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THE NOTION OF THE EUROPEAN CINEMA: NESTING THE OTHERNESS

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The concern of this paper is to analyse the construction and representation of Europe through the notion of the European Cinema offering the survey of its multiperspective and encompassing definitions. The notions of the European Cinema - understood as the exponent of the European (Cultural) identity/Europeaness - derive from twofold process. First, it is constant recognition of other in relation to which its own identity is defined. The othering is both internal (maintained between European cinemas) and external (maintained between European and non-European cinemas). Various national cinemas in dense interaction, thus, chart their relations and positions through, both, "othering" and "nesting" the otherness. Second model refers to European Cinema as the floating signifier for the coalescence and harmonisation of the various national cinemas in order of expressing pan European identity- cultural identity of Europe united after political premises (EU membership) or chosen cultural identity model (German or French). The paper tends to explore the notion in permanent de/reconstruction and changes that develop through diverse intercultural dialogues (between other) becoming visible in film narratives but also in (co)production, distribution, censorship. Cinema established as integral part of national (cultural) identity functions on the level of redefining the European identity/Europeaness that follows the motto *United Through Common Values, Enriched by Cultural Diversity*.

Key words: Europe, European cinema, cultural identity, Europeaness, EU

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THE NOTION OF THE EUROPEAN CINEMA: NESTING THE OTHERNESS

The concern of this paper is to analyse the complex and dense inter connectedness of the idea of Europe and Europeaness as inscribed and refracted in the multiperspective and ever-changing notions of the European Cinema offered in the works of film studies (Vincendeau 1995; Rosen, 1984; Hill 1998; Crofts 1998; Nowell-Smith and Ricci 1998; Higson 1989, 2000). The aim is to chart bilateral model of the relations of the notion of European cinema and geopolitical changes i.e. to analyse their interdependence through dual methodological approach classical social historical and neoformalist/historical poetics (Bordwell 1989; Stam 2000). Both imply that the analysis of the form (notion of European cinema) allows the reconstruction of the corresponding historical context (concept of Europe and Europeaness in neoformalist/historical poetics approach) and vice versa (in social historical approach the context enables the decoding of the /form. The genesis of the notions of European Cinema- understood as the exponent of the European (Cultural) identity/Europeaness - is two-pronged. First, it is (re)defined in constant Lacanian “othering” that is both internal (maintained between European cinemas) and external (maintained between European and non-European cinemas such as Hollywood but also broadly non Western cinema). Second model identifies European cinema as tightly and dynamically interrelated group of national cinemas that variously coalesce into pan European entity and identity. The paper provides the time line of the mutual reconceptualization and influences as divided in four periods: 1895-1957(Treaties of Rome that came into power in 1958 by the founding of EEC), 1957-1989(fall of the Berlin Wall), 1989-1999 (establishment of the monetary Union) and contemporary era (intensive enlargement of EU). However it also should be noted that the models and periods frequently overlap and hardly exist in the pure forms.

1895-1957: Europe vs. Hollywood

From the very beginnings, *le cinema des premiers temps* (1895-1908) (Gauderault, Gunning, 1989; Burch 1990), through era of silent cinema (1908-1927), European cinema mainly if not exclusively refers to the Western European cinema in clear and strong opposition with Hollywood cinema as “big other”. The binary European cinema vs. Hollywoodⁱ as the all-encompassing paradigm of cinema as media, industry, VII art and social phenomenon is threefold: aesthetic, economic, and social. The aesthetic, deeply stipulated from the 1930s (emergence of Studio system) to today, perpetuate the tense and to degree artificial opposition of European cinema as art and auteur against Hollywood as industrially, commercially, genre oriented. The evolution and revolution brought by talkies when cinema in Europe is recognised as important constituent of national culture and of the construction of national identity just confirm art-industry, auteur- tedium genre binaries that are to be theoretically contested only in the sixties. *Politique des auteurs* and its Americanised version *Auteur Theory*- promoted by the young generation of French film-makers (Truffaut, Rohmer, Godard, Rivette, Mourlet etc.), the second generation of *Cahiers du cinema* (Comolli, Narboni 1969) and the British American critics and theoreticians such as Pauline Kael, Andrew Sarris and Peter Wollen - relativized the boundaries of the entrenched concepts revealing the Hollywood genre film as space of innovation and auteurship of great names such as Ford, Sirk, Minnelli etc. The line of thought went into the decline by 1980s with the rise of the Film Studies that supported the research pattern of diverse national cinemas as addressing the same but appropriated span of issues as for Hollywood cinema (Crofts 1998; Willemsen 2006).

Economic and production differences are best described through comparison of the categorisation of the films based upon production and economic parameters. Financially successful, standardised and industrially organised Hollywood allows the recognition of four categories of filmsⁱⁱ: blockbusters, mainstream A, commercial quickies and sleepers (comp. Schatz 1993, 35). In the European production - handicapped by the limited markets and problematic distribution that prevent the self-sustainability of the national productions through box office revenues - the list is narrowed to: local productions (monocultural, local narrative made for the limited targeted local audience) and big A productions that aim the

international market. Their cosmopolitan features hiding the national origin but assuring international appeal confirm their closeness to the categories of europuddingⁱⁱⁱ or films made for festivals- for being awarded prizes and thus becoming emblematic for the national production. ^{iv} Eventually the social aspect refers to the position of cinema as the part of the cultural heritage, national cultural identity. Hollywood production is truly emblematic for the whole state and nation bearing in mind the specific character of America nation and America as the state without nation (Hjort 2000). It is consensually recognised as dedicated to the promotion of American ideals and values that replace the notion of national cultural identity *stricto sensu*.^v Classical model of European cinema suggests cinema as the site of the construction and representation of the national identity - recognised after essentialist theories - such as britishness, frenchness etc. The classical history of European cinema (in different world film histories of Bardeche and Brasillach 1935; Sadoul 1949; Gregor and Patalas 1962; Cook 2001) is usually written as succession of the history of certain movements, school, styles that have inevitable national qualification before-German Expressionism, French Nouvelle Vague, Italian NeoRealism, Soviet Revolutionary School, Yugoslav Black Wave. The typical names strongly argue national cinema as the body of texts of display and representation of the never changing national identity essence expressed in stylistic, textual or even genre features.^{vi}

European cinema as cinema of nations: 1957-1989

Although the year 1957 is chosen as the turning point, the years before and after are of no less significance as the demarcation lines. Hungarian revolution of 1956 as the first sign of Easter European crises and the “beginning of the end” of the Cold war era and of the international discovery of the cultural spaces of Socialist block. In 1958, Palme d’Or awarded to Soviet film *The Cranes are Flying* (*Letyat zhravil, d.* Mikhail Kalatozov, 1958) announced the forthcoming years of growing visibility and presence of the production of other Europe. The set of circumstances brought the classical model of film history to the perfection. The film history is underpinned by the parallelism with social history when the social changes and turbulences are accompanied by the innovative aesthetical paradigms. The paradigm is defined from the perspective of Western Europe as one concerned with social criticism written in revolutionised form^{vii} and awarded at European festivals (films of Jancso, Forman, Sasa Petrovic).

The widened, heterogeneous notion of European cinema including the cinema of Other Europe implies as well as it is based upon other displaced within the confinements of Europe itself. The change is achieved through the process depicted as “nesting of orientalism” (Bakic Hayden 1992; Todorova 1997) or nesting of otherness in our case referring to constant (re)inventing and (re)positioning of the new other in relation to who the (old) identity is (re)defined. In this period to talk about European Cinema meant to talk about European cinemas in plural emphasizing richness and diversity but also identity gaps that could not be bridged. The Europeaness as homogenised or pan European identity seems like unattainable concept as accurately and vividly diagnosed by G. Vincendau (1995, XV):

The multiplicity of tongues is itself indicative of the `patchwork` or `kaleidoscope` aspect of European Cultures. It is ironic that Europe, so intent on its `cultural exception` when faced with America in the GATT negotiations, based the European Union (...) on industry and commerce rather than culture, turning to the latter almost as an afterthought: the Council of Europe was founded in 1949 and the European Community in 1957, but directives on the cinema only came into action in mid 1980s”. (...)Where concreted policy is non-existent or fails to unite, what chance is there of a European cinema as a coherent entity, except in terms of its difference from others (Hollywood, `world cinema`)?

In this case the answer to the last, almost rhetorical question is by accommodating the difference within own boundaries and making the multiple, split identities own trademark.

1989-1999: First vs. Third Europe

The domination of `kaleidoscope` concept ended by the fall of Berlin Wall (1998) that opened the way for new rethinking of the divided identity of European Cinema. Nevertheless cultural identity, culture and cinema stay tightly knotted together. The heterogeneity of European cinema is renamed in accordance with the overall shifts of post time: post socialist, national and above all post-colonial. Model of Cinema of Nations is replaced by the Cinemas of First and Third world in Post-colonial optique. As Marina Grzinic (2005) claims the second Europe has disappeared and on its place appeared black whole, black box through which I and III world directly communicate. The imposed relabeling and redistribution of the roles turned disappeared Socialist block/ Eastern Europe into disappeared II world/II Europe; the

Western Balkans ravaged by wars and left out of EU borders became III world/Europe that communicate through the empty space with Western Europe that became I World/I Europe. The new situation is strengthened by Maria Todorova's (1997) theory of the increasing thirdworldisation of the Balkans seen, recognised and represented like the III world – poverty ridden, war ravaged, unstable countries, through an alternative aesthetics highlighting and founded upon poverty, oppression, garbage, hunger, political and economic dependency, cultural imperialism. Contrary to the expected western Balkans and non EU members like Turkey maintained steady production of quality that demanded appropriated ways of reading, interpretation, definition or historicisation.^{viii} The innovative mode is provided by the framework Postcolonial cinema/III world cinema conveniently related with the redefined III Europe and accordingly imposed post-colonial parallels. The analytical approach is again text oriented while the film texts are read as “sites of discursive contestations, or representational spaces, in which changing social and cultural meanings are generated and fought over” (Rings and Tamosunas 2003, 14). The fight involves the questioning of: the “traditional registers which portray self and the Other, ‘Civilised’ and ‘Barbarian’” (Rings and Tamosunas 2003, 15); deceptively unchangeable positions of centre and periphery and converts their dialogue into dialogue of equals instead of until then valid dialogue of superior centre with “subdued and inferior” periphery antithetically constructed (Ibid. loco.cit.)^{ix}

Pan European era (1999-)

The last period is marked by the U turn and restoration of the apparently severed links with the notion of national cinemas and nation as deterritorialised, imagined, flexible community, deconstructed only to be reconstructed in post-, trans-, and inter- context along the lines of increasing globalisation multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue (Dakovic 2005). In the post national era, the net of concrete legal and practical solutions-*sine qua non* for the creation of pan European (ess) as well as global European cinema- finally became efficient. The nodal point is work of the associations and funds like EUROIMAGES supporting the building of European Cinema as in most aspects, homogenised and “standardised” entity. In fact, the work might be described as the regulation and channelling of the polyphony, intercultural dialogue and exchange in order of conceptualising and promoting (pan) European cinema as the trademark of Europeaness. The sore point is the coordination of the EU preferences, demands and rules- financial but also thematic- and auteur freedom of non EU artists. The solution is the creative negotiation about the freedom of expression (artistic, national, identity etc...) resulting in the forms of accented, diasporic, exilic cinema (Naficy 2001) of growing importance. Simultaneously, measures supporting distribution of the films coming from all European countries around whole of the old continent presents valuable contribution for the realisation of the long standing goal- creation of the market that could match the one opened for Hollywood production. Number of programs allows the overcoming of the language barriers making Europe the market with the prescribed and guaranteed presence of European films. The era of the pan Europeaness, globalised and intercultural identity end long line of battles: for the protectionist measures such as quotas (1946-1948 Bloom-Byrnes agreement for the limiting of the presence on Hollywood films on the repertoires of French theatres); for the de-Americanisation of the French and European culture (1980s and 1990s, launched by Jack Lang) or of the failed Uruguay round of GATT negotiations in 1993. The contemporary notion of European cinema is of dynamic and flexible entity without fixed positions of centre and periphery, or casted roles of small and big other. It is identity appropriated to the model of polycentric multicultural space Europe nowadays is or at least desires to be.

European Cinema in constant redefining is discovered as the floating signifier of the changing concept of Europe and its cultural identity/Europeaness. In different moments of the evolution it stands for various othering and nesting of otherness (Hollywood, Eastern Europe, III Europe) while in present days it marks the coalescing into global and supra national forms of cinema. The remapping of European cinema follows the cultural strategies, aims and political priorities of the EU. In before EU/EEC era European cinema indicated the common cinematic identity of the mainly western European countries in firm opposition toward Hollywood. Following different phases of the growth of EC European cinema transforms into dynamic unity of national cinemas with the clear border of East and East, or afterwards of I and II Europe of postcolonial and post Berlin Wall era. The pan European, global cinema and identity nowadays are determined by the political premises (EU membership) as well as by compromise cultural identity model. (Pan)European civilisation as French concept is implemented via rigorous measures and mechanisms of German model of Kulturation.^x Contemporary situation might be seen as the upgraded concept -European Cinema of Supranational cinemas or European Cinema as Post national or Transnational Cinema that rejects and denies the need for othering. Pan Europeaness is achieved through intensive intercultural dialogue and exchange not on the individual national levels but rather among clustered larger than nation unities and productions. It respects motto *United Through Common Values, Enriched by Cultural Diversity* (The World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue 2011) - that replaced the older and simpler *Unity in Diversity* - uniting political and cinematic history and heir interrelatedness.

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ⁱ In the classical cinema Histories other modes of production like independent cinema or East coast cinema apart from II avant-garde are barely mentioned and Hollywood stands for mainstream emblematic US production,

ⁱⁱ More basic division is Hollywood and Indi(Pendent)

ⁱⁱⁱ Provisional and vivid description of europudding film is:

Un pudding, c'est un gâteau où l'on trouve des ingrédients divers et variés. Appliquée au cinéma, la recette est la suivante : une scénario au sujet large ou européen, la vie de Napoléon par exemple ; deux stars, Catherine Deneuve pour la France, John Malkovitch pour le Royaume-Uni ; un réalisateur italien, Roberto Benigni (*La Vie est belle*) ; des techniciens espagnols (leurs salaires sont compétitifs...). Mélangez le tout dans un tournage en Pologne (les studios y sont performants). Il ne reste plus qu'à déguster en anglais, pour que tout le monde comprenne. (Gallardo 2002)

^{iv} The promotion and evaluation of the annual production in USA predominantly relies upon system of yearly awards (and Oscar on its top) and fewer festivals (New York, Sundance, Palm Springs...) while in Europe it relies equally on the system of national annual awards and web of international, worldly acknowledge festivals (Venice, Cannes, Berlin, San Sebastian, Karlove Vary...). European Oscar first named Felix and then EFA/European Film Academy award was established only in 1988/1989.

^v The whole issue is father problematized by the difference of popular and highbrow culture as national cultures.

^{vi} Comp. Rosen 1984; Dakovic 2008.

^{vii} Comparable with Goddard's recommendation that one should not make revolutionary films but make film revolutionarily.

^{viii} On the other hand the production of disappeared II world went in sever decline being reduced to isolated projects made with ample support of the spreading European funds.

^{ix} However the subdued position resists through the development of theoretical or cultural imperialism that even this paper is example of.

^x It is universalist and rational vision "foreseeing enlightened state bureaucracy interacting with the market" (de Grazia 1998, 28)