariable elements in a programme out of which the variable elements of an individual episode are produced“.

Robins (1995: 17) see the ambiguity of globalization directly in television programming: “As an antidote to the internationalization of programming, and as compensation for standardization and loss of identity that is associated with global networks, we have seen a resurgent interest in regionalisation in Europe”. Silvio Waisbrod (2004: 367) refers to the “Janus-faced” television industry, and some simply think that formats have the potential to support nationalization of programmes that would not be feasible in the canned shows business (Beeden, de Bruin 2009: 3).

International communication exchange has not always been understood as a process that includes adjustment to local cultures, however. Early perspectives of the so called cultural imperialism as represented, for example, by Herbert Schiller (1971) or Armand Mattelart (1984), assume that the more powerful North and West regions imposed their values and cultural patterns on weaker nation-based cultures in the South and East. This is supposed to be happening through one-way flow of mass communication with a language-independent television image as its leading force (Tomlinson 2002).

However, the early cultural imperialism thesis was scrutinized and underwent revision in the 1980s and 1990s. Strong Latin American and Indian television and film productions motivated scholars to propose the concept of “contra-flow” (or reversed flow), which describes how mainly Brazilian and Mexican telenovelas were disseminated in the US and some European countries (Bilteyest, Meers 2000: 394).

Another challenge to cultural imperialism emerged when Eastern European television markets opened up for global circulation of international television shows. The new post-socialist markets became an opportunity to search for a new wave of inflictions of foreign tastes and imperialist values – which was not continued. For example, in Czech Republic no systematic bias towards a massive surrender of local cultural preferences has been found (Štětka 2007: 168). (Although in contrast to the factual research, albeit rather scarce, the intellectual elite take the Americanization of television programming for granted.) The operations of Eastern European television markets also help to make oversimplifications in discourses on cultural imperialism visible. If Columbian television sells a programme format to Czech television, is this a flow or a contra-flow? Which element is dominant and which is on the dependent periphery in this transaction? What matters more in the television formats business – the fact that formats promote certain global sameness and homogeneity, or the fact that they allow for considerable regional distinctiveness? In further analyses of

highly glocalized post-socialist motifs in *Ošklivka Katka* we want to show that formats really do provide space for indigenous modifications.

Global and local chains of equivalence in *Ošklivka Katka*

Serials and series have been a mainstay of Czech (formerly Czechoslovak) television production since the end of the 1950s (Reifová 2009). However, socialist and post-socialist programmes differ significantly e.g. in the ways that work and wealth are articulated or disarticulated. Unlike in the old propagandist serials produced by communist television, “in the new ‘capitalist’ serials physical manual work is remarkably absent. ... Otherwise invisible work is made present only through its effects: wealth and social status” (Reifová 2008: 303). Negotiation of the meanings associated with gaining property, new class differences and social inequality – in a sense a kind of economic determinism – is an important paradigm in *Ošklivka Katka*.

The main organizing principle of the *Ošklivka Katka* narrative is movement between conflicting oppositions. One of the basic engines of this particular global format is the conflict between two different worlds. It contrasts the world of interior goodness and outward ugliness (Bertold family) with the outward beauty but interior lack of morality (Meduna family). In the Czech adaptation this fundamental division is further continued by specific post-socialist elements standing for economical transformation and nation’s contemporary history.

Effective tools which help to see how the counter-position of the two worlds is constructed can be searched for within the discourse theory. It is mainly the notion of ‘chain of equivalence’ as introduced by Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle Mouffe (1985: 127–9) that is of particular relevance here. The chain of equivalence is a discursive practise “through which some possibilities of identifications are put forward as relevant while others are ignored”. (Jorgensen, Phillips 2002: 44). In other words, chain of equivalence articulates social elements which do not naturally belong to each other and could be also interconnected differently. In case of the narrative of *Ošklivka Katka*, it reveals the principal mechanism by which the global pattern is supplied with local meanings – it happens by linking new (local, post-socialist) elements to already existing global chains and making them new coherent wholes.

In the starting global version, there is the core chain of equivalence in operation. Unprivileged world of inner beauty and outer ugliness is systematically articulated with poverty. The privileged world is articulated with wealth. This can be defined as the universal, global chain of equivalence in which identifications of ugliness/good character/poverty and beauty/bad character/wealth are put forward.

Our main point is that that in the Czech version there is also the second level of equivalence that is added in the process of local adaptation. This level adds another systematically articulated element to the global chain – and it is presence/absence of the socialist past in visual and/or narrative dimension. The Czech adaptation takes up the global chain and continues it with one added local element in both of its branches. The global articulation of ugliness, good character and poverty is continued with the tight linkage to the socialist past whereas the coherent whole of beauty, bad character and wealth is complemented by strict dissociation from the socialist past. In the Czech local domestication of the story, the unprivileged world is not only poor, but its poverty is moreover amplified by many different links to the socialism, its heritage and iconicity of its life-style. The privileged world is not only wealthy but is also totally immersed in the new times of capitalism and strictly disconnected from the past.

	diagetie world		global equivalence	local equivalence
	<i>outside</i>	<i>inside</i>		
Bertold family	ugly	pretty	poor	associated with socialist past
Meduna family	pretty	ugly	wealthy	dissociated from socialist past

Double history: “We had special tools in the 1970s factory ...”

The capitalist world and the lower class environment have different temporal characteristics; created by specific history. The rich people connected to the Medunas do not have a past beyond 1989, no tradition back to the “old times” of the socialist regime. In episode 7 old Meduna refers to the foundation of the company 18 years earlier (early 1990s) as the

farthest point in time – no reference is made to how the rich characters in the serial lived or what they did before this time. In case of the poor Bertold family, there are numerous links to the days of socialist everyday life. The conception of “ugliness” in Katka’s appearance is based on numerous references to ladies’ fashions in the badly supplied socialist market times. To see how Katka’s styling draws upon 1980’s appearances we can compare her to the female character Anna from a 1988 realist television serial *Boys and Men*.



Anna in *Boys and Men* (1988)



Katka in *Ošklivka Katka* (2008)

Katka’s hair and eyebrows are shaggy, a slight moustache can be detected on her upper lip; she wears big, old fashioned glasses, braces on her teeth, and sports no make up. The clothes also represent meaning. Katka is generally more warmly (sensibly) dressed than the other female characters, and usually wears low heels, thick tights, and thick below knee length skirts or ill fitting dresses. From episode 38 on Katka has new glasses, even bigger and uglier than the old ones, but she wears them because they were a gift from her father.

It is father Bertold – the naïve, unemployed do-gooder – who is the strong link to the past for the Bertold family. He lost his job in a factory where he had worked for decades and for which he still feels nostalgia. (He refers to the factory and how he worked there in 70s in episode 3.) He drives a rusting old Skoda 120 (nowadays seen as an artefact epitomizing Czechoslovak socialism) and finds it difficult to find his place in the harsh capitalist world.

The Bertold’s flat and lifestyle are permeated with reminders of the socialist past, such as the food and the clothes. The material signifiers of the past should not be understood as ahistorical props with purely esthetic function. Signs of life-style and objects of consumption have been turned into important points of historical reference within process of resurrecting memory in post-socialist context. This material form of post-socialist nostalgia is frequently

referred to as reification or fetishization of the past (Reifová 2010: 64), although it can be interpreted as a cultural compensation for the dislocated memory. For example, in the first episode the Bertolds are seen having bread and marmalade for breakfast, and in episode 2 they enjoy a simple soup with Nataša (Liliana Malkina), an old, unkempt Ukraine woman.⁵ The equipment in their flat dates back to 1970s and 1980s as does the music to which the Bertolds listen. They live in Vystrkov, a fictional place located in the Prague neighbourhood of Žižkov.⁶ Vystrkov is an isolated, unsightly suburb, with houses with flaking paint, populated by lower class people, small business (wo)men, retirees, unemployed street accordionist and the young represented by nerds such as Katka's friend Miky (Vojtěch Štulc), or skateboarders and graffiti artists. The Bertold's life thus has clear connections to the objects or patterns of behaviour inherited from the modest, underdeveloped, socialist past. The value ladder of the Bertold family – unlike the one of the posh and snobby Medunas – was not affected by the principal of profit and economical growth. The achievements of the market economy, which have brought fortune to the Meduna family have hardly affected the living standards or immediate environment of Bertold family. According to Jeremy Butler (2007: 139), the set design has a narrative function of its own, and serves as objective correlatives or symbols. Albeit the mother Bertold is also trying to run her small businesses (shabby grocery store which is later turned into an internet café) they are not focused on an accumulation of the capital. The Bertold family puts more emphasis on sustainability than progress and on community benefits than individual merits. All these qualities presented in a package with the retro elements of their living and clothing style link the Bertold family to the socialist past much more than to competitive capitalist presence.

The world of the capitalist Meduna family has no bond with the “primitive” socialist past. The family live a flamboyant lifestyle, as if the past had not existed; old objects, and memories of bygone times are absent in their world. Visual ugliness in the serial is strongly articulated with poverty – we rarely encounter visual ugliness in the capitalist, rich world. The fashion designer, Hugo, finds the seedy ugly outfits worn of Katka (episode 1) and later Nataša (episode 28) make him feel physically ill. Ugliness of the poor people who surround Bertold family and populate their world is often emphasized by their physical malformation or significant absence. Ukraine (direct reference to the former USSR) old woman Nataša

⁵ Realistic reproduction of culinary habits is also confirmed e.g. by Castelló, Dobson, O'Donnell (2009: 467).

⁶ The literal meaning of “Vystrkov” in Czech is something like “in the middle of nowhere”.

does not have some of her front teeth; one of the homeless characters who come to socialize in the shop is blind. Tomáš's girlfriend, Marcela, shows unerring social intuition when she recognizes Katka as an alien, somebody, who "belongs to another category and you cannot drag her in among us" (episode 17, time 11:08).

The worlds of richness/beauty and poverty/ugliness have two quite separate and different histories of different durations. "Beautiful" people live in a world defined by a new and clear-cut beginning in the early 1990s; "ugliness" often draws its meaning from the continuity with the socialist period. Katka's transgression between the worlds of poor ugliness and affluent beauty is underlined by the shift in her manners and general knowledge. In episode 6 she is seen struggling (unsuccessfully) to eat sushi in a fancy restaurant; in episode 61 she has become a gourmet, and invites her parents to eat sushi in the same restaurant (where her father wants to complain about having been served raw fish!).

Double capitalism: drudgery and the shiny world

The beautiful/wealthy world is essentially rooted in the capitalist business environment of the fashion clothing company and glamour life-style which it brings. Although the way that the entrepreneurialism of KM styl is presented differentiates two generations of capitalism: the company's founding fathers (old Meduna and old Konečný) and the "greenhorns" Tomáš Meduna and Daniel Konečný. The story suggests that fair and useful capitalism is possible, but that it vanished with the "founding fathers" generation. (Old Konečný had died in car crash and old Meduna was about to retire.) The old generation is depicted as being honoured entrepreneurs who pursued genuine values and were interested in the business substance, while the next generation of capitalists (Tomáš and Daniel) cares only about superficial glitz, luxurious façade and impressive life-styles. In episode 1 Tomáš enthusiastically points his father to the new designer desk he got as a replacement for the old piece used by father Meduna which shows that Tomáš cares more about the image than the core of the fashion business. In contrast to the old generation, which almost represents capitalist mentality based on protestant ethics and ascetic life, the young generation does not esteem the essence of the job, and requires visible signs and signifiers of status. Power seems to be a very important issue. Tomáš and his rival Daniel do not stop fighting over the position of the company's president. In episode 7 old Meduna scolds them for attacking each

other and contrasts their priorities with values that used to be held by the old generation of company's managers – he reminds them that he and his best friend Konečný (Daniel's father) used to fight over who would *not* be president.

The two layers of capitalism in the story refer to the turn from utopian to dystopian socio-economic imagination in the Czech post-socialist developmental discourse. Economical transformation started as a dream about performance-based justice of the capitalist economy that brings welfare and deserved fruits only to those who work hard. Overcoming artificial equalization of living standards which was an aftermath of the socialist project was an important value immediately after 1989 – e.g. all prime-time television serials produced by the public television in 1990s dealt with privatization process and therefore with gaining wealth and additional properties (the castle, the farm, the hotel, the hospital, the florist studio, etc.) (Reifová 2008: 303). The capitalist renewal was first grasped as a renaissance of the real, authentic work that brings people closer to the economical principal. Only later post-socialist society started to realize how important image industry, symbolic capital, logo principle and the simulacra of the capitalist spectacle are. The shift from the old generation of hard working manufacturers (old Meduna and old Konečný) to the generation of their hedonist sons (Tomáš and Daniel) refers to this shift from authenticity to superficiality, from the fantasies dominated by production to the prevalence of consumption.

What is even more important is that this capitalist schism is not framed as an irreversible dislocation. The gap between generation of authenticity and generation of image-making closes in the end and the unifying, reconciling agent is – as usually in the story – Katka. Throughout the story she is a symbol of hard work, enormous diligence and austerity...This makes her a kindred spirit to the old father Meduna and together they open Tomáš's eyes so that he can see where the real value is.

The two forms of capitalism presented with a strong sense of managerial and business details and the bridge that makes a return to the healthy grass-roots of the system – it all refers to the post-socialist fantasy which sees new economic order as the final and effective solution that can not be alternated.

The polarized environments of the rich Medunas and the poor Bertolds differ radically in terms of how work and the fruits of "labour" are represented. The poor are always shown as doing "hard" jobs that require great physical effort, and are not rewarded well. Jobs of the rich people working in KM styl are often not visible; characters refer to their huge work load

in dialogue before (or after) a job has been completed, but the actual “work” is rarely depicted. In the capitalist world, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish work from leisure activities and their borders are somewhat porous. The work of KM styl managers blends with entertainment or even flirting, as in episode 8 when Tomáš’s friend Marek (Michal Zelenka) and Patricia meet out of office hours to work on a business plan in Patricia’s, very modern and kinky apartment, but the consultation becomes a sexual adventure. That same night, Katka and Miky work on their business plan until dawn, working in Katka’s childhood bedroom with her mother supplying bread and glasses of milk to keep them going. In episode 13 Tomáš confuses work with a bowling competition, in episode 24 he uses his workplace for an erotic encounter with a model. The rich Medunas talk about their work and enjoy its outputs more than they are seen to practise it. Upper class work is mostly apparent through its indirect manifestations: profits (the Meduna’s London residence or weekend house, in episode 61), duration (Tomáš and Marek work long hours on their papers, with the help only of a lamp in episode 8), related stress (Katka almost collapses for alleged loss of data in episode 17), or responsibility (Tomáš and Marek use a dishonest supplier and almost drive the company into bankruptcy in episode 45).

Lower class labour is repeatedly constructed as activity involving very hard work and physical drudgery. Mother Bertold runs a small grocery store and we can see her heaving crates and boxes in episodes 2, 6, 10, 23, 25, 28 and 34. Sometimes she complains about being exhausted or tired as a result of her hard day’s work, e.g. in episode 1 she even refuses to eat the dinner for being too tired and in episode 6 she cries about doing all the drudge in the shop.

Specific demonstrations and definition of work are connected to Katka. Although she was appointed as secretary, she is a highly skilled business woman and has first class degrees in economy including a PhD. Some of the training she got in London is referred to. The world of soap opera is characterized by structural oppositions and differences (Gledhill 2003: 362), which is in accordance with the “golden rule” of structuralism with signs bearing meaning in relation to other signs (Danesi 2002: 39). The character of Katka and some of its meanings are created by the tension between her striking intelligence, hidden within an unattractive body. But Katka’s intelligence and cleverness have an exact specification – they are equated with capabilities in economic analysis and understanding of market operations. To underpin Katka’s economics expertise, the script writers often let her use specialist language and

jargon. In episode 1 she introduces herself at the job interview as a person who masters “financial databases systems”, “detailed analysis of investment projects” and studied “principles of stock exchange business”.

Katka’s economics skills are also highly valued by her parents. Her father is proud of her capacities and believes strongly that “she will go up” (episode 8). When Katka undergoes the magical “transformation” in the last episode, not only does she become the beautiful swan, she also gets a job as a financial executive officer in KM styl. Her parents receive the news with tears of joy as they chant: “we have daughter-director; we have daughter-director...”. Quite simply, in the Czech version the main character’s professional highlights are a talent for commercial transactions and the capability to enhance material estates or rise profits. It can be read as post-socialist enchantment with the market and uncritical worship of the skills that enable the operation of a neo-liberal economy.

Social inequality is expressed strongly through scenes of material equipment in the worlds of the rich and poor. Surfaces speak, and meanings of difference are embedded in easily observable signifiers of misery and luxury. As well as ugliness, poverty is constructed through references to objects dating back to the times before the establishment of the free market at the beginning of the 1990s. The Bertold family’s apartment is homely rather than elegant and is furnished and equipped with items that are clearly from another era. The epicentre of Bertold home is their kitchen, the room for family gatherings, where handmade tablecloths and some rather tasteless decorations are evident. The kitchen is the place that is not only cosy it is the place where various kinds of work take place (cooking, preparing things for the grocery store, working out the accounts, etc.). The heart of Tomáš and Marcela’s apartment is the smart living/bedroom. This space houses a double bed - sometimes covered with red satin bedclothes. Here, the emphasis is on pleasure and bourgeois vanity. The poor are set in a working kitchen; the rich are in a voluptuous bedroom.

Throughout the serial, images of class differences support an assumption that the worlds of the rich and the poor are incompatible. Tomáš’s parents look very different from Katka’s. They are always neat; father is nonchalant and elegant and always sports a pocket handkerchief and a silk scarf instead of a tie, mother is mostly seen wearing smart suits. The Medunas live in houses, that are nice, elegant, classical, and expensive. (Their London bedroom has a wooden framed bed and white sheets. Their weekend house is in a quiet street, with white fencing; their Prague flat has heavy curtains, gilt framed pictures, a French

window). KM styl's headquarter are in the business district, in a skyscraper building, and we are shown frequent shots of this high building taken from below. Katka's first line in the first scene of the serial underlines her feelings of inferiority towards the company installed in this authoritative building. "I knew the house was big – but I didn't know it was that big!" Hodge and Kress confirm that equilibrium (or its disruption) between subordinates and superordinates can be visually realized by (disruption of) symmetrical composition (Kress, Leeuwen 2006: 81).

An important part of the representations of social class differences is the awareness of inequalities, which seems to be present in the consciousness of only the poor people. The poor reflect on their problematic social position and are aware that their career paths differ from those of the rich; the rich take for granted their standard of living and pay little attention to any alternative. In episode 1, a local guy in Vystrkov is riding his skateboard and Katka tells him to be careful not to fall: "Here, in Vystrkov, we all fall down and then get on our feet again". In episode 13 Katka's parents acknowledge their lowly position expressing fears that Katka will find a wealthy boyfriend in KM styl. In episode 28 Katka's mother watches television broadcast of KM styl's fashion show and, overcome by emotion, almost weeps when she sees the shiny glamour of the evening.

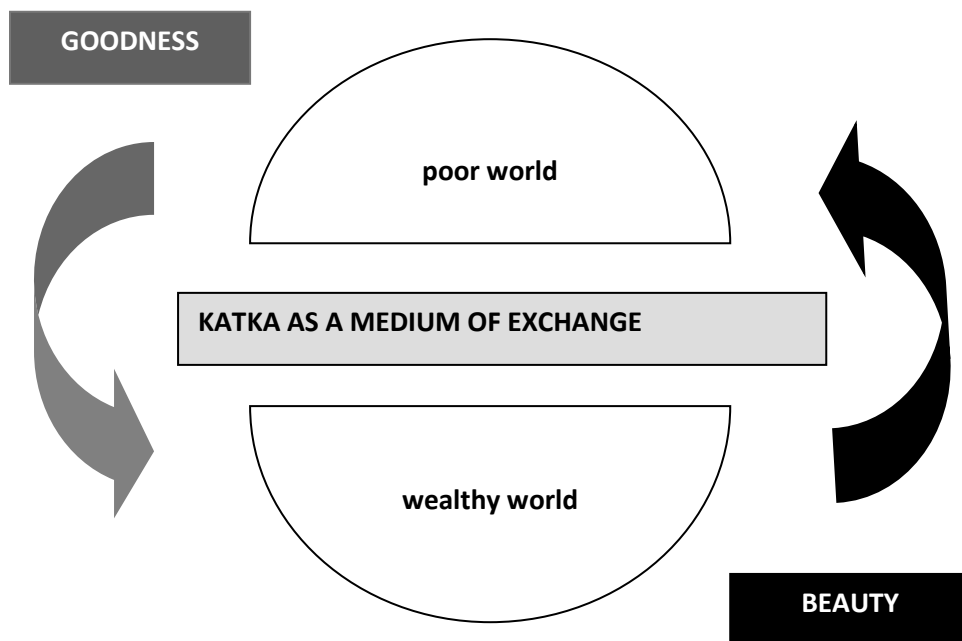
In some scenes where the characters play with images of their poor/rich identities and challenge them (are challenged by them), class difference is made to produce meaning by moments of transgression. In episode 28 Pěťa (Vojtěch Hádek) (messenger and driver, on the lowest level in a company hierarchy) takes up Hugo's directorial position in a fashion show choreography training with the models. The chief fashion designer, Hugo, is summoned by Tomáš and Pěťa crawls up the stage, then marches in self-confidently and parodies the patronizing, authoritative behavior of the company power-holders. Pěťa, the powerless, makes the transgression in playful style full of creative mockery of power, to which Michal Bachtin's (2007) conception of the carnivalesque or John Fiske's (1988) theories of excorporation and popular resistance could be applied. Tomáš is also presented in a situation when the image of his identity is challenged in episodes 42 and 43. Gay Hugo makes him wear a mask and go to a gay party dressed as Marilyn Monroe. On escaping from it, Tomáš ends up at Katka's place where he has to borrow some of father Bertold's outdated, worn out, baggy garments. However, Tomáš does not find any pleasure in this "travesty": he feels irritated and worries about his reputation and authority.

Summary: Katka as a heroine of a utopian capitalism

Among all peculiarities of the two different worlds sketched above there is one component that continuously travels between the two poles and connects them – and this is Katka herself. She is part of the ugly/good/poor world, but is the only character from this environment that also has an access to the beautiful/bad/rich world. She is a “medium” communicating between the two worlds, enabling comparisons and holding up a mirror for both worlds.

Katka is a typical popular hero who is on a quest; a journey that takes her from one place to another (van Zoonen 2005: 109). The concept of a change or makeover is ever present throughout the serial. Katka changes from the ugly duckling into the beautiful swan. The Bertold’s shabby grocery store changes into the renovated Internet café. The unemployed father changes into a freelance accountant. Tomáš changes from a cynical womanizer into a reformed sinner. Mervart (Josef Carda), the former accountant, changes from a fraud into a “nice guy” who knows that money cannot buy love.

It is not only Katka who is affected by the principle of change. It is omnipresent and works in both directions, both worlds must change. The rich/beautiful world cannot stay as it is on the inside and the ugly/poor world cannot remain as it is on the surface. Katka operates as a “medium” that enables a circulation; she helps each of the worlds to take the better from the opposite world. The ugly world becomes nicer (she gives up on her ugly duckling appearance) and the beautiful world becomes morally reformed (Tomáš takes a lesson and starts to see the real virtues instead of mere image-making). Post-socialist Czech adaptation eventually stages capitalism as a land of utopia which, if something goes wrong, allows for a return to the healthy, strong grass-roots.



And the utopian equilibrium itself is established by the means of capitalist mentality – the exchange of beauty and goodness between the poor and wealthy worlds follows the pattern of profitable transaction. The exchange is personified in and arranged for by Katka and therefore we define Czech “Ugly Katka” as a heroine of a utopian capitalism.

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Between politics and soap: On articulation of ideology and melodrama in Czechoslovak television serials

Bibliografický záznam publikované stati¹:

Carpentier Reifová, I., Bednařík, P. and Dominik, Š. (2013) Between politics and soap: On articulation of ideology and melodrama in Czechoslovak television serials, 1975-89. In P. Goddard, ed. *Popular Television in Authoritarian Europe*, pp. 91-106. Manchester: University of Manchester Press.²

¹ Titulní strana publikované stati viz Příloha 5

² Irena Reifová-autorský podíl: 70%

Between politics and soap: On articulation of ideology and melodrama in Czechoslovak communist television serials in 70s and 80s

Irena Reifová, Petr Bednařík, Šimon Dominik

During period of Czechoslovak normalisation 1968–1989¹, important centre of everyday life was located in a private living room. As David Morley claims, home territories are far from being innocent neutral gaps isolated from social and political processes (Morley, 2000). The family living room decorated with floral curtains, squeaking plush coverings and wavering bluish light from an obsolete television set vividly epitomizes social climate at that time – politically motivated withdrawal of the people from public sphere that was permeated with the communist newspeak and their retreat into the private “caverns”. It was in this environment that the Czechoslovak television serials of 70s and 80s – this chapter’s object of study – were watched in their premiere screenings and turned into a cult genre of the period.

Opening the chapter with these recollections can be easily accused of mere “nostalgia”; rather sensationalist demand for kitschy signifiers and easy-to-be-understood, reified symptoms of the communist past (Sarkisova, Apor 2007; Enns 2007; Boyer 2006). However, post-socialist nostalgia refers to a serious traumatic content although it is displaced by the trivial form. Socialist era was consigned to oblivion immediately after 1989 and the urge to integrate the past back into the present clearly does not meet any existing political project. It is exactly this ongoing post-socialist struggle over the future of the past that inspires us to ask questions about one of the most eloquent artefacts of the socialist past in 70s and 80s, the nature of the worshiped television serials. Our view of the television audiences in socialist Czechoslovakia is in line with Michel De Certeau’s concept of unavoidable everyday creativity that forces people to work with “what is available for supplies” (De Certeau, 1998: 183). Hence our main question about what was available in terms of textual structure and patterns of ideological meanings in television serials in totalitarian Czechoslovakia in 70s and 80s? We will frame the topic in top-down logic; start with the general remarks about status

¹ Normalisation is a name commonly given to the period 1969–1989. It was characterized by the restoration of the conditions prevailing before the liberation reform period led by Alexander Dubček (culminated in the *Prague Spring*) and the subsequent preservation of this “new” status quo.

and political conditions of television serial production and go to the specific example of one of the serials. Using a case study of the serial *Muž na radnici* [*Man at City Hall*, 1976] we will show how propagandist content was distributed along two storylines: ideological and melodramatic.

1. Cult of the national seriality

It can be argued that the domestic television serials have acquired a status of “cult television”. (Reifova, 2001: 170) The genre of television serials has always occupied a special position in both production strategies and audience viewing habits in the Czechoslovak television environment. The first television serial *Rodina Bláhova* [*Blaha Family*] was aired in 1959, only six years after television broadcasting had commenced. From its establishment to the political transformation in 1989, Czechoslovak Television aired 283 serials and series, the majority of which were broadcast within two decades after 1968. (See Table 1).

Table 1

Premiere screenings and reruns of television serial dramas 1959 – 1989		
Premieres	Reruns	total
151 (54 %)	132 (46 %)	283 (100%)
62092 min	61707 min	

Unlike international discourses on seriality, Czechoslovak television culture has never recognized the subtle genre and narrative specificities embodied in otherwise differentiated terminology.² Any item of television seriality – whether it was rooted in comedy, drama or detective story – has always been referred to as “seriál”. Television and film studies’ knowledge on seriality provides a wide variety of sub-genres, but English terms can not fully capture the specificity of Czechoslovak communist serial television (e.g. Creeber 2004: 8). In our opinion, singularity of “seriál” denomination in Czechoslovak discourse on seriality can

² Creeber provides one of the most complete typologies by differentiating single play, television film, soap opera, anthology series, serial and miniseries (Creeber, 2004: 8). However, sitcom (e.g. Langford, 2005: 15-23) and docusoap (e.g. Bignell, 2003: 198) are missing even here.

be understood as a symptom of a cult, because through this language practice the genre resists any inner fragmentation, pragmatic reflection or deconstruction. Application of previously suggested typologies of seriality is always a bit inaccurate in case of Czechoslovak serial dramas. When formal and content characteristics (such as episodic structure, length of episodes, number of episodes per one season, lack of division into seasons, themes, plots, characters or settings) combine, we get what we consider to be rather unique national variant of television seriality that is difficult to subsume under actually existing varieties of television seriality, and which can not be fully identified in other renowned television production cultures either, although in principal Czechoslovak “serials” belong to the broader genre category of television serial as such. Regarding this problem, the elusive nature of serial genre diversification has been noticed before (Oltean 1993, Koukoutsaki 2003). We propose, however, that one of the most quintessential marks of the Czechoslovak normalisation seriality follows from a peculiar fusion of ideological and melodramatic storylines. Therefore, we think that the majority of Czechoslovak normalisation “seriáls” can be situated between socio-political drama and soap opera.

2. Determining elements of ideological and melodramatic storylines

In Czechoslovakia, the exclusive political capital of communist *apparatchiks* was derived from the Constitution itself, more precisely from its fourth article implementing the so-called leading role of the communist party.³ Therefore, for the purpose of normalisation television serials analysis, we can assume that any unit (contributing to) legitimating the leading role of the communist party in the Czechoslovak society should be taken as an ideological element. Thus, elements of ideological storylines should be specified in terms of how party policy gets justified, glorified or merely repeated in the serials’ subject themes, characters and their qualities, plots and settings.

Very few communist television serials produced in 1968-1989 showed clearly manifested predominance of ideological storylines not accompanied by sub-narratives depicting

³ “Vedoucí silou ve společnosti i ve státě je předvoj dělnické třídy, Komunistická strana Československa, dobrovolný bojový svazek nejaktivnějších a nejuvědomělejších občanů z řad dělníků, rolníků a inteligence.” [“Communist party is a leading force in the society and the state; it is a working class vanguard, voluntary combat union of the most active citizens among workers, farmers and inteligentsja.”] (Ústava československé socialistické republiky, Zákon č. 100/1960 Sb., kapitola 1, článek 4). [Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Law No. 100/1960, chapter I, article 4]. URL: (consulted in November 2008) http://www.psp.cz/docs/texts/constitution_1960.html

turbulences in the character's personal lives.⁴ Though outlines of the serials' themes were politically approved (and repeatedly supervised in the course of filmmaking), screenwriters were not usually restricted from including "soap-like", romantic and psychological motifs – if these were previously authorized by the communist party administration. By situating Czechoslovak normalisation television serials between politics and soap we, of course, refer to soap-operas. We do so, although melodramatic lines of normalisation serials fit only some parts of soap opera's definitions, according to generic conventions and definitions of soap-operas (Hobson 2003).⁵ Almost no formal attributes of soap-operas can be applied to normalisation television serials, except that they attempted to provide realistic television text, and the episodes usually had open endings (although not so sharply open to subsume it under a "cliff-hanger" type). Associations of some layers of normalisation television serials with soap-operas are made solely with a reference to the serials' melodramatic layers of content (Ang 1985).

We understand melodramatic storylines as narrative parts concerning emotional management in male-female relationships. This decision is empirically grounded in the fact that one story-line in these serials was always constructed around main character and his or her opposite gender partner. (We can call them alpha-couples consisting of alpha-male and alpha-female characters.) This is, for instance, also the case in the serial which will be described later: city communist mayor Bavor and the female – or rather "female position" – by his side are the alpha-couple in *Muž na radnici* [*Man at City Hall*, 1976]. Hobson takes a larger family or small community setting for typical soap-opera settings; Liebes and Livingstone further elaborate the differentiation into dynastic, community and dyadic soap-operas (Hobson 2003: 53; Liebes, Livingstone 1998: 237). Relying on these delimitations, we suggest (and exemplify below) that both ideological and melodramatic elements were distributed rather evenly. Ideological storylines usually develop in a collective (most frequently workplace community) environment, while melodramatic lines are concentrated into stories of romantic dyads.

⁴ *Gottwald* (CST, 1986, director: Evžen Sokolovský, 5 episodes) – a period version of life-story of the first Czechoslovak president after the communist takeover in 1948, Klement Gottwald – may be an example of television serials with ideological story-line predominance.

⁵ Dorothy Hobson sees following soap-opera attributes: it is transmitted regularly and frequently (daily), it is aimed at female audience, it gets allotted day-time or early evening slots, it uses constant and large cast and continues for years, it has cheap production and low-prestige entertainment reputation, it is concerned with everyday lives of large families or small communities, it tries to mimic real time and realistic events, it includes several interweaving lines, its episodes have open endings (Hobson 2003: 53-4).

3. Political surveillance in Czechoslovak Television

Czechoslovak Television strongly supported the reformation policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC) during the so-called Prague Spring (January – August 1968); therefore it was one of the first institutions brought under strict ideological supervision after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968. The re-establishing, pro-Soviet power immediately started using media to push forward and legitimise its policy; “the broadcasting media were an important tool for the communist regimes, by controlling the news and media outlets they were able to disseminate their propaganda and restrict the flow of the ideas into the region“ (Wells 1997: 106).

As soon as in September 1968, censorship was legally reinstated, only three months after it was abolished. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CC-CPC) started to demand a pro-Soviet orientation from all the media. “The media system was purged off all reformists and was turned into a machine which spouted emotional, ideological propaganda whose intensity remained practically unchanged until the fall of communism in 1989“ (Kelly, McQuail, Mazzoleni 2004: 31).

In 1970, checks on members of the CPC took place in the Czechoslovak Television. Comparing to 1968, its CPC organization lost 56,1 % of its party members – mostly they were dismissed, some of them left the party out of their own will beforehand (Cysařová 1998: 45-46). Expulsion from the party consequently resulted in a dismissal for the respective person. Employees who were not members of the CPC were subjected to a check of their stands regarding the 1968 reformation policy, which caused another wave of firings.

In 1972, a new scheme of checks, introduced by the CC-CPC presidium, was adopted in Czechoslovak Television. The so-called complex personal assessment, which all employees, regardless of whether they were members of CPC or not, had to pass every two years, primarily evaluated political commitment and development of the respective worker (e. g. membership and position in a trade union or in the Union of Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship, participation in political trainings etc.). Professional qualification and work performance was only a secondary concern. In the same year, the CC-CPC presidium approved a list of 33 positions in the Czechoslovak Television management, the staffing of which was contingent to the approval of the CC-CPC secretariat – e.g. the director general and his deputies, directors of regional studios or editors-in-chief of individual editorial offices (Cysařová 1998:

53). The CPC immediately used its newly gained authority and appointed two employees of its Central Committee into the positions of deputies of the director general in an attempt to strengthen the ideological supervision of the broadcast.

In general, we can talk about an external (performed by the authorities of CPC) and internal (performed mainly by the executive staff) control of the production of Czechoslovak Television. For example, it was entirely commonplace that officials from the CC-CPC department for mass media participated in weekly briefings of editorial offices where they assessed broadcasted programmes (Reifová 2007: 391). An ambiguous relation between the internal and external ideological supervision of the Czechoslovak Television production is evidenced by memories of the widow of Jaroslav Dietl, a successful television serials screenwriter. Magdalena Dietlova commented on events, which occurred prior the filming the serial *Nemocnice na kraji města* [*Hospital on the Outskirts*] in 1977: “Milena Balášová, the deputy for programme in that time, went totally insane. She got scared and she wanted to put off the shooting. Suddenly, she had doubts whether the script is sufficiently loyal; if it is enough that the main character is a member of the party and whether there should perhaps be something more... Next day she calmed down and the shooting began. What was running through her head; by whom she was scared all of a sudden – I don't know. Somebody must have disturbed her.”⁶

Three main footholds of ideological pressure on television production during the years of normalisation can be distinguished – the institute of the so-called Ideological-thematic plan (ITP), the constant control of scripts and the process of approval projections. The ITP stated everything the Czechoslovak Television intended to shoot in the oncoming year and was considered strictly mandatory, since it was authorised by the ideological commission of the CC-CPC. The plan served as an overview of the ratio of ideology-free programmes on one hand and politically impacted titles on the other. Only a due representation of the latter programmes (e.g. films from the history of the communist and working-class movement, biographies of communist officials etc.) could enhance a chance of producing also a certain number of programmes without a direct relation to the party line.

The script control started in the respective editorial offices. Their management read and commented on every single submitted script and its author had to modify it until the head of the office approved it. Then followed subsequent control from the television management,

⁶ Interview with Magdalena Dietlová, 12th July 2006, archive of IR.

which had the authority to approve programmes into production (the management naturally did not deal with all scripts, but it always examined ideologically important, and financially demanding, programmes such as serials). Deleted part about the tricks that some writers played with the administration ...

The last step was the approval projections process. Freshly finished programmes were screened for members of the management and sometimes also for CC-CPC officials or even top rank politicians, and there was hardly a programme approved without the order of some subsequent editing work. However, even this stage was sometimes not the end, the constant control continued and some programmes were found unsuitable for further broadcasting even after their premiere, e.g. the five part serial *Byl jednou jeden dům* [*There Once Was a House*, 1975] set in the years of World War II. Its last episode had to be significantly modified after more than half a year after its first screening, because the party officials considered the way it depicted the liberation of Prague by the Red Army forces far from spectacular.

4. *Muž na radnici* [*Man at City Hall*]: normalisation serials as an ideological choral and melodramatic lyricism

Muž na radnici [*Man at City Hall*] (further referred to as MR) was one of the early series dramas from the 70's which can be used as an example to describe the narrative coordination of the melodramatic and ideological story-line. The script was written by Jaroslav Dietl who is considered to be the most outstanding screenwriter in the field of television seriality in the context of Czechoslovak Television history.⁷

4.1 Ideological line and political surveillance

Using basic methods of television historiography (Godfrey 2006), we can reconstruct some circumstances of the production and ideological supervision of the serials content. The serial

⁷ The personality of Jaroslav Dietl is so ambivalent that we can not address it here with appropriate details. Dietl participated in the anti-occupation broadcasting in 1968 and he was crossed out of the house CPC organization in CST, for example. At the same time, however, he started to accept offers for serial scripts in the beginning of the normalisation which were defined as a support of the normalizing regime, although it was clear that he would have to stick to interpretations supporting the party dominance in the society. He wrote 17 scripts of serials for CST and until his untimely death in 1985, he achieved the status with audiences as the most popular and hence prominent author of television dramas participating in the consolidation of the status-quo. For further reference see: Smetana, M. (2000). *Televizní seriál a jeho paradoxy* [Television serial and its paradoxes]. Praha: ISV, Cysařová, J. (1998). *Televize a totalitní moc 1969-1975*. [Television and totalitarian power]. Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny.

MR was created as a contribution of television to representative bodies elections in 1976, although the elections were not free.⁸ In so-called ITP (see chapter 3), it appeared as a five-part serial about a deputy and a chairman of a National Committee called simply *Poslanec* [Deputy]. The serial was supposed to show “everyday activity of deputies and officials in a smaller town, their work with people, as well as conflicts resulting from their concern for the town development. The serial is based on authentic experiences of several deputies from the Central Bohemia region, and it was intended for broadcasting during pre-elections.”⁹ It is not clear when the intended mini-series with only a few episodes was extended to an eleven-part regular serial, but even after this change, the title *Poslanec* was still used.¹⁰ Copies of the script issued in the first three months of 1976 already operated with the changed title *První muž na radnici* [First Man at City Hall] which was later shortened to the final *Muž na radnici* [Man at City Hall].

The intention to broadcast the serial within the pre-election campaign was reflected in a very rushed preparation for the shooting, as well as a rush during the shooting. Scripts were not provided all at the same time – Jaroslav Dietl was still finishing them step by step from January to March when actor rehearsals were simultaneously in motion, and the stage crew was doing inspections of exteriors and props (which continued during the filming itself as well).¹¹ Also, the music was not recorded after the editing of filmed material as usual - recording sessions were carried out before the shooting initiation and during its first days. The shooting was conducted at a quick pace during 68 days between 15th March and 20th June 1976, and producers managed to shorten the original plan by one month. Approval projections of the final editing occurred very soon such that CST managed to run the serial at the chosen date of the pre-election campaign in the beginning of September 1976. The rush in the finalization and the entire production of the serial is documented by a letter signed by the chief of the production stage crew, editor and director addressed to the CST general

⁸ Citizens could only elect candidates of the so-called National Front which incorporated approved political parties and social organizations. Non-participation in the elections was considered an expression of a negative relation of the respective citizen towards the socialist establishment, it resulted in persecutions in their employment and it was recorded in their personal files. Therefore, the voter turnout was always around 98-99%, and candidates got almost 100% of votes.

⁹ Ideově-tématický plán hlavních redakcí dramatického vysílání na léta 1976, 1977 – 1980 [Ideological-thematic plan of Drama Programs Main Editorial Offices], p. 45, APF ČT, Ve2 30.

¹⁰ See a requisition record for allocation of graphic artists for the eleven-part movie *Poslanec* from 18th November 1975, APF ČT, Red 281.

¹¹ Čapková, A.; Hornerová, D. [chiefs of the serial production]: Hodnocení – seriálu „Muž na radnici“ [Assessment of the serial *Muž na radnici*], undated, APF ČT, Red 281.

director deputy Milena Balášová in the end of May 1976: “We need expeditiously a maximal quantity of capacities for editing all eleven episodes so that we can do control and approval projections, and also so that we can get the true picture of the quality and political implications of the entire serial. (...) We would like to point out that (...) it is intended as one of the important pre-election campaigns for representative bodies for the very beginning of September.”¹²

In the archive of Czech Television, there was maintained one undated and unsigned page with a handwritten requirement of four edits in four episodes which probably comes from the time around approval projections, and which is perhaps related to topics discussed at them. Out of these instructions, three were implemented after all. Two of them are motivated rather artistically, but one of them has almost certainly a political background. According to the script, in the seventh episode, one character is supposed to present a reply: “Well, you know, such a construction requires enthusiasm and steam, here it is not enough to just be attending like in a factory.”¹³ The edits for the final episode removed the comparison to attendance in a factory, which probably insulted the favoured working class in the eye of approvers. The ideological story-line in the serial drama *MR* links factors associated with the work and political effort of the main character, which the story defines as a struggle for a change.

The narration represents a time period of 1971 – 1976. The main character is František Bavor, the chairman of the City National Committee in a fictitious city named Starý Kunštát. In the first year of the story, he is a National Committee deputy but he has no office position, and he works as a technician in a factory. Starý Kunštát is described as a place with a number of partially built structures from 60’s which the current city leaders are not able to finish. Therefore, party authorities require a change in the city administration. The serial emphasizes clearly that only the arrival of new people in 1971 sets the wheels in motion. The chairman Bavor begins to champion a concept of a radical reconstruction of the city. He wants to have the historical centre demolished and build panel buildings in place of it. An

¹² Letter to the deputy Milena Balášová from 21st May 1976, APF ČT, Red 281. „Potřebujeme urychleně maximální množství kapacit pro sestřih všech jedenácti dílů, abychom mohli udělat kontrolní a schvalovací projekce a vůbec, abychom si mohli udělat skutečný obraz o kvalitě a politickém dosahu celého seriálu. (...) Chceme upozornit, že (...) je určen jako jedna z důležitých předvolebních kampaní do zastupitelských orgánů na samotný začátek měsíce září.“

¹³ *MR*, script of the 7th episode, scene 2, page 6. “To víš, taková stavba to chce nadšení a páru. Tady to není jako jen tak chodit někam do fabriky.”

important feature of Bavor's character is his loyalty to his own persuasion even in situations which do not bring him popularity. Within Bavor's sphere of action, the story progresses by events in which the chairman pushes forward this intention. Bavor persuades the town citizens of the necessity to demolish the old buildings. His reasoning is that interests of the collective should be put above interests of individuals. Furthermore, the narration builds the basic story conflict (Bavor's struggle for the demolition of old buildings and their replacement by the panel housing development) on the basis of one of the most typical binary oppositions of the modern society, on the bluntly presented significant difference between the aged/old fashioned/oriented on the past, and the new/progressive/looking into future. Bavor proceeds in his reasoning from the opinion that every sensibly and logically thinking person should understand that when it is necessary to gain space for building several hundred flats, the owner of the old real estate should sell his house for a price determined by state authorities and move into a panel house.

In this point, the serial narration linked fiction with the reality. In the 70's, there was a considerable growth of housing construction in Czechoslovakia – 1 263 000 flats were given for utilization (Kalinová 2006: 21). The construction was carried out predominantly in the form of panel housing blocks – in the Czechoslovak conditions of that time, panel flats represented a higher standard of living with warm water and central heating. In unified housing developments, it was possible to accommodate a large number of people within a relatively short time which the party line considered to be a part of a strategic plan of changing the civil discontentment for basic life security. In principle, it was an equivalent e.g. of the Hungarian "goulash" socialism (Varga 2008: 81). CPC needed to offer an acceptable accommodation to young families because the number of babies born increased in the first half of 70's.¹⁴ The communist regime knew that without large housing construction, the discontentment among young people might increase, so it promoted the construction even at the cost of demolishing traditional developments, and the elimination of the original appearance of towns.

In the analysed serial drama, ideological content (defined by a general support of the communist party leading role) is mixed with a goal-directed agitation (perceived as turning

¹⁴ That happened partly in connection with pro-population measures (convenient marriage loans, longer maternity leave) - and besides that, family was a form of realization for many people because they rather resigned or had to resign from their carrier or participation in the public sphere.

the audience for a particular idea). Through words and actions of the main character František Bavor, the serial *MR* explicitly agitated in favour of the process which was taking place in the fictitious story as well as in the real-existing socialism at the same time. As Koukoutsaki distinguishes i.a. a “social drama” within her innovated typology of serial television sub-genres, the case of Czechoslovak normalisation series would be a “social-political” drama (Koukoutsaki 2003: 720). Social issues are always presented in relation to the political line which guarantees their suitable solution.

4.2 Convergence/divergence between ideological and melodramatic lines

Apart from the ideological line (work, political, public), a melodramatic line (personal, poetic, private) also appears in *MR*, as in other normalisation serial dramas. The screenwriter lets the protagonist go through many personal problems which are centered around the main heterosexual couple, in this case around Bavor as an alpha-male character and a female, respectively “female position”, next to him. It is noteworthy that while “the alpha-male” is the constant main hero, the “alpha-female position” gets occupied by three different women as the narration develops. His wife/ archetypal love Ludmila dies in the end of the first episode in a road accident. Bavor replaces her with rather superficial dressmaker Jitka whom he leaves after they have a disagreement and he discovers her infidelity. Slowly he falls in love with the third woman who is taking up the alpha-female position, one of the city inhabitants-in-need, lyric and sensitive Kateřina. Within secondary lines, linked with characters of the main melodramatic line, Bavor’s children are significant. Bavor’s daughter Bohunka lacks experience (and obviously a mother’s advice as well) and she falls in love with a local dandy Vít. But Vít feels stronger about his career as a car racer and Bohunka becomes a single mother. However, her father’s helper and the main architect of demolition Mikuláš later acquires her confidence and she enters into a relationship with him in the end. Bavor’s son Přemek wants to take advantage of his father’s high position at school, but Bavor rejects all attempts for his son to receive favouritism.

Ideological and melodramatic lines do not slide over each other. They are not simply parallel – on the contrary, they intersect each other, push each other forward but mainly they are consequent of each other. In causal relations between events, these of the ideological line have priority in the role of a cause. Movements in the melodramatic line are often only a consequence of the more effective ideological line or they illustrate general value

declarations of the ideological line in a form of particular example. The relation of a cause and a consequence between the ideological and melodramatic lines can be transparently expressed by a table that shows how ideological causes and melodramatic consequences are organized in particular episodes. (See Table 2).

Table 2

Episode	Ideological line	Melodramatic line
	causes →	consequences
1 Havárie [Accident]	It is the year 1971. Bavor works in a factory and he is a deputy of City National Committee. Citizens complain that the city has become dilapidated.	Bavor's wife Ludmila dies in a road accident when she drives into a pipe from dilapidated scaffolding of a non-reconstructed house.
2 Rozhořčení [Embitterment]	At a civil committee meeting, Bavor criticises leaders of the City National Committee.	Bavor's colleague Vlasta (also a deputy of City National Committee) admires his resolve and she is platonically in love with him.
3 Byt [Place to stay]	Bavor takes up the office of the City National Committee chairman. He organizes an enquiry among citizens which shows their scepticism regarding any changes.	For the first time, Bavor as the City National Committee chairman is visited by Kateřina who was ejected from her flat by her husband. She attracts Bavor through her gentleness and sensitivity.
6 Vzbouření [Rebellion]	Bavor champions the city reconstruction, gets into a dispute with the city council as well as with owners of properties which are supposed to be demolished within the	Bavor's second wife Jitka (marriage in the beginning of the 4th episode) accepts an offer for a chief position in a tailor's shop in a regional city. At this moment, Bavor is not

	<p>reconstruction. Bavor's reputation in the city goes through a crisis.</p>	<p>popular and he is afraid that the situation will get worse and that he will be suspected of favouritism.</p> <p>Bavor's loyal secretary Hlavica ends an affair with his secretary out of a fear for his communist morale at the difficult situation.</p>
7 Syn [Son]	<p>The project of city reconstruction still meets with opposition. The city organizes a plenary meeting of citizens in which young people loaded in favour of the demolition and new housing construction gain predominance.</p>	<p>Bavor meets Kateřina again. She belongs to objectors of the city reconstruction because her parents would lose their family house.</p>
8 Silvestr [New Year's Eve]	<p>The reconstruction is initiated and it begins with the demolition of an old pub in which meetings had often taken place. However, the construction is still accompanied by many difficulties.</p>	<p>Bavor has a quarrel with his wife Jitka. She accuses him that in the entire project, he is only interested in his personal fame. After the quarrel, Jitka leaves Bavor.</p>
9 Křížové tažení [Crusade]	<p>Word spreads through the city that the old teacher Hanák committed suicide because of the involuntary house sale. But it turns out that Hanák died from a heart attack.</p>	<p>The death of Kateřina's father brings Kateřina and Bavor together again in an intimate and understanding dialogue.</p>
11 Setkání [Rendezvous]	<p>The new housing estate is finished and festively handed over to city citizens to be used.</p>	<p>Bavor together with Kateřina (as well as Bavor's daughter Bohunka with Mikuláš) begin a new life in new flats in the new housing blocks.</p>

Events of the ideological line have stronger narrative power, they move the story forward, and they dominate sequences of causes and consequences. On the contrary, events of the melodramatic line have a greater dramatic (and often lyrical) value. Up to the present day, components of melodramatic lines in Jaroslav Dietl's serials are acknowledged as the best in television screenwriting profession.¹⁵ What is praised is the emotional realism of characters, potential for identification, and the ambiguity and psychological persuasiveness of characters and relations in which they enter. In the characteristics of the components of Dietl's melodramatic lines, we find some indications of what western television studies summarize under the term "quality television": "(...) a form of television which is seen as more literate, more stylistically complex and more psychologically 'deep' than ordinary television fare" (Feuer quoted in Akass, McCabe 2007: 8).

In our opinion, the political refinement of Jaroslav Dietl's serials is embedded precisely in how divergence and convergence between the ideological and melodramatic lines are managed. The main "trick" which made television drama serials written by Dietl the cult genre of the period was in keeping the ideological and melodramatic lines close enough for the censors so that they could approve it and simultaneously distant enough for the audience so that they could identify with it. At the moments when the lines fully intersect, the fragile convergence-divergence equilibrium is disrupted. The propagandistic appeal becomes too obvious and the respective passage results in a farce with exaggeratedly emphasized features of an unwanted comic. A typical example is a dialogue between Bavor's secretary Hlavica and his mistress Bára (see Table 2, Episode 6).

Hlavica: "I wanted to tell you that it is a historic turning point now. Everything is at stake now. Maybe even tonight. At the moments like this, it turns out who is a good communist and who is not. "

Bára: "Why are you telling me that, what does it have in common with me?"

Hlavica: " I am telling you that because I must not fail."

Bára: "Fail in what?"

¹⁵ See for instance Tamchyna, R. Jaroslav Dietl. URL (consulted in November 2008): <http://www.rozhlas.cz/historie/vyroci/ zprava/8352>.

Hlavica: "In the whole idea of the project here and disappoint Frantisek and the history in general. Bára, I have to break up with you." ¹⁶

(Episode 6)

In most episodes, however, a more sophisticated relation of seeming divergence is established between ideological and melodramatic lines. They diverge in content but converge in basic organization of the fundamentally intersecting lines into the story. From the latter point of view, both lines are closely coordinated and linked by relation of causes (situated into events of the ideological line) and consequences (projecting into the story in a form of the melodramatic line components). In respect of content, though, both lines are very independent of each other. Ideological line components work with the political significance, and melodramatic line components work with the emotional significance. A level on which both lines articulate is a deeper layer of the story structure, and it is visible only by vigilance or by application of Althusser's method of "symptomatic reading" (Althusser 1971: 8). Elements of "poetics" (emotions/relations-oriented parts of narration), however, are not at all autonomous in these serials, and they make sense only as an appendix, consequence or illustration of elements from the world of "politics" (ideas/actions-oriented parts of narration). Bavor's archetypal love and first wife Ludmila, for instance, does not die in the end of the first episode in isolation from the rest of the story. This particular melodramatic line event (death of the first alpha-female) is only a function of the ideological line dynamics. The city is falling apart and Ludmila pays with her life because she drives on a rotten piece of scaffolding. In other words: if it had not been needed to re-establish the eroded equilibrium of ideological line (the city is falling apart because it is governed poorly; in 1971, the city is still in the hands of weak and inconsistent communists from the time of the attempt for a liberal reform), the tragic event of the melodramatic line (death of the main hero's wife) would not have happened.

¹⁶ Bára: "Proč mi to říkáš, co to má společného se mnou?" Hlavica: " Já ti to říkám proto, že já nesmím zklamat. " Bára: "V čem zklamat nebo koho zklamat?" Hlavica: "Tady celou tu myšlenku o tom projektu a taky Františka a vbec dějiny. Já se s tebou, Báro, musím rozejít."

5. Conclusion

Our scheme of melodramatic and ideological storylines in communist television serials can be easily translated into the terms developed by Newcomb who worked with concepts of “choric” and “lyric” drama (Newcomb, Alley 1984: 96). Choric drama is understood as an artistic representation which fully identifies itself with the society dominant ideology, whereas lyrical drama tends to negotiate with the system through individual, personalized voices (Ma 1995: 46). We operate with the assumption that there is a substantiated overlap between ideological and choric qualities and between melodramatic and lyric qualities of television dramas.

Drawing upon Ma’s application of Newcomb’s original dichotomy we want to conclude that the specific management of equilibrium between choric (ideological) and lyric (melodramatic) parts may be one of the narrative strategies which were supporting potential of dominant ideology in a television text. MR is a typical example of how the melodramatic and the ideological can diverge through separation into two different storylines which than nevertheless still converge on a deeper level of the narrative structure. The melodramatic voice is considerably present in the communist serials but at the same time, the lyrical part is fundamentally subordinated to the choric, political, ideological storyline by means of distribution of causes and consequences. Melodramatic line legitimizes ideological line, cooperates with it and both gain crucial comprehensibility from the mutual relationship. We think that precisely this simultaneous co-presence of the ideological and the melodramatic storylines – as it was shown in the narrative structure of MR – can explain one part of an enormous popularity of the serial genre in the period of Czechoslovak normalisation. The fluctuating convergence and divergence between ideology and melodrama opened the texts up for different reading positions, made the television serials more flexible and thus available for broad consumption.

Acknowledgments

The article is an output of a long-term project devoted to the study of television popular culture and Czechoslovak serials and series, 1959-2009, at Charles University of Prague, Centre for Media Studies (CEMES). As such it is a part of the research project, entitled ‘Development of Czech Society in the European Union: Challenges and Risks (2005-2010)’. MSM0021620841.

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