

Bjorn Ingvoldstad

The Paradox of Lithuanian National Cinema[★]

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When I first moved to Lithuania in 1997, it was striking how important locally produced television and pop music was to my friends and neighbours. Equally striking was the structuring absence of any discussion of domestically produced films made after 1991. People would talk about, and even offer to show me, films from the Soviet period they knew and loved—but no one had much to say about Lithuanian films of the 1990s. What had happened to Lithuanian cinema? This article discusses motion pictures in Lithuania—in particular, the ways in which films are being produced and consumed in the Lithuanian context.

A key term in my discussion will be ‘national cinema’. At first glance, this is an unproblematic, even self-defining term. Show me a nation, and I will show you a national cinema. Pioneering works of film criticism read national cinema like a symptomatic text from which we might gain an understanding of ‘the nation’ (e.g. Siegfried Kracauer ([1947] 2004) or Lotte Eisner (1973) writing on Nazi Germany). More contemporary work, such as from Ib Bondebjerg (2003: 70–85) or George Faraday (2000), following Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), emphasises the contested and dialogic nature of national cinema. Further, as the era of globalisation undercuts the very efficacy of the nation-state, the efficacy of the concept of ‘national cinemas’ is bound to be questioned with it. Yet, socio-political globalising forces do not just gather power across and despite borders, but also realign these borders in smaller, more localised units. Thus, for example, the United Kingdom takes part in the legislative wing of the EU, the European Parliament, and has also agreed, as part of an ongoing devolution process, to greater autonomy and lawmaking capacity for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

I am interested in thinking both about how the term ‘national cinema’ might be applied in cases where the nation-state is a structuring absence and how this national cinema loses its potency upon the re-emergence of its nation-state. How might we conceptualise national cinemas that do not necessarily correspond to a nation-state? One way to do this is through the notion of diaspora—to look, for instance, at the body of work Iranian film-makers have produced

in their decades of exile. Another way might be to look at groups who could be defined as a nation or a people, but without a geographically defined nation-state. This might include, for instance, Yiddish¹ or Romani² cinema. We might also speak of Basque, Kurdish or Palestinian cinema, in which bodies of work have emerged from geographically contained sub-national regions or districts. During the Cold War, Lithuanian cinema could be considered in this final category: a geographically defined, sub-national entity. After the Soviet collapse, of course, Lithuania became an independent nation-state once again. But as we will see, among the myriad changes that simultaneously took place in the wake of this collapse, Lithuanian national cinema’s relationship with its audience profoundly shifted.

My main objective here is to investigate the notion of Lithuanian cinema in both socialist and post-socialist contexts. When discussed at all, Lithuanian film is referred to most often in discussions of Eastern Bloc or Soviet cinema. More often, however, it is not discussed at all. To be certain, very little has been written on Lithuanian film outside of Lithuania since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. However, if we take a closer look at the film’s cultural circulation in Lithuania, we find a scenario that calls for no less than a rethinking of our understanding of the notion of ‘national cinema’.

Briefly, my theoretical argument is that Lithuanian national cinema *per se* existed and functioned while Lithuania as a nation-state did not. To use the oft-quoted phrase of Benedict Anderson (1991), Lithuanian film was a site of ‘imagined community’ at a time when Soviet power strove to maintain firm control over its Baltic republic. Further, I argue that upon the regaining of independence in an increasingly globalised context, this national

1 For more on Yiddish interwar cinema in Poland, see Paskin 1999.

2 A major retrospective of the latter was presented at the 2004 Rotterdam Film Festival. Entitled *Once We Were Birds: Romani Cinema*, it featured no less than 30 feature films. This curatorial intervention in Holland prompted a similar (albeit more modest) program at the next year’s Zagreb Film Festival. See festival information at www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com and www.zagrebfilmfestival.com.

cinema collapsed from both internal and external causes. Not only did the national need for representations and re-circulations of the nation dwindle after re-independence, but international interest in the Cold War ‘Other’ did as well.

I begin this piece with a personal anecdote from the national premiere of *Freedom* (*Laisvė*, 2000). A striking example of modernist cinema, *Freedom* was a Lithuanian film seemingly intended for the international festival market rather than for domestic consumption. As a result, its lack of domestic success is perhaps no surprise. However, the additional failure of *Freedom* to attract global attention makes the film sadly symbolic of the state of 21st century Lithuanian cinema. As such, the film serves as a vivid introduction to the essay’s central concern: the negotiations grappled with by both Lithuanian film producers and consumers in an era of global change.

This disconnection between production and consumption prompts my more detailed discussion in the following section involving questions of national cinema, and the ways in which this notion dovetails with Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’ in the Lithuanian context. The political and economic structure of Soviet film production calls for a rethinking of how we understand the function of national cinemas. Paradoxically, it appears that ‘Lithuanian national cinema’ did in fact exist and was viable—but only at a time when the Lithuanian nation was still subsumed within the Soviet state. Films in the era of re-independent Lithuania have been fewer in number, largely unpopular with local audiences, and aimed more at global film festivals (with mainly European funding). This has left local audiences with the task of negotiating their place in relation to output from Hollywood, Russia and the rest of Europe. Here, I speculate further about the application of theories of national cinema to two different ‘regional cinemas’: European and Baltic cinema. Can we consider the European Union, for instance, to possess a national cinema? (And if so, what of ‘European cinema’ outside the EU?) It is my hope that my examination of questions such as this will contribute to the (post-)post-Cold War literature on the cinema of the region (formerly

referred to as ‘Eastern Europe’, as well as European studies generally.³

*FREEDOM: JUST
ANOTHER WORD FOR NOTHING
LEFT TO LOSE?*

Šarūnas Bartas is the most internationally celebrated feature film-maker living in Lithuania today.⁴ In part, this has to do with his acumen in raising necessary capital: taking advantage of the restructuring of the Soviet industry in the late 1980s, he formed the first production company not directly controlled by the State. His output has been a fixture on the international festival circuit since the 1991 film *Three Days* (*Trys dienos*) won accolades in Berlin, including an International Film Critics’ FIPRESCI Prize, garnering interest from international co-producers. Subsequent feature-film projects *The Corridor* (*Koridorius*, 1995), *Few of Us* (*Mūsų nedaug*, 1996) and *The House* (*Namai*, 1997) all increased Bartas’s status as an *auteur* internationally.

Yet while Bartas’s star rose over the film festival circuit abroad, in Lithuania his work was discussed and read about more than actually viewed—and even then, almost exclusively amongst urban intelligentsia. Indeed, outside the capital city Vilnius, few people I talked to had ever heard of Bartas, and fewer still had seen his films. Paradoxically, then, Bartas is someone whose films have come to signify ‘Lithuania’ within international festival culture, while signifying almost nothing to most Lithuanians themselves.

Bartas’s work places him squarely in the realm of modernist film—which, of course, also places his films decidedly *outside* of popular or mainstream cinema. Even audiences favourably disposed to Bartas’s output can find his work overly opaque. In spring 2001, I attended the national premiere of his latest feature film, along with hundreds of other Lithuanian *cinephiles*, film enthusiasts, and fashionable *salonų liūtai* (‘salon lions’)⁵ in the main hall of the finest movie theatre in the country, the recently renovated Lietuva (Lithuania). *Freedom*, a Portuguese-French-Lithuanian co-production, filmed entirely on location in Northern Africa,

had recently received significant local media attention from its competitive entry at the Venice International Film Festival. Such international acceptance heightened excitement and expectation on the national level, drawing an audience on par with new Lithuanian theatrical productions by top dramatists Eimuntas Nekrošius or Oskaras Koršunovas.⁶

Like these stage figures, Bartas carves out a kind of *intellectual space* in his films, signified, for example, in his penchant for extraordinarily long takes that invite prolonged contemplation. The theatre has been held in particularly high esteem in Lithuania, and on the whole, audiences have shown great willingness to engage difficult (even avant-garde) productions; however, this is something that cannot be said as readily for film audiences. Certainly there is a tradition of meditative cinema in Soviet, East and Central European film, constructed of more philosophical narratives and devices such as the long take—Andrei Tarkovsky and (more recently) Alexander Sokurov are well-known examples of this. However praised these film-makers have been and continue to be, it is difficult to categorise either as producers of *popular* cinema—they have always been outside the mainstream. In both form and style, these directors make no apologies for challenging audiences with demanding material that at times can tax even sympathetic audiences beyond their tolerance threshold.

Freedom presents a similarly challenging aesthetic. Several grizzled fugitives book a boat to escape from authorities (what they have done is not clear); however, in the desert sands of North Africa, they succumb to the elements one by one, in extreme long-shot. *Freedom*, if it ever existed, is soon found only in death—post-socialism and European integration are revealed, it seems, as another form of waiting for Godot. The film's sandy coastline and shimmering dunes echo the Lithuanian coastal region of Neringa,⁷ yet clearly this landscape is far from the Baltic Sea. The film also fosters a sense of distancing in the way its characters look and act. Here, the premiere's urbane audience must focus on ragged refugees who barely say anything to one another—and what words they *do* utter are only translated into Lithuanian

by the giant LED subtitle display under the Lietuva's wide screen. The danger, of course, is that such techniques construct a philosophical, intellectual space that audiences may find off-putting. In other words, a director's Brechtian device can too often be an audience's invitation to file out of the cinema. Indeed, I watched a number of people in the audience shifting nervously in their seats, suggesting that the director had missed his mark. Slowly, then with alarming regularity, people simply got up and left.

When the house lights came up, director and crew took the stage for a curtain call, but at least a third of the seats of the formerly full house were empty. Worse, as the programme moved to the question-and-answer session, the tone quickly degenerated from befuddlement ('Why did you have to go all the way to Africa to shoot this story?') to outright hostility ('Are you planning on making more of such films?!'). To the latter question, Bartas can only feign incomprehension ('Erm, well, what do you mean?')

3 The title of the 2005 annual SOYUZ Conference on Russian and East European studies, held at Indiana University, was *Post-Post-Socialism?* This title was indicative of the critical turn scholars of Eastern and Central Europe are tentatively making (or at least contemplating) in the wake of EU accession, nearly 15 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

4 Perhaps the best known of all Lithuanian film-makers is New York-based Jonas Mekas, who fled Lithuania during World War II. Mekas is a major figure in documentary and avant-garde film whose major works include *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* (1972) and *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1976). See James 1992 for an anthology of critical work on Mekas's output. In addition to being a personal film archivist, as seen in his 'film diaries', Mekas also began the Film Archive in New York, and edited the journal *Film Culture*. In addition, he is a celebrated writer – Mekas's poetry collection *There is no Ithaca* (1996) is available in a bilingual Lithuanian/English version, and his memoir of fleeing Lithuania and living in 'Displaced Persons' (DP) camps in the immediate post-war period, *I Had Nowhere To Go* (1991), is also available in English. He continues to be a major figure in the Lithuanian arts: a delightful documentary chronicling his return to Lithuania for his 75th birthday was screened at the 2001 Vilnius *Kino Pavasaris* (Film Spring) festival.

5 Here I am using a phrase introduced to me by Jurga Čekatauskaitė (2005) to describe those folks who always appear to be seen at fashion shows, museum openings, gala fundraisers and even film premieres.

6 Audronis Liuga points out that ten-year retrospectives for both Bartas and Koršunovas coincided in Vilnius in the winter of 2000–2001 (Liuga 2000).

7 For an introduction to this Lithuanian coastal region, see Antanas Sutkus's coffee-table book *Neringa* (1994).

as a murmur of agreement passes through the audience. The director quickly thanked his crew again before retreating offstage.

Popular disavowal of Bartas's project calls into question the director's position as contemporary Lithuanian cinema's top *auteur*, but more to the point it underscores the shifting foundation of Lithuanian national cinema—indeed, 'national cinema' itself.⁸ After all, not only was this a Lithuanian director with little or no popular Lithuanian base, this was ostensibly a Lithuanian film bereft of the Lithuanian language. To what extent is this situation a function of particularly national circumstances—or a function of 'art cinema' as a genre? Or perhaps it is a function of a more regional post-communist transition and/or European integration? Or, for that matter, a function of globalising tendencies in the motion picture industry?

At first glance, the real significance of this anecdote might be unclear. After all, the reaction of this Vilnius audience is not unlike art cinema's rejection by audiences throughout the world. For Lithuanian cinema, the case of Bartas's premiere is important because there are so few domestic films released—one or two a year at best. From such a small pool of films, many are pitched for an international festival market rather than for domestic audiences. As a result, films that ostensibly represent 'Lithuanian-ness' internationally have next to no domestic audience base.⁹ Further, those that stick by Bartas are likely to be urban intelligentsia—more rural, less urbane audiences prefer earlier Lithuanian films of the Soviet period, in which a more vibrant version of 'national cinema' appears to have flourished. Thus, I would argue, the situation of the Lithuanian film industry, as initially sketched here with my discussion of *Freedom*, encourages a closer look at the notion of national cinema in both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras.

QUESTIONS OF NATIONAL CINEMA

In the introduction to his anthology *Film and Nationalism* (2002), Alan Williams underscores the ways in which national cinema might fruitfully be understood as a *process*, an ongoing negotiation by a range of interested groups.

Extrapolating from arguments Rick Altman (1999) makes about film genre, Williams proposes that we also see national cinema as dialogic in nature, a site of conflict, contention and conversation. Thus, while Anderson (1991) emphasised the births of imagined national communities via print media, Williams highlights the ongoing, everyday lives of these communities via cinema. Communities *continue* to be imagined, then, even when the primary medium is no longer print but visual in nature. Further, Williams argues that certain genres function transnationally (such as 'action films'), while others (such as comedies) 'remain persistently 'national'' (Williams 2002: 18). Anderson and Williams should not be read as contradictory, but rather as mutually reinforcing the notion that different historical periods, as well as different generic forms, have seen different media utilised to articulate and circulate notions of national identity.¹⁰ Rather than set in stone, such notions of the nation are fluid and unfixated, even when they are located within a broader structure of power dynamics within a constantly *re-*imagined community. How then to best present and discuss this process?

Stephen Crofts offers a taxonomy recognising Hollywood's hegemonic position, and therefore the (potentially) counter-hegemonic position various national cinemas occupy (Crofts 1993). He distinguishes a range of types within this category,

- sequenced in rough order of decreasing familiarity to the present readership:
- 1) cinemas that differ from Hollywood, but do not compete directly, by targeting a distinct, specialist market sector;
 - 2) those that differ, do not compete directly *but* do directly *critique* Hollywood;
 - 3) European and Third World entertainment cinemas that struggle against Hollywood with limited or no success;
 - 4) cinemas that ignore Hollywood, an accomplishment managed by few;
 - 5) anglophone cinemas that try to beat Hollywood at its own game;
 - 6) cinemas that work within a wholly state-controlled and often substantially state-subsidized industry; and,

7) regional or national cinemas whose culture and/or language take their distance from the nation-states which enclose them. (Crofts 1993: 50.)

This schematic is a helpful way to tease out a number of differences we find in various national cinemas around the globe, yet the author himself acknowledges that the boundaries between categories can be malleable, making exact fits problematic.

Where might we plot Lithuanian film within Crofts's taxonomy? In the Soviet era, it was *both* state-controlled and owned *and* functioning within the larger, multi-national USSR (6 & 7). However, with re-independence, the best fit would seem to be either (1), which encompasses what Peter Lev (1993) elsewhere refers to as 'Euro-American art cinema', or its more populist variant (3) which still fails to draw audiences. Yet both of these choices seem somehow unsatisfactory, as there isn't even a critical mass of films *en total* to see as either oppositional to or reminiscent of Hollywood output.

Indeed, with one or two features annually, contemporary Lithuanian national cinema often feels as if it is teetering on the boundary between being and nothingness. This sense is only strengthened by understanding the minimal impact post-1990 Lithuanian films have made on domestic audiences. This was not always the case, though. Indeed, the Lithuanian films I have found to be most embraced by audiences here are from the period when Lithuania was one of the fifteen Soviet republics.

In addition to discussing the ways in which national cinemas are constructed, we must also find a more balanced way to speak about how these films function culturally. To articulate effectively the dialogic nature of national cinema, we as critics must redress the imbalance of writing on the subject that emphasises industry over audience. Andrew Higson asserts that 'the parameters of a national cinema should be drawn at the site of consumption as much as at the site of production of film ... [focusing] on the activity of national audiences and the conditions under which they make sense of and use the films they watch.' (Higson 1989: 36.) Indeed, as Higson argues, 'very often the concept of

national cinema is used prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what *ought* to be the national cinema, rather than describing the actual cinematic experience of popular audiences.' (Higson 1989: 37.)¹¹ The Vilnius premiere of *Freedom* nicely illustrates Higson's point: Bartas's film was prescribed as exemplary Lithuanian national cinema, attracting audiences that were soon repelled by its modernist artifice.

A particularly crucial element of this 'actual cinematic experience' is language. Silent film was well suited for the global market, with its ability to overcome language barriers with visual storytelling and interchangeable intertitles. The coming of sound was problematic for film producers hoping to distribute globally, but an opportunity for those looking to sell to a more local or national market. Spoken language became a crucial factor for international distributors: whereas bridging linguistic divides had been previously a matter of replacing printed titles of one language with another, it quickly became a matter of synchronising image and sound, speaker and speech. While the standard practice in America became screening in the original language with English-language subtitles,

8 This anecdote even helps call into question the very notion of what audiences understand the function of cinema to be, and how divergent that might be from the understanding of cinema producers.

9 A popular music parallel of this situation was the failed early 1990s strategy by major Western record labels, in which Eastern talent (such as Hungary's Sexipil) would be signed to deals despite their lack of domestic fan base.

10 The implicit argument here is that while newspapers were a crucial medium for articulating nationhood in the 19th century, film served a similar role in the 20th century, especially with the advent of sound. Of course, television can be understood to be just as important—if not increasingly more so—to this discussion as the historical period in question advances closer to the 21st century, itself ceding efficacy to new media such as the Internet, video gaming, cell phone usage, and so on.

11 Andrew Higson helpfully identifies four general ways in which discussions of national cinema has been framed. First, it can be understood within an economic frame, inherently linked with the national film industry. Second, national cinema can be found through close textual analysis, with emphasis placed on form and style, themes and motifs, and so on. Third, there is what Higson describes as 'the possibility of an exhibition-led, or consumption based, approach to national cinema', which he notes is often diffused with anxieties about American cultural imperialism. Finally, there is what Higson calls a 'criticism-led approach to film that equates national cinema with notions of quality and artistic merit' (Higson 1989: 37).

other countries such as Italy opted for dubbing into their own language.¹²

Of course, the challenge of how to deal with thousands of languages and dialects was something grappled with not just by international film industries, but also by governments throughout the world.¹³ In the Lithuanian case, several (largely unsuccessful) waves of Russification by tsarist authorities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries inspired and spurred nationalists to codify the Lithuanian language as a means for the nation to take its place among nations (Butkus 1997). This vision was realised with the declaration of independence in February 1918, an example of how language and identity are tightly interwoven, and that the control hegemonic forces possess is not absolute. Indeed, central authorities attempted to utilise language as a post-Stalinist pressure release, a policy of inclusion through diversity.¹⁴ Waves of hard-line policy such as Russification under Stalin had succeeded mainly in fostering resentment towards the centre from the periphery of the USSR. However, such a strategy created an opening for ‘nationalist’ texts to emerge—not on a level of political action, such as a call to uprising, but on the more basic level of language itself. As long as the Lithuanian language continued to exist, the notion of ‘Lithuania’ continued to exist as well: not just as a Soviet socialist republic, but also as the continuation of the independent Lithuanian state (1918–1940) that existed before its forced incorporation into the USSR on the eve of World War II.

Asserting historical Lithuanian identity through language helped to reassert a sense of ‘Lithuanian-ness’ in the Soviet epoch. I would argue that language also helped lay the foundations for a post-Soviet, re-independent future. Change was gradual and intermittent for decades before the popular front Sąjūdis emerged in the late 1980s. I will not contend here that the emerging Lithuanian national cinema of the Soviet period made any concrete political claims or calls to action as did Sąjūdis. However, in a way similar to the national song festivals—sanctioned by Soviet officials to showcase ethnic diversity flourishing within the USSR, yet providing an invaluable link with the

national past—Lithuanian cinema’s very existence underscored the continued existence of the Lithuanian nation, even in the absence of a nation-state.¹⁵

However, to merely focus on *Lithuanian* cinema as a modest foreshadowing of re-independence in the 1990s oversimplifies the issue. In ethnographic fieldwork conducted as part of my dissertation (Ingvoldstad 2006), I found a real sense in which *Soviet* film in general (and not just Soviet Lithuanian film) functioned *as* national film. Indeed, we are mistaken if we understand Soviet cinema as monolithic or as mere propaganda. A case in point is the genre of Russian-language comedies, films that articulate Soviet absurdities in a disarmingly articulate manner. One beloved series involves the recurring character known as ‘Shurik’ (including *Operation ‘Y’* (*Операция Ы и другие приключения Шурика*, 1965) and *Kidnapping Caucasian Style* (*Кавказская пленница, или Новые приключения Шурика*, 1967)), a chaste student happy to fend off thieves from warehouses, assist in the work re-education of bullies, or save pretty Komsomol members from leering authority types. Charles Eidsvik nicely describes this regional comedic vein as both ‘mock realism’ and ‘comed[ies] of futility’ (Eidsvik 1991).¹⁶ These films were made with a minimum of dialogue, so that they *could* in fact travel throughout the USSR and amongst its allies. Eidsvik also notes, however, the cultural limits of such comedies, positing that ‘Eastern European audiences laugh at things that mean little to Westerners’ (Eidsvik 1991: 91). Recalling Williams’s point that comedies are instrumental to the formation and circulation of popular national cinema, these Soviet films brought together audiences from across its fifteen republics. The low regard in which comedy is too often held makes Soviet Russian comedies doubly ‘invisible’ to western critics—yet these same films really should be considered an integral part of the USSR’s national cinema.

Even before World War II, Hollywood cinema dominated the global market generally, and the European market in particular (see Jarvie 1992 and Thompson 1985). However, in the Soviet Union (and to a varying extent

the Warsaw Pact nations), central authorities kept tight control over which films, and how many films, would be distributed and exhibited within the socialist sphere. Thus, at least before perestroika, the Lithuanian cinemascape was profoundly different than that of either Western or Eastern Europe at the time. Of course, the situation changed drastically when the USSR finally collapsed: re-independence brought with it the ability to access a much wider range of materials from the West. However, this freedom was also curtailed by the economic reality that, while the local market was flooded with global (Hollywood/Western) fare, local product had little chance of being made and distributed locally, much less globally.

NATIONAL CINEMAS
WITHOUT NATION-STATES
(AND VICE VERSA)

Thus we are left with this seeming paradox: Lithuanian cinema appears to have resonated most deeply with audiences at a time when Lithuania as a country was a contested memory of the interwar period, and perhaps a far-off goal, but decidedly *not* a geopolitical fact. Is it possible that Lithuanian national cinema thrived when Lithuania itself was not a nation-state, only to collapse upon re-independence? In other words, in the Lithuanian case, is there an inverse relationship between statehood and national cinema? To address these questions, we need to first consider the Soviet Union as a nation of nations (and therefore possessing a 'national cinema' of many nations), then look particularly at cinema from Lithuania.

In the same way that the 'Soviet Union' and 'Russia' were (and are) so often used interchangeably in common parlance in 'the West'—assimilating the hundreds of ethnic groups into Russians was something Soviet officials were never quite so successful at as conversational English would have us believe—Soviet film is too often equated with Russian film. The net effect, of course, is the marginalisation or outright erasure of other, non-Russian national cinemas. Consider, for example, the recent, encyclopaedic reference book on film in the former Soviet sphere of influence, *The BFI*

Companion to Eastern European and Russian Cinema (Taylor *et al.* 2000). Here there is but a single reference to Lithuanian film: an entry for actress Ingeborga Dapkunaitė, best known internationally for her Russian-language roles in *Intergirl* (*Инердевочка*, 1989) and *Burnt by the Sun* (*Утомлённые солнцем*, 1994). Even with the Dapkunaitė entry, not one Lithuanian film is mentioned, neither before, during or after the Soviet era. Unfortunately, this is not an anomaly, but rather an extension of the critical neglect Lithuanian cinema has consistently suffered in English-language Soviet/Russian/East European film studies.

Mira Liehm and Antonín J. Liehm, in their groundbreaking survey *The Most Important Art* (1977), which covers three decades of post-World War II cinema from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, offer us only fragments of pertinent information. Of the pre-war period,

12 Soviet practice appears to parallel that of Italy. Not only were foreign films dubbed for domestic consumption (most often Russian), Russian-language Soviet films could also be dubbed into any number of other languages used within the USSR.

13 Here we might expand our geographical scope and point to cases such as the United Kingdom maintaining colonial hegemony, in part by deploying 'the King's English' throughout its empire, with post-colonial India's ethnic and linguistic diversity an important factor in its nation-building.

14 The Lithuanian language was never banned from usage in the Soviet period, though most official business took place in Russian. This was at least more benevolent than the solution implemented during Stalin's lifetime, in which Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians were to be exiled *en masse* to Siberia. In fact, mass deportations at the start of World War II steered large sections of the populace against the USSR to the point where the Nazis were welcomed as liberators, and the Soviets' return violently opposed in and after 1944.

15 In this sense, Lithuania's situation as a Soviet republic was somewhat better than, for instance, the Rom throughout Eastern Europe. The Rom have their own language and culture, but not their own territory—either as an independent nation-state or as a federal state such as the former Yugoslavia or Czechoslovakia. Lithuania's borders as a Soviet republic largely replicated those of the independent interwar nation-state. Upon the Soviet Union's 1991 collapse, several Russian commentators wistfully regretted maintaining republic borders along ethnic lines—this of course is what Stalin was attempting to obliterate with his mass deportations to Siberian gulags.

16 I use the term 'regional' here in opposition to Lithuanian 'national' film, though of course these films were 'national' at the time they were originally circulated widely throughout the USSR. Now, ironically, despite being fifteen separate, independent nations, these Soviet Russian-language comedies are 'national' in reception.

there is nothing about Lithuanian film. Of the late Stalinist era (1945–1955), we learn that a director named Abram Room directed a ‘cold-war horror film in Lithuania, *Silver Powder*’ (Liehm, Liehm 1977: 68–69). Then, during the Thaw of the Khrushchev era, we read of ‘a real surprise’—the ‘veritable birth of Lithuanian cinema’ (Liehm, Liehm 1977: 209)—which the authors briefly describe through the work of director Vytautas Žalakevičius (*Adam Wants to Be a Man* (*Adomas nori buti zmogumi*, 1959), *Living Heroes* (*Gyvieji didvyriai*, 1960)) and his long-time cinematographer Jonas Gričius. Finally, discussing the period 1963–1977, Liehm and Liehm offer several pages on Lithuanian cinema: in addition to noting Gričius’s work on Grigori Kozintsev’s adaptation of *King Lear* (*Король Лир*, 1970), they now recognise that a relatively rich history indeed exists. They write: ‘Perhaps the most surprising emergence of a national cinema occurred in Lithuania. It was based primarily on an artistically mature and strongly nationalistic film tradition. [...] Nurtured by this tradition, a galaxy of talented cameramen and a number of films with unconventional subject matter appeared in the sixties.’ (Liehm, Liehm 1977: 328–329.) With such a lead-in, readers might well prepare for at least a section on Lithuanian film, but the authors offer no such discussion.

Subsequent scholarship offers more details, but fails to broaden the discourse. In a later work on Soviet cinema, Neya Zorkaya twice brackets off discussion of non-Russian Soviet output under the awkward heading of ‘Soviet ethnic cinema’ (Zorkaya 1989: 233, 289). To her credit, Zorkaya also discusses Žalakevičius, citing *Living Heroes* as ‘the first remarkable production made by a new Lithuanian movie school’ (Zorkaya 1989: 237). Both Zorkaya and Josephine Woll (2000: 210) touch on Žalakevičius’s next feature, *Nobody Wanted to Die* (*Niekas nenorejo mirti*, 1965), whose plot depicted *miškų brolai* (‘forest brothers’) as antagonists terrorising a local collective farm, with the (worker) sons of the slain collective farm chairman returning to avenge his wrongful death.¹⁷ In sum, there is a paucity of English-language writing on Lithuanian cinema in general, and on the question of Lithuanian national

cinema in particular. And yet, from the information that is available, a particularly interesting paradox emerges.

Indeed, it appears that ‘Lithuanian national cinema’ *per se* existed when Lithuania as a nation-state did not. Further, once the nation-state came back into existence, the economic imperatives of the film industry curtailed (at least to date) the real possibility of a continuing national cinema. Both sides of this equation can be understood and explained economically and politically. Like Liehm and Liehm, I date the emergence of national cinema in Lithuania in the 1950s and 1960s, while Lithuania was still being consolidated by the USSR as one of the three ‘new’, annexed Baltic Soviet republics after World War II. In other words, this national cinema emerged at a time when the Lithuanian nation-state had ceased to be, and the movement for re-independence was decades away. To understand how this process evolved, let me briefly discuss the ways in which top Soviet leadership conceived of cinema as a medium.

THE MOST IMPORTANT ART

From the very beginning, the centralised government viewed cinema as a crucial tool in the consolidation and maintenance of ‘Soviet power’. Lenin’s famous dictum, that ‘of all the arts for us the most important is cinema’, is too often reiterated as a decontextualised assertion of cinema’s relevance and merit. A closer reading of Anatoli Lunacharsky’s 1922 interview with Lenin, from which this quote originally comes, underscores the link between film, propaganda and Communist power. Lunacharsky asserts that Lenin ‘*had an inner conviction of the great profitability of the whole thing if only it could be put on the right footing.*’ Lenin further exhorts that as ‘*new films imbued with Communist ideas and reflecting Soviet reality*’ were created, along with the envisioned improvement of the situation of the country, ‘*you must develop production on a broader basis and, in particular, you must promote wholesome cinema among the masses in the cities and, to an even greater extent, in the countryside.*’ (Lunacharsky 1988: 56.)

The impetus for moving cinema out of urban centres and into rural areas would be most effectively carried out when the network of thousands of ‘culture houses’ were in place throughout the Soviet sphere. Indeed, these culture houses, widely scattered throughout the Lithuanian SSR after World War II, treated ‘cultural enlightenment [as] an area of ideological work’ (White 1990: 1). As much as government officials strove to make this a hall of socialist idealism, it also served pragmatic, everyday functions. As we will see, they were *both* locations for disseminating party ideology through rationally organised activity *and* gathering places for local folks to congregate. Thus, these culture houses can be seen as a very real point of contestation: authorities strove to make them *a part of* everyday rural Soviet life, while most citizens strove to make them *a place apart from* that same everyday rural Soviet life.

Of course, the political economy of cinema is such that the government has the ability to control every element of the process (production, distribution and exhibition). And yet, movies were certainly a site in which people could imagine (and re-imagine) themselves and their identity(-ies), and not always in the ways in which Communist leadership may have intended. Part of what draws academic discussion to the *art* of Lenin’s ‘most important art’ is the significant body of work of Soviet avant-garde film-makers in the silent era: e.g. Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Aleksander Dovzhenko. Discussion has also focused on the fate that befell formal experimentalism generally, and these practitioners in particular, once Josef Stalin consolidated his leadership position in the USSR. As Peter Kenez explains, Stalin and his administration saw things differently. ‘They believed that art that was many-layered and complex—as all first-rate art must be—was a dangerous opponent. The world view that they propagated was a simple one that tolerated only black and white; and art that included complexity, irony and ambiguity undermined such a world view.’ (Kenez 2001: 225.) Stalin’s government institutionalised a policy of ‘socialist realism’ in the 1930s, and turned to cinema as a tool of consolidation and motivation during

World War II. Socialist realism continued in earnest at the war’s conclusion, and with the Cold War’s onset—in fact, it never was officially stripped from its status as *the* ideological blueprint for artistic creation until the final years of perestroika. However, with Stalin’s death in 1953, Soviet leadership began to rethink fundamentally its centralised policies, including those regarding cinema.

In February 1956, Khrushchev delivered his famous ‘secret address’ to the 20th Party Congress—a body that included a number of young reformers, including a young Mikhail Gorbachev—that created a seismic shift in the Soviet leadership by articulating and denouncing Stalin’s ‘cult of personality’. Jay Leyda notes that, like Lenin, Khrushchev too singled out cinema. However, Khrushchev did so to assert that it had been misused in the creation and perpetuation of Stalinist idolatry. Leyda quotes from Khrushchev’s speech at length: ‘...let us take, for instance, our historical and military films and some literary creations; they make us feel sick. Their true objective is the propagation of the theme of praising Stalin as a military genius.’ (Leyda 1960: 400–401.) To utter such phrases while Stalin lived would have been akin to signing one’s own death warrant. However, it would be going too far to argue that Khrushchev was at all averse to showing the government’s role in films. What seems to truly rankle the new leader—a career bureaucrat, speaking to a hall full of career bureaucrats—is that the noble and invaluable role *of the bureaucrats* had been edited out of the picture. Khrushchev continues:

Let us recall the film *Fall of Berlin*. In it only Stalin acts, issuing orders from a hall in which there are many empty chairs. ... And where is the Military command? Where is the Political Bureau? Where is the Government? What are they doing, what keeps them busy? There is nothing about them in the film. Stalin acts for everybody. ... Everything is shown to the nation in this false light. Why? In order to

17 For more on the ‘forest brothers’ and the anti-Soviet resistance in Lithuania, see Misiunas, Taagepera 1993: 83–94, and Anušauskas 1999.

surround Stalin with glory, contrary to the facts and to the historical truth. (Leyda 1960: 401.)

On the whole, Khrushchev's argument was that the central government had essentially overplayed its hand, resulting in what became referred to as the 'cult of personality'. In the wake of this electrifying and incredibly influential speech, Khrushchev pushed for greater economic reform via a series of de-centralising moves, and Brezhnev continued this shift towards greater economic autonomy. One of the results of this shift in policy was that individual republics received a greater measure of autonomy from Moscow. This allowed for a greater variation in freedoms throughout the fifteen republics. In particular, the three Baltic republics of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia gained a reputation throughout the rest of the Soviet Union as being the 'West of the East'.

With the recognition that cinema was an important ideological tool, that it had been abused by previous (centralised) leadership, and that local autonomy was to be both encouraged at the top and fostered on the republic level, the political and cultural atmosphere was ripe for encouraging Lithuanian-language cinema.¹⁸ In these Thaw years, and in later years of Brezhnev-era stagnation, central authorities de-emphasised overt propaganda in favour of a more genuinely popular cinema. This meant not only Moscow productions like *The Irony of Fate* (*Ирония судьбы, или С лёгким паром!*, 1975)¹⁹—a dramatic comedy which, among other things, brilliantly satirises the sameness of Soviet suburban building development—as well as less didactic, more populist cinema in the other republics outside of Russia. This was a green light not only to increase production in languages other than Russian, but also to encourage subject matter that didn't necessarily even *need* to make an all-Union appeal. This is what opened the door for the locally produced, much beloved films of the 1960s and 1970s.

The limits of what could be said about Lithuania's situation in World War II (in terms of USSR accession/annexation, the 'forest brothers' who conducted a post-war, low-level guerrilla war against the Soviets well into the

1950s, and so on) were demarcated early on in *Nobody Wanted to Die*. Here, per Soviet ideology of course, the Lithuanian rebels were class enemies inflicting terror on a newly liberated countryside. Linas Vildžiūnas rightly notes the impossibility of filming fully and truthfully about the post-war partisan resistance in Lithuania:

[In the Soviet era] it was impossible to create a film about the partisan resistance in post-war Lithuania, where the events would be shown from the inside, from the partisan point of view. But if such a film were made, it would have won total recognition ... [*Nobody Wanted to Die*] showed another point of view—not the one of the forest. (Vildžiūnas 2000: 53.)

Leaving further war films to the Russians, Lithuanian cinema told romantic stories that activated the nation's agrarian roots, even as collectivisation fundamentally (and fatally) was imposed on the countryside. For instance, a beloved sequence in *Nut Bread* (*Riešutų duona*, 1977) involves the son of one feuding family adamantly insisting that one day he would buy a cow for the daughter of the other family, with her equal insistence that he will do no such thing. Another example, *The Beauty* (*Gražuolė*, 1969), while transposed to the city (the ostensibly more Lithuanian Kaunas, as opposed to the cosmopolitan capital Vilnius), develops themes of beauty and innocence, linking them to childhood and a child-like grace.

These Lithuanian films have come to interest me because they were the ones with which the people I spoke to were most conversant, that seemed to speak to them and for them about who they were. For comparison, it is striking to look in vain for their favourites in a Soviet-era 'Top Ten' list of Lithuanian films, written for a Western audience (Tapinas 1980: 7–30).²⁰ Equally striking is the numbing post-independence-era emphasis on international awards and accolades in overviews such as that presented by the Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum website:²¹

Although many films were ideological in character and the censorship was strict,

a great number of films were really good and they were awarded prizes at both the All-Union and international festivals: Vytautas Zalakevicius' *The Chronicle of A Day* at the 6th Baltic and Belorussian Cinema Festival...; Arunas Zebriunas' *The Last Day of the Holidays* at Locarno Festival and Cannes Youth Films Festival...; Algimantas Puipa's *A Woman and Her Four Men* at the All-Union Festival of Young Cinematographers in Kishinev...

Indeed, what this kind of history presents is a history of international festival reception spun retrospectively on the nation's back catalogue, a foundation for the international ambitions of contemporary Lithuanian national cinema. Not coincidentally, what's missing in the museum's discussion is any sense of the domestic audience. Given the funding structure of re-independent cinema in Lithuania, that audience has become more and more expendable—to the point where it is not unreasonable to discuss the country as a nation-state bereft of a national cinema.

RE-INDEPENDENCE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

In the 1990s, we can plot the shift from a Lithuanian national cinema in the Soviet context to an international (European) cinema in a re-independent national context. There are several reasons for this shift. The former methods of film funding—essentially state funding on a union-wide basis or on a more localised, individual republic level—collapsed. Studios had been funded by the state, essentially shielded from market considerations; with the collapse of communism came the collapse of state funding for cinema. This collapse was by no means limited to Lithuania; rather, it was a systemic implosion felt throughout the former Soviet bloc. (And, of course, by no means was this limited to cinema particularly or the arts generally; rather, it was a systemic implosion felt throughout the former Soviet bloc.) Thus, restructuring of the film industries in this region has been a shared project in the region since the late 1980s.

Of course, each country has its individual histories and inflections regarding this problem.²² Lithuania is a particularly compelling case for those interested in theoretical notions of centre and periphery, because, with the collapse of the USSR, Vilnius shifted from a provincial (albeit Westernised) Soviet republic capital to the very centre of political and cultural life in the re-independent nation. The Lietuvos kino studija (Lithuanian Film Studio)—or LKS—likewise went from a peripheral player in the larger Soviet cinema industry to the primary purveyor of Lithuanian movie production. While the country's film industry was ostensibly freer politically to explore certain themes and issues, the economic imperatives from which the previous system had largely shielded them became a major obstacle to address. It was a Faustian pact: trading the tyranny of the government for the tyranny of the market. Some artists even posited the 'heretical' notion that they were actually more 'free' under the previous system.

Indeed, the rules of the marketplace dramatically shifted, as national industries opened up to international competition at the same time that local funding evaporated. The result was a near-crushing blow to the local industry. Studios tried to stay busy with foreign run-away productions, though they were competing against other regional studios with technical

18 In this sense, parallels can be drawn between Lithuanian cinema and the quadrennial song festivals held in Vilnius.

19 In the film, the passed-out protagonist is placed on a plane by his drinking buddies from Moscow to Leningrad. When he wakes up, unaware of his change of locale, he proceeds along the same-named streets to his same-numbered apartment block, where he is able to use his key to gain entry to what appeared to be his apartment—to the confusion of its current occupant. For years, Soviet television annually screened *The Irony of Fate* on New Year's Eve.

20 'The Top Ten' as proscribed by Tapinas 1980, in chronological order: *Living Heroes* (1960), *The Chronicle of One Day* (1963), *The Last Day of the Holidays* (1964), *Nobody Wanted to Die* (1965), *A Staircase to the Sky* (1966), *Feelings* (1968), *A Small Confession* (1971), *Herkus Mantas* (1972), *The Riven Sky* (1974), and *The Devil's Bride* (1975).

21 For the full overview, see <http://teatras.mch.mii.lt/Index.htm>.

22 Here, see Coates 2005 on Poland, Faraday 2000 on Russia, Ingvaldstad 1995 on Central Europe, and Iordanova 2001 on the Balkans.

and economic advantages, such as Barrandov in the Czech Republic. Only in recent years have the rising costs in Central Europe forced television and film producers hoping to stretch their shooting budgets to keep moving further east. At LKS, for instance, more often than not facilities were being utilised to make various series for US cable channels, such as *Robin Hood* (TNT) and *The Barbarians* (The History Channel). The alternative, realistically, is not that production crews and facilities would be working on Lithuanian productions, but rather that the facilities would sit idle, without any production work at all.

As Soviet funding structures collapsed, two alternative sources emerged. The first was television—specifically state television—whose mandate for public service productions led to commissioning the vast majority of documentary projects in the country. The second was the various European film funds, such as EUREKA and MEDIA (Jäckel 2003: 57–63). These funds have served as an impetus for co-productions throughout the continent in the past two decades. In terms of national cinema, such co-productions might be seen as anathema. However, a counter-argument might be made: that such films are a nascent beginning of a European cinema as *both* national and transnational. Here, we need to make a distinction between the European branch of what Lev (1993) dubs ‘Euro-American art cinema’ and a *popular* cinema that could work throughout the European continent (Dyer, Vincendeau 1992; Dale 1997).

If we ask why Lithuanian national cinema is in such dire straits, or even why there is no longer any ‘national cinema’ of which to speak coherently, we can certainly begin to answer by discussing the economic constraints faced by the film industry of a particularly small country with limited resources. But is the problem only economic? Or rather, do the economic problems exacerbate the issue further? Here, I am asking not only about production values and other such variables, but also about *who is the intended audience* for these films. Faraday argues that, in Russia, the ‘black films’ phenomenon (so-called because of their relentlessly bleak stylistic and narrative qualities) have been a function of productions bankrolled by foreign

sources to play on international festival circuits. The films articulate a particular flavour of *imagined* Russia that sells (to festival buyers) internationally, but meets with public distain and/or indifference (Faraday 2000: 176).

Lithuania’s producers and directors have faced similar economic pressures—arguably even more so, given the small population from which to draw domestic audiences as compared to the Russian example. Of course, this is something that, to some degree, *all* non-Hollywood cinema must deal with—particular the European Union (see table below). What we see here is the fact that, even within EU member states, US films clearly dominate national film markets. While this table only has seven years’ worth of data, it is remarkable how consistent the figures are: in the average European country, American films control approximately 66–75% of the market, with that nation’s films

	US films	Nat'l films in own market	Eur. films outside own market	Others
1996	71.6	17.1	8.8	2.6
1997	67.0	21.3	10.7	1.1
1998	77.5	14.4	7.1	1.1
1999	69.2	17.5	11.3	2.0
2000	73.3	15.7	7.2	3.8
2001	65.4	20.1	11.0	3.5
2002	71.2	19.5	7.9	1.3

(Table 1)
Market share of films distributed within the EU
1996–2002 (prov.) (EAO 2003: 3).

drawing 15–20% within their own domestic market, and other European films attracting another 10% of the market.

EUREKA and MEDIA were formed to counteract this situation, but their very structure brought new potential pitfalls. To a bureaucrat in Brussels, the notion of funding from several different European states to fuel the European film industry (singular!) might sound like a grand notion indeed. For producers, gaining access to these funds is certainly a victory, at least in the short-term: their projects gain the necessary funding to be produced. However, such funding often has explicit or implicit stipulations attached to it that can doom projects to box-office oblivion. These deals can go beyond distribution deals to the mandating of shooting locales, above/below-the-line talent, and so on. This in turn affects choices regarding plotlines, casting and even the language used.

The inherent danger of funding projects this way is that too often they are planned from the onset to garner funding, rather than attract audiences. Any number of European film critics have pointed out the pitfalls of so-called ‘Europuddings’ (or ‘Euomush’ or even ‘Europorridge’), in which plotlines, locales and casts can be traced back directly to the countries committing the funds. A revealing example of this is *The Long Shadow* (1992), an English-language US-Hungarian-Israeli co-production, in which a Hungarian finds his Jewish roots in Israel. The resulting projects have difficulty resonating much of anywhere locally; in truth, there is no real locality for which it might resonate. Nor, for that matter do these Europuddings succeed as regional or pan-European projects. The films clear any number of bureaucratic hurdles to get made, only to find a disappointing lack of audience once the film is actually presented. Cinema becomes a cultural ‘loss leader’ for the EU.

Multinational co-productions (‘Europuddings’ or otherwise) are so commonplace in Europe that we might consider to what extent we can begin to understand European cinema as national cinema—acknowledging that there is still a problem determining who the audience is for this national cinema. The cinemas of the United Kingdom and the former Soviet Union

are clear antecedents in this regard: multinational national cinemas. If we return to Crofts’s schematic above of national cinemas, we might identify the filmic output of the European Union as national cinema, straddling categories of art cinema and struggling entertainment cinema in its attempt to articulate and shape an emerging European identity. As the EU continues its political and economic integration, thinking collectively about cinema in the twenty-five state superstate will no doubt garner considerable critical attention. Here, however, I turn to a more modest geographical focus: just as Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Danish and Icelandic cinemas have been considered together as Scandinavian cinema, so too might we collectively discuss the output of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as Baltic cinema.

TOWARDS A STUDY OF BALTIC CINEMA

Even when the literature contemplates the notion of ‘East European film’, most often it is still discussed serially in terms of single-nation output. This has been the case in both book-length studies and in edited anthologies that bring together chapters on various national cinemas. However, Dina Iordanova makes a powerful argument for a different approach: to understand cinema *regionally* in order to uncover common themes, industry trends and so on. Her research project acknowledges and accounts for geopolitical shifts that have taken place in the past fifteen years.

In *Cinema of Flames*, written in part as a response to the wars between former Yugoslav republics, Iordanova looks at the output of a wider, Balkan region: beyond Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro and Slovenia, including Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova, Greece and Turkey (Iordanova 2001). Her follow-up, *Cinema of the Other Europe* (Iordanova 2003), looks at East Central European film, focusing on the former Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic and Slovakia), Hungary and Poland. Iordanova’s argument, convincingly borne out by close, thematic readings of films across the region of study, is that each of these terms

denotes a 'cultural entity' rather than a 'geographical concept' (Jordanova 2003: 5). She rightly calls for the retirement of the concept of 'East European cinema' as a sub-field of study in her Balkan book, arguing that new configurations are needed to reflect geopolitical realities. The problem, not only in terms of Lithuanian film but of all national cinemas from the former Soviet Union (except the Russian), is that they are critical orphans. In the introduction to *Cinema of the Other Europe*, Jordanova acknowledges that

the study of Soviet cinema has been more or less reduced to the study of Russian cinema, which scholars almost exclusively treat as synonymous with Soviet cinema. It is extremely rare to see writing on the cinemas of Ukraine, Belarus, the republics in the Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) or the Baltics (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia). Where do these cinemas belong today, one wonders? They are left in a sort of vacuum—the Russian specialists are no longer interested in them, and scholars of 'Eastern Europe', that other periphery of Russian influence, think they are in the 'realm' of the Soviet specialists. It is a paradoxical situation that has yet to be addressed and resolved. (Jordanova 2003: 14.)

Certainly one way to redress this, at least within the Lithuanian context, is to initiate a project on Baltic cinema to sit alongside Jordanova's recent work on Balkan and East Central European cinema. Such a project would necessarily attempt to view Baltic cinema as separate from (yet connected to) Soviet cinema. It would explore shared Baltic production techniques, themes and consumption patterns. Further, it would necessarily need to begin to think about Europe as a cultural construct, as well as the Baltics' place within this construct. The problem, I would argue, is that much work is yet to be done on individual Latvian, Lithuanian or Estonian cinemas—*disaggregated* from Soviet cinema and thought of in their respective national contexts. This needs to happen before we can make the next important step, to *re-aggregate* them

under the rubric of Baltic cinema. Jordanova points to a fruitful avenue for Baltic film scholars to pursue, but *after* we gain a better understanding of the cinemas of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

In this article, my discussion of cinema in Lithuania has offered several ways in which to think about 'national cinema'. I have argued that, however paradoxically it may seem, Lithuanian 'national cinema' appears to have flourished under Soviet rule, as a nation without a nation-state. The relatively favourable economic conditions Soviet Lithuanian film-making enjoyed quickly imploded in the midst of post-socialist transition, forcing national film-makers to market their product more to the international festival market than to local exhibitors. If we expand our notion of 'national cinema', we can see that 'Soviet cinema' too functioned as a popular national cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, often fuelled by genres such as comedy that have eluded significant critical attention in the West. We also can see that, however tentatively, we might fruitfully start talking of 'European cinema' and even 'Baltic cinema' as regional cinematic clusters. For such terms to fully have meaning, we need to more fully understand each of their constituent parts; however, I maintain the importance of understanding Lithuanian film within both Baltic and European contexts, and believe this to be a fruitful avenue for future research.

FILMS

Adam Wants to Be a Man (Adomas nori buti zmogumi), dir. Vytautas Žalakevičius. Lithuania, 1959

The Beauty (Gražuolė), dir. Arūnas Žebriūnas. Lithuania, 1969

Burnt by the Sun (Утомлённые солнцем), dir. Nikita Mikhalkov. Russia, France, 1994

The Chronicle of One Day (Vienos dienos kronika), dir. Vytautas Žalakevičius. Lithuania, 1963

The Corridor (Koridorius), dir. Šarūnas Bartas. Germany, Lithuania, 1995

The Devil's Bride (Velnio nuotaka), dir. Arūnas Žebriūnas. Lithuania, 1975

Feelings (Jausmai), dir. Algirdas Dausa, Almantas Grikevičius. Lithuania, 1968

Few of Us (Mūsų nedaug), dir. Šarūnas Bartas. Portugal, France, Germany, Lithuania, 1996

Freedom (Laisvė), dir. Šarūnas Bartas. France, Portugal, Lithuania, 2000

Herkus Mantas, dir. Marijonas Giedrys. Lithuania, 1972

The House (Namai), dir. Šarūnas Bartas. France, Lithuania, Portugal, 1997

Intergirl (Инердевочка), dir. Pyotr Todorovsky. Russia, 1989

The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath! (Ирония судьбы, или С лёгким паром!), dir. Eldar Ryazanov. Russia, 1975

Kidnapping Caucasian Style, or Shurik's New Adventures (Кавказская пленница, или Новые приключения Шурика), Leonid Gaidai. Russia, 1967

King Lear (Король Лир), dir. Grigori Kozintsev. Russia, 1971

The Last Day of the Holidays (Paskutine atostogu diena), dir. Arūnas Žebriūnas. Lithuania, 1964

Living Heroes (Gyvieji didvyriai), dir. Vytautas Žalakevičius. Lithuania, 1960

The Long Shadow, dir. Vilmos Zsigmond. USA, Hungary, Israel, 1992

Lost, Lost, Lost, dir. Jonas Mekas. USA, 1976

Nobody Wanted to Die (Niekas nenorejo mirti), dir. Vytautas Žalakevičius. Lithuania, 1965

Nut Bread (Riešutų duona), dir. Arūnas Žebriūnas. Lithuania, 1977

Operation Y and Other Shurik's Adventures (Операция Ы и другие приключения Шурика), dir. Leonid Gaidai. Russia, 1965

Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania, dir. Jonas Mekas. UK, West Germany, 1972

The Riven Sky (Perskeltas dangus), dir. Marijonas Giedrys. Lithuania, 1974

A Small Confession (Maža išpažinti), dir. Algirdas Araminas. Lithuania, 1972

A Staircase to the Sky (Laiptai į dangų), dir. Raimondas Vabalas. Lithuania, 1966

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