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Strategies of Historicization of the Presented Cinematic World and Film Narrative in Historical Cinema. An Analysis of the Phenomenon on Selected Examples

Strategie uhistoryczniania filmowego świata przedstawionego i narracji filmowej w kinie historycznym. Analiza zjawiska na wybranych przykładach

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the issue of strategy of historicizing film narrative and the world presented on a screen in historical cinema. It shows with what elements the film narrative and the world presented on a screen are historicized. In the introduction of the article, the most important analytical categories such as historical film and strategies of historicizing film narrative and the world presented on a screen are conceptualized. Historical film is defined as an operational category requiring conceptualization relativized to a cultural context of its use. A historical film is described as a screening work covering various genealogical structures, the subject of which relates to the past. The strategies of historicizing the film narrative and the film world presented on a screen are understood as numerous ways

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of equipping the film with various signs of historicity that allow the viewer/researcher to get an impression of the screen effect of a time shift towards the past. In the following parts of the article, the signs of historicity that have the function of historicizing the film narrative and the world presented on a screen are analyzed on the examples of various films covering a wide spectrum of history from ancient times to the present day. The Signs of historicity include the following elements: (1) scenery, stage design, costumes; (2) language; (3) music; (4) characterization; (5) events and characters. Strategies of historicizing the world presented on a screen and film narrative, which have been analyzed in the article, play a particularly important role in the so-called classic films made in the aesthetics of zero style cinema.

Key words: visual history, historical film, film narrative, depicted world, staging, historicizing, set design, costumes, language, music, events, characters, makeup, mise-en-scène

INTRODUCTION

History has been a charming subject of interest of the cinema from its very beginning. It is worth mentioning in this context such titles as: *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise* (1908), directed by Albert Lambert and Charles Le Bargy; *The Birth of a Nation* (1915); *Intolerance* (1916), directed by David W. Griffith; *Napoleon* (1927), directed by Abel Gance; *Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *Ivan The Terrible* (1944, 1945), directed by Siergiej M. Eisenstein; *Ben Hur* (1925), directed by Fred Niblo; *La Grande Illusion* (1937), directed by Jean Renoir; *Gone with the Wind* (1939), directed by George Cukor; *Rome, Open City* (1945), directed by Roberto Rossellini; *Kościuszkó near Raclawice* (1938), directed by Józef Lejtes; *Forbidden Songs* (1946), directed by Leonard Buczkowski; *The Last Stage* (1947); *The Soldier of Victory* (1953), directed by Wanda Jakubowska; *Sewer* (1956), *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), directed by Andrzej Wajda, and much more. Today, historical cinema is a subject of interest of not only historians of film and specialists in film studies but also of historians, especially theoreticians and methodologists of history. They treat film as an instrument of serious reflection on history and the past constituting a real alternative for the official academic historiography. They see filmmakers as unconventional historians who are partners for licensed researchers of past realities in the debate on the past and history. Therefore, historical film is considered by historians not as a work of art – a product of social artistic practice – but an audiovisual historical narrative able to contribute to the debate about the past in an interesting way¹.

¹ See: e.g.: R.A. Rosenstone, *History on Film: Film on History*, London–New York–Boston–San Francisco–Toronto–Tokyo–Singapore–Hong Kong–Seoul–Taipei–New Delhi–Cape

Here, we should reflect over the status of film as historical narrative – in other words, over the way in which a film becomes historical. In one of my previous texts, I wrote that a film (documentary/feature film), being a form of modeling and recording of social experience and constructing variants of possible worlds through the act of filming, becomes a historical one in the case when it is considered to be such by the viewers/scholars within particular interpretative community. Thus, perceiving a film as historical is related to the way in which we understand historicity in a given system of reference. The same film might be considered historical in one system of reference, whereas in another one it may not deem to be such. This means that historical film is an operational category every time requiring conceptualization relativized according to the cultural context of its use. In my reflections, I will use the conceptualization of historical film offered by Zygmunt Machwitz. In his opinion, historical film has a syncretic character, and that means that it exists in result of inter-genre instrumentation. So, 'historical film [...] is a collective name, including various genological structures, whose theme relates to the past, is supported by historical knowledge that, combined with fiction, gives a generalized image of the past, remaining within perceptual possibilities a viewer equipped with a specific historical consciousness'².

Considering a given film to be a cinematic historical narrative within an interpretative community is conditioned by the signs of historicity, that the author equipped the work with, and by cultural competence of the viewer, that is by the ability to recognize in particular work the signs and formulas serving as denotations of historicity of the screen story. Of course, particular signs and formulas that are denotations of historicity of the cinematic historical narrative have relative character. Depending on the interpretative context, given signs and formulas may be recognized and considered to be signs of historicity of a film narrative or not. I call various

Town–Madrid–Mexico City–Amsterdam–Munich–Paris–Milan 2006; idem, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*, Cambridge MA–London 1995; P. Witek, *Andrzej Wajda jako historyk. Metodologiczne studium z historii wizualnej*, Lublin 2016; idem, *Kultura. Film. Historia. Metodologiczne problemy doświadczenia audiowizualnego*, Lublin 2005; M. Ferro, *Cinema and History*, Wayne State University Press 1988.

² 'film historyczny [...] jest nazwą zbiorczą, obejmującą różne struktury genologiczne, których temat odnosi się do przeszłości, wsparty jest wiedzą historyczną, która w połączeniu z fikcją daje uogólniony obraz przeszłości, pozostający w możliwościach percepcyjnych widza wyposażonego w określoną świadomość historyczną'. Z. Machwitz, *Fabularny film historyczny – problemy gatunku*, 'Folia Filmologica. Zeszyty Naukowe' 1983, 1, p. 125. I developed this issue elsewhere. See: P. Witek, *Film historyczny jako gatunek dwójakiego rodzaju. Kilka uwag metodologicznych o „(nie)użyteczności” teorii genologicznej w refleksji o filmie historycznym*, 'Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio F' 2011, 66, 2, pp. 87–113.

ways of equipping film in different kinds of denotations of historicity the strategies of historicization of film narrative and the presented cinematic world.

Due to the fact that the conception that I respect assumes that historical film is a story depicting the closer or more distant past, one of the most important signs of historicity of the film story is, in this case, the effect of screen shift in time towards the past. It consists in the viewer being aware of the difference between the world presented on the screen and the one that he/she knows from his/her contemporary everyday experience.

SCENERY, SCENOGRAPHY, COSTUMES

Historicity of film narrative and the presented world is manifested, in this case, by, among others, three basic elements: scenery, scenography and costumes. Recognizing them as historical (denoting the past) enables us to consider the film narrative and the presented world as historical.

Let us use as an example one of the first historical films, *The Assassination of the Duke of Guise*. The film is a silent story, realized in 1908, lasting a quarter. The film plot takes place on 25 December 1588. The Duke Guise is a leader of French Catholics. He is also a candidate for the throne. Summoned by the king Henry III, he goes to the castle of Blois. The ruler prepares a trap for the duke. He orders armed with swords and daggers courtiers to murder Guise as soon as he crosses the doorstep of king's apartment. The duke takes up a fight with the attackers but, outnumbered, gives up and is killed. The king orders to burn the body of the murdered.

A very important role of defining historicity of the narrative is played in this picture by scenography and costumes. Interiors and clothes are stylized as the old ones. They differ from those known by the viewers at the beginning of the 20th century from everyday experience. On the screen, we can see men dressed in crinkled, thigh-fitting trousers, stockings, high heels shoes/slippers, caftans with capes fastened to them, they wear hats on their heads and berets, with rapiers attached to their belts³. The look of the interiors, clothes of particular characters and props resembles the interiors, attires, and props known from the iconography of the epoch that the film depicts and from paintings presenting the 16th century, created in the 17th, 18th or 19th century. In this context, it is worth mentioning exemplary paintings: 'The Death of Henry II at the Hand of a Monk' (Hugues Merle), 'Henry III and the Duke Guise' (Pierre-Charles Comte),

³ M. Gutkowska-Rychlewska, *Historia ubiorów*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1968.

'Ball at the Court of Henry III' (Unknown), 'The Assassination of Guise' (Paul Delaroche).

The situation is not different in the case of films realized in later years. A good example may be the screenings of the novels of Henryk Sienkiewicz 'Quo Vadis' from 1951, directed by Mervyn LeRoy, and from 2001, directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, depicting Rome in the times of Nero⁴. The scenography and costumes in these films also play a very important role in defining historicity of the narrative and the depicted world.

On the screen, we see architecture stylized as that typical for the ancient Rome. One of the most typical objects is the amphitheater with open oval arena and seats for the audience in the form of steps. This type of buildings usually hosted games which included gladiator fights and chariot racing. The arena of amphitheater in the mentioned films serves mostly as a place of execution of Christians killed by wild animals. Buildings on the streets of Rome and interiors of houses of Roman officials visible in both films are equipped with columns typical for the ancient world, known from preserved fragments (ruins) of ancient buildings⁵. We can also see, on the squares of the Eternal City and in the interiors of the palace of Nero and Roman senators, monuments, statues, busts, resembling ancient sculptures displayed in contemporary museums.

We can also see, in the film, Roman officials traveling through the city in sedan chairs carried by slaves. Mentions about this form of travel through the streets of ancient Rome can be found in ancient texts – for instance, in Seneca⁶. Also, figurines depicting men carrying a sedan chair

⁴ On screening of *Quo Vadis* of Henryk Sienkiewicz see: J. Słodowski, *Filmowe adaptacje Quo Vadis? Henryka Sienkiewicza*, in: *Sienkiewicz i film*, ed. L. Ludorowski, Kielce 1998, pp. 101–110. On visualization of ancient Rome in film see a very interesting study: M. Wyke, *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History*, London 1997.

⁵ On architecture of ancient Rome see e.g.: E. Makowiecka, *Sztuka Rzymu od Augusta do Konstantyna*, Warszawa 2010.

⁶ See: L.A. Seneka, *Listy moralne do Lucyliusza*, LV, zrodla.historyczne.pl, 2003, <http://biblioteka.kijowski.pl/antyk%20rzymski/06.%20seneka%20lucjusz%20anneusz%20-%20listy%20moralne%20do%20lucyliusza.pdf> [accessed on: 10 V 2020]: 'Gdy właśnie wracam z odbytej w lektyce przejażdżki, czuję się nie mniej zmęczony, niż gdybym to, co przesiedziałem, przebył pieszo. Bo dać się długo nieść to także trud; i nie wiem, czy nie tym większy, że sprzeczny jest z naturą, która dała nam nogi, żebyśmy sami chodzili, i oczy, żebyśmy sami patrzyli. Wygody osła były nas tak, iż staliśmy się niezdolni do wszystkiego, na co przez dłuższy czas nie mieliśmy ochoty. Dla mnie jednak wstrząsanie ciała było potrzebne po to, by żółć, jeśli osiadła w ciasnych przewodach, została rozpędzona, lub sam oddech, jeśli z jakiejś przyczyny stał się gęstszy, był rozcieńczony przez wstrząsy, które wedle mego odczucia dobrze mi robiły' ['While I am just returning from a ride in a sedan chair, I feel no less tired than if I walked what I was sitting. Because letting them to be carried long – is also a labor; and I do not know if not even bigger, as it is contradictory with nature which gave us legs to walk ourselves, and eyes to see ourselves. Comforts

coming from ancient Rome have been preserved. This way, the sedan chair also performs the function of denoting both the 'ancient' historicity of the world presented in the film and the historicity of the screen story.

A characteristic emblem of the world of ancient Rome are, undoubtedly, chariots – two-wheeled carts pulled by horses, used by the Roman army e.g. as parade carts or by the participants of the games for races. We see them in the film of LeRoy several times. On the beginning, right after the prologue, we watch the return to Rome of the 14th Legion under the command of Marcus Vindictus who travels in a chariot drawn by two horses. Chariots have also been incredibly well presented in the scene of the praetorian chase after Vinicius rushing to the rescue of Lygia after the arson of Rome by Nero. In the picture of Kawalerowicz, the chariots are not displayed in such a spectacular way as in the American film, however, they appear there as well. In both films, they resemble the ancient Roman vehicles visible in, among others, ancient mosaics preserved to this day. And as in the case of sedan chair, they perform the function of an 'ancient' denotation of historicity of film narrative and the presented world.

Attires in films on the ancient Rome are exceptionally emblematic – men's outfits, worn by high officials in particular. They included a white tunic and a toga. Representatives of higher classes wore white tunics with two red stripes about 4 cm wide, running down from the arms. Senators also wore white tunics with one, 8 cm wide, red stripe running between the arms down from the neck. Toga was an outwear. It was a piece of material folded lengthwise. Its one edge was thrown on the left arm, then was put on the back, while its other edge was taken under the right arm and again thrown on the left arm, this time to the front⁷. In the American version of the film, characters from the circle of the emperor Nero wear white gowns stylized as Roman tunics. They are similar in the film of Kawalerowicz. For example, Marcus Vindictus wears a white tunic with two red stripes, Petronius and Aulus Placius wear white tunics decorated with one red stripe. In the American screening, outwear of the Roman high officials resemble more of capes or coats stylized as togas. The oeuvre of Kawalerowicz is a bit different – the outwear of the high officials looks here are togas that we can see in the preserved ancient frescoes or

weakened us, so we became unable to do anything we would not like to do for a long time. For me, however, shaking the body was necessary for the gall, if not settled in narrow conduits, to be dispersed, or for the breath, if for some reason became thicker, to be diluted by the shakes that, in my opinion, did me well'].

⁷ See: F. Boucher, *20000 Years of Fashion. The History of Costume and Personal Adornment*, London 1959; J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome: The People and the City at the Height of the Empire*, New Haven 2003.

Roman sculptures (e.g. the, so-called, Barberini statue). Tunics and togas appearing in films about ancient Rome, as sedan chairs or chariots, act as denotations of historicity of the presented world and film narrative. They enable viewers to recognize that the film plot is situated not in the 17th-century France but in the ancient Rome.

Films depicting the past nearer to contemporaneity, 19th or 20th century, are no different. Let us look at some examples of films presenting the last century.

The film *Stalingrad* (2013), directed by Fiodor Bondarчук, depicts the siege of Stalingrad by the German army under the command of the general Friedrich Paulus, defended by the Red Army and the inhabitants of the city during the Second World War. The film's plot takes place in a war landscape, among ruins, in the streets and on the squares piled high with rubble. It is difficult then to expect the scenery to be a sufficient denotation of historicity which would indicate the fact that, on the screen, we deal with a reference to a particular period in the past. Urban ruins not necessarily have to denote a war landscape. We can easily imagine that the city lying in rubble that we see on the screen is an effect of e.g. an earthquake or ecological catastrophe in a non-specified time (the past, present, and the future). For that reason, other elements play the role of the denotations of historicity in the film of Bondarчук. As the film depicts warfare, these are, first of all, uniforms and equipment of soldiers fighting on both sides of the front.

German soldiers wear uniforms of field gray color. Particular characters are dressed in uniform jackets resembling uniform blouses (models M36, M43) and trousers (models M37, M40, M43). Officers wear uniform jackets which can be associated with uniform blouses (model HBT). We can see, on the heads of German privates and non-commissioned officers, forage caps, with a design referring to models M43 and M34 and helmets of Stahlhelm type with a visible cut in front and specific neck protection in the back, with emblems of swastika painted on the sides. In the film, the design of the headgear of officers resembles round caps with hard peak of crusher type. Soldiers and non-commissioned officers wear two kinds of weapon which, by their look, refer to the mauzer 98K rifle and MP40 machine gun ('schmeisser'). Officers use short weapon that looks like P08 gun (parabellum).

Red Army soldiers in the film of Bondarчук wear uniforms of green and khaki color. Most often, they are dressed in uniform blouses with a few buttons on the chest resembling gimnastiorkas (no 35). Their design was based on peasants' shirts called rubaska. Equally often, soldiers appear on the screen in quilted jackets (waciaks) resembling warm work

clothes of kufajka/tielofriekja type. We can see three types of headgear on the heads of Red Army soldiers: forage caps with a star, earflaps with a star and 6-rivet helmets. Red Army soldiers in the film use automatic weapons with a drum magazine that look like PPSz41 submachine guns. Officers and commanders are equipped with short weapons which, by its shape, resemble Soviet gun of Fiodor Tokariew's construction so called TT (tetetka)⁸.

Uniforms and armaments of both armies fighting with each other in the film of Bondarczuk are very similar to those known from thousands of photographs and film chronicles depicting German and Soviet soldiers from the period of the Second World War. Their appearance has been preserved and functions in the public space mainly thanks to historical documentaries using archival chronicles and aired in thematic TV channels such as ViaSat History, Discovery History, History or TVP Historia, as well as historical channels on YouTube devoted to the war from the years of 1939–1945. The image of German and Soviet soldiers in the film *Stalingrad* allows viewers to easily recognize that the plot of the screened history takes place during the Second World War, and this way clearly serves as a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented world.

Films depicting even closer past, e.g. of the last two decades of the 20th century, also deal with similar procedures of historicization. Let us take a look at the biographical film *The Dirt* (2019), directed by Jeffrey James Tremain. It shows a story of an American band, Mötley Crüe, popular in the 1980s and on the beginning of the 1990s, playing metal music (described also as pop metal or hair metal)⁹.

One of the important features of glam metal music was a very distinctive look of the performers, created and popularized at the end of the 1970s by, among others, members of the group KISS. Each of the musicians of this American band performed on stage in heavy and eye-catching makeup, heavy boots, decorated with sequins and studs leather jackets and tight pants.

In Tremain's film, in the scenes depicting everyday life, we can see the musicians from the band dressed in skinny pants, loose T-shirts, black, biker-type leather jackets as well as jeans jackets (often with sleeves cut off presenting tattoos on their arms). The members of the group also wear long hair.

The stage image of the band differs from that of everyday life. In the scenes from concerts, we can see the artists in provocative outfits including:

⁸ On uniforms and armaments of German and Soviet military formations from the time of the Second World War see: P. Rio, *The Soviet Soldier 1941–1945*, Histoire et Collections 2011; J. de Lagarde, *German Soldiers of World War Two*, Casemate Publishers 2005.

⁹ On metal music see e.g.: B. Major, *Dionizos w glanach. Ekstatyczność muzyki metalowej*, Kraków 2013.

tight (black-red) pants, T-shirts, studded black leather bands on their wrists, arms and forearms, wide leather belts fastened on the hips (also studded), studded black leather collars, studded multicolored belts with visible buckles entwining half-naked torsos, black leather armlets, black bands on their heads with pentagram on the forehead. The image is supplemented with spectacular makeup in the form of heavily painted cheeks, lips and eyes. On their faces, we can see painted patterns and lines resembling body decorations used by, for example, Native Americans. To complement this stage image, the musicians in the film wear long, teased hair.

The appearance of the members of Mötley Crüe presented on the screen corresponds with the image of this kind of music groups of the 1980s, created and popularized by the unusually popular at that time TV station MTV (here it is important to note that the TV station appears in the film *The Dirt*), whose program was based on showing music videos, concerts and interviews with musicians, and by illustrated music magazines of that time (e.g. 'Metal Hammer') publishing, among others, photographs of artists of the music scene. Thanks to the images produced by MTV and illustrated music magazines, the characteristic image of the bands of the 1980s playing glam metal functions in the space of contemporary public media. Original video materials from the 1980s, where we can see the image of Mötley Crüe of that time, are available on YouTube on the channel devoted to the group¹⁰. Therefore, the characteristic costumes which we see in the screened story by Tremain effectively perform the function of denotations of historicity in the film narrative and the presented world thanks to the fact that they bear similarity to the costumes of glam metal musicians of the 1980s that we can see in the archival materials of MTV.

Historical films not accidentally are sometimes named as costumed films as the styling of scenography and costumes so that they appear as historical is indeed an important strategy of historicization of film narrative and the presented world.

LANGUAGE

An important element of the strategy of historicization of film narrative and the presented world is language which is used by the characters on the screen. In films speaking about older epochs – Antiquity or Middle Ages – characters often speak contemporary languages. In the case of

¹⁰ Mötley Crüe, Official Website, YouTube, 30 August 2011, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCq2g_Vcu3J1OwNRmdTNoxYA [accessed on: 8 VI 2019].

the productions of Hollywood it is the English language, in European pictures these are national languages of particular cinematographies: French, Spanish, Russian, Polish, etc. And in the aforementioned film *Quo Vadis* (1951), directed by Mervyn LeRoy, the emperor Nero played by Peter Ustinov, or Petronius played by Leo Genn, speak and communicate in a beautiful contemporary American English. In *Quo Vadis* by Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Nero and his circle speak in a beautiful contemporary Polish. In the film *The Cradle* (1974), directed by Jan Rybkowski, prince Mieszko I, played by Wojciech Pszoniak, also speaks with contemporary Polish, while the rhetoric he uses resembles strongly the rhetoric from speeches of the Communist Party secretaries from the turn of the 1960s and 1970s. In such cases, it is difficult to speak about the use of language in the function of historicization of the narrative and the presented world.

However, there are many film productions where the authors pay attention to the language and treat it similarly to scenography or costumes, that means, as an instrument of obtaining on the screen the effect of time shift towards the past.

One of the most spectacular examples of this kind of procedure is the considered controversial biblical drama by Mel Gibson entitled *The Passion of the Christ* (2003). Contrary to the classic Hollywood productions, like for instance mentioned *Quo Vadis*, the dialogues and speeches in Gibson's film are expressed by the characters in several ancient languages – Hebrew, Latin¹¹, and Aramaic¹² – which were used in the time and the area that the film talks about. Use of historical languages in their archaic sound by the film director in his tale of ancient times is, in this picture, one of very important denotations of historicity. This procedure was a very successful instrument of obtaining the effect of time shift, and, at the same time, of historicization of the film narrative and the presented world.

Mel Gibson's proposal is one of a very few. Film directors usually do not reach for such radical film procedures of historicization of film narrative and screen reality. This does not mean, however, that they resign from them completely. Easier solutions, consisting in styling of a language as a historical one, are more frequently used. A great example of such tricks may be Polish films presenting the period of the First Polish Republic – the trilogy of Sienkiewicz directed by Jerzy Hoffman. While watching *Colonel Wolodyjowski* (1969), *The Deluge* (1974) or *With Fire and Sword* (1999), we

¹¹ On the Latin language see: J. Safarewicz, *Zarys historii języka łacińskiego*, Wrocław 1986.

¹² On the Aramaic language see: P. Nowicki, *Język aramejski. Zagadnienia podstawowe*, Warszawa 1964.

listen to the dialogues expressed in the Polish language which are for an average viewer completely understandable, what means that the characters use contemporary Polish. Nevertheless, that Polish has been enriched with elements which do not occur in the contemporary Polish. There are expressions such as: *waćpan, waćpanna, kompanija, waszmość, waść*, as well as phrases with characteristic syntax: 'through the intercession of the Orszański standard-bearer, Andrzej Kmicic, to Michał Wołodyjowski with the other stray and my other colonels, for rebel to death condemned, I spare life and to Birczański prison I order to send them back'¹³, etc. Thanks to the used styling, the language appears as Old Polish, the one which was used in the times of the First Polish Republic¹⁴. This styling is an effective instrument of obtaining the screen impression of time shift and historicization of the film narrative and the presented world.

Also films presenting closer past use similar procedures of historicization. A good example may be the pictures showing the times of the Polish People's Republic.

The film *The Great Race* (1981), directed by Jerzy Domaradzki, depicts a story of young activists of the Polish Youth Association and work leaders from entire Poland taking part in a peace race organized by the communist authorities in spring 1952. The characters of the screen story speak contemporary Polish language understandable both for the viewer watching the film in the 1980s (when the film was made) and for the viewer watching Domaradzki's picture in the second decade of the 21st century. It might seem, then, that it would be difficult to consider the language that is spoken by particular characters to be an effective instrument of obtaining the effect of timeshift to the past on the screen. However, once we listen carefully to that language, we will notice that it is strongly characterized by the climate of the historical period presented by the film.

We deal, in the screen story, with a rhetoric characteristic for the Stalinist era. Communist apparatchiks in the film, when addressing singular person, use the second person pronoun in the plural – Polish 'wy' (in contrast to singular 'ty'): 'you know what you (wy) must do, what a bighead you (wy) are, the success of this enterprise will be your (wasz) success, etc. It is a typical way of addressing each other by

¹³ 'za wstawieniem chorążego orszańskiego Andrzeja Kmicica, Michałowi Wołodyjowskiemu z onym drugim przybędą i innym moim pułkownikom za bunt na śmierć skazanym darowuję życie i do birczańskiego więzienia odesłać nakazuję'.

¹⁴ On the Old Polish language see e.g.: Z. Klemensiewicz, *Historia języka polskiego*, part 1, *Doba staropolska (od czasów najdawniejszych do początków XVI wieku)*, Warszawa 1961; idem, *Historia języka polskiego*, part 2, *Doba średniopolska (od początków XVI wieku do ósmego dziesięciolecia XVIII wieku)*, Warszawa 1965.

communist activists officially used in the time of the Polish People's Republic. The characters of the film communicate often with each other by the use of the term 'comrade' (both in masculine and feminine forms): 'how does comrade chairman know?'; 'there, in the room, you will find comrade Wrzesień'; 'I am very sorry, comrade, I am only for a moment'; 'comrade Fastyn has our full confidence'; etc. From the beginning of the Polish People's Republic, the term 'comrade' was also used by the state and administrative authorities.

The year 1952, when the film plot takes place, is a time characterized by intensification of terror of the authorities towards the society and of the propaganda imposing the only right vision of the world defined and respected by the communist ideology¹⁵. We deal with symptoms of this propaganda in the language which is used by the characters of the film – communist functionaries and average participants of the race. In one of the scenes, we see an official event of taking an oath by the sportsmen. The text of the oath is read by a communist functionary Wrzesień. Let us recall the words of the oath: 'We, the Polish youth, devoted to the cause of the fight for the only right social system – socialism, swear that we will use our strength and courage achieved in sport for an anticipatory realization of the six year plan'¹⁶. The text of the oath elevates, in this case, the socialist system and everyone who works for its cause.

In the scene depicting the beginning of the next stage of the race, right before the start, one of the participants of the competition reads an official letter to the president Bierut prepared by the organizers: 'We, the participants of the peace race, are extending our sincere thanks to you, our best friend, for the help and care that the people's state and the government under your leadership have given to the mass youth movement. Only under the conditions that you have created for us, we, young workers and peasants, can we develop our abilities and make our fathers' dreams come true. We send You, Citizen President, expressions of deep love and devotion, and fruitful work for the happiness of our nation. Long live the president of the Polish People's Republic, Bolesław Bierut'¹⁷. The text of the letter and its

¹⁵ On this topic see e.g.: M. Mazur, *O człowieku tendencyjnym. Obraz nowego człowieka w propagandzie komunistycznej w okresie Polski Ludowej i PRL 1944–1956*, Lublin 2009.

¹⁶ 'My młodzież polska, oddana sprawie walki o jedyny ustrój społeczny – socjalizm, przysięgamy, że naszą siłę i odwagę zdobytą w sporcie wykorzystamy do przedterminowego wykonania planu sześćdziesięcioletniego'.

¹⁷ 'My uczestnicy biegu pokoju, składamy tobie, naszemu najlepszemu przyjacielowi, serdeczne podziękowanie za pomoc i opiekę, jaką państwo ludowe i rząd pod twoim kierownictwem otaczają masowy ruch młodzieżowy. Jedynie w warunkach, jakie stworzyliście nam, my młodzi robotnicy i chłopcy możemy rozwijać nasze zdolności i realizować marzenia ojców. Przesyłamy Ci obywatelu prezydencie wyrazy głębokiej miłości i oddania i owocnej

language are symptoms of the communist newspeak and of a phenomenon of the cult of individual from the first decades of the People's Poland.

In the film, the language of communist propaganda is used in communication between average participants of the peace race also in everyday private conversations. In one of the scenes, we hear a dialogue of two young boys Romek Martyniuk and Józek Butrym – Martyniuk: 'Józek, I will not manage to run further'¹⁸, Butrym: 'Romuś, a true member of the Polish Youth Association is distinguished by fighting strength, will of character and great fortitude. [...] We will prove to them that we can, not by words, but by deeds, win not only at the construction site, defeat not only imperialists and class enemies, but also other crooks. We will prove to them. It is an obligation of every member of the Youth Association'¹⁹. This exchange almost immediately brings to mind the dialogues from the propaganda so-realist films²⁰ produced in Poland in the 1940s and 1950s, commentaries from film chronicles of the Polish Film Chronicle and the press of that time²¹.

Thus, due to the similarity of the rhetoric of the language used by the characters of the film *The Great Race* and the rhetoric of the language of the propaganda messages known from feature films, film materials of the Polish Film Chronicle and the press of the Stalinist era, we can say that the language in the picture of Jerzy Domaradzki performs the function of a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented cinematic world. The language that is spoken by the film characters constitutes an effective instrument for obtaining the screen impression of time shift towards the past.

MUSIC

Historicity of film narrative and the presented world may be manifested also through the audio-sphere, for instance, music. Let us take

pracy dla szczęścia naszego narodu. Niech żyje prezydent Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej Bolesław Bieruś'.

¹⁸ 'Józiu, ja nie dam rady dalej biec'.

¹⁹ 'Romuś, prawdziwy ZMP-owiec wyróżnia się siłą walki, wolą charakteru i wielkim hartem ducha. [...] Nie słowami, lecz czynem dowiedziemy im, że potrafimy zwyciężać nie tylko na budowie, nie tylko imperialistów i wrogów klasowych, ale i innych cwaniaków. Pokażemy im. To jest obowiązkiem każdego ZMP-owca'.

²⁰ On so-realist cinema see: A. Madej, *Socrealizm*, 'Kwartalnik Filmowy' 1994, 6, pp. 195–203. Also see: T. Lubelski, *Historia kina polskiego. Twórcy, filmy, konteksty*, Katowice 2009, pp. 143–156; M. Haltof, *Kino polskie*, Gdańsk 2002, pp. 75–92.

²¹ On propaganda in film and press in 1944–1956 see: M. Mazur, *op. cit.*, pp. 241–253, 283–301.

a look at a few examples. The film *Yesterday* (1984), directed by Radosław Piwowski, depicts the story of a group of young boys from a provincial technical school sharing love for the music of the British group The Beatles. Their love for the rock stars from the Islands is manifested through, among others, the fact that the four protagonists copy the dressing style of their idols, wear similar haircuts, take nicknames coming from the names of the members of the band: John, Paul, George and Ringo, start their own music band. In the film, the main characters' fascination with music is the motivation for their behavior. The life of the students of the technical school goes on around the music. They listen to the recordings of The Beatles from music postcards, radio, or they perform the pieces of the British artists themselves. In the film, we can hear such pieces of music as, among others, those from the debut album 'Please Please Me' (1963) and the album 'A Hard Day's Night' (1964).

Taking into consideration the fact that the explosion of popularity of The Beatles occurred in the 1960s and that we hear in the film one of the most known pieces of the four from Liverpool (e.g. 'Love Me Do', 'And I Love Her') from the beginning of the group's career, it can be said that the diegetic music in Piwowski's picture successfully performs the function of a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented world. It signals effectively that the story presented on the screen takes place in the middle of the sixth decade of the 20th century.

In the film *The Dirt*, aforementioned in this article, a biographical tale about the group Mötley Crüe playing a pop variety of metal, music plays a very important role. Glam metal is a commercial variety of heavy metal²², created at the turn of the 1970s and 1980s, most popular in the ninth decade of the previous century. Heavy metal as a music genre was created on the basis of blues rock and hard rock. Simplifying, it can be said that heavy metal music is characterized by a heavy tone achieved with strongly distorted guitars and bass, diversified and variable tempo of the songs (from slow and heavy to very fast), impressive guitar solos and distinctive vocal. Glam metal combines the features of heavy metal and pop music²³. The latter is – in great simplification – characterized by a rhythmical simplicity, ear-catching easy melodic line, usually lively (dance) arrangement, superficial borrowings from other music styles, and easy to remember and repeat lyrics. Thus, glam metal is characterized by uncomplicated rhythm, tone stylized as heavy, variable tempo of the

²² See note 9 in this text.

²³ On pop music see: *The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock*, eds. J. Street, W. Straw, S. Frith, Cambridge 2001.

songs, impressive solos and, what is most important, ear-catching melody. And this style of music can be heard in the film *The Dirt*.

Compositions of Mötley Crüe, known from at least MTV, appear in the film. Following the story of the group, we listen to, among others, songs such as 'Live Wire' from the album 'Too Fast for Love' (1981), 'Shout at the Devil' from the album 'Shout at the Devil' (1983), 'Girls, Girls Girls' from the album 'Girls, Girls, Girls' (1987), 'Dr. Feelgood' from the album 'Dr. Feelgood' (1989), 'Kickstart My Heart' from the album 'Kickstart My Heart' (1989)²⁴. It is the music characteristic for the 1980s. Thanks to the fact that it is easy recognizable and associated with the ninth decade of the previous century, it successfully serves in the film *The Dirt* as a denotation of historicity of the screen narrative and the presented world.

We encounter a bit different form of use of music in the film by Andrzej Wajda *Man of Marble* (1976). The film plot takes place in two temporal dimensions – in the mid-1970s (when the picture was realized) and in the 1950s. In the sequence showing the 1970s, we can hear a then modern, perfectly arranged, synthesizer disco music by Andrzej Korzyński, referring to international trends. The scenes depicting the 1950s, mostly film shots stylized as documentary, are most often accompanied by the music from that time. Already in the very beginning, when we are watching shots realized within the framework of documentary aesthetics, depicting breaking the record by Birkut and his team, we can hear a socialist song, coming from the background, entitled 'Service for Poland', beginning with the words: 'the song comes to the lips again'. This song appears in the film several times. Documentary shots depicting the rebuilding of the capital are accompanied by the song 'We are building a new home'. The shots which are stylized as documentary as well as documentary shots depicting a march going through the streets of rebuilt Warsaw, in which young builders of Nowa Huta participate, are echoed by the song 'The March of Friendship' performed by the band 'Mazowsze'. We listened to the mentioned songs together with the main character Agnieszka while she is watching archival materials in the screening room. Socialist songs appear not only in the context of monochromatic documentary shots. We hear them in several polichromatic scenes that serve to reconstruct the social reality of the 1950s. A good example may be the scene depicting Mateusz Birkut and Wincenty Witek traveling by train to the field to a show of team brickwork. In the first shot of the scene, with a going train we can hear march sounds of the song 'The March of Friendship' coming from the

²⁴ Music videos for these songs see: Mötley Crüe, Official Website, YouTube, 30 August 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/user/MotleyCrueMusic/videos> [accessed on: 25 VI 2019].

background. When the action moves to the interior of the train car, non-diegetic music fades. Then, in subsequent shots, we see Birkut and Witek singing a fragment of the chorus of the song 'The March of Friendship' with lyrics: 'Come on, young Slavs, come on, Greeks, Spaniards, a young Chinese rises to the march. Soon others, black brothers from Virginia will join, heroic Malaya, will hasten'²⁵. In the scene depicting breaking the brickwork record by the Birkut's team, we can hear music played through megaphones on the construction site. The proceeding workers are accompanied by the songs 'Warsaw Day' and 'We Are Building a New Home' playing in the background.

The aforementioned music examples are popular songs of the 1950s – so called mass songs²⁶. Because of their character – ideologically engaged texts, arrangement, march rhythm – they associate unequivocally with the early era of socialism. For that reason, the director used them successfully as denotations of historicity of the presented world and the film narrative. Here, it is worth pointing out one more procedure which was used by Wajda. He put together the mass songs of the sixth decade of the 20th century and very modern music of Korzyński. In comparison to the modernist, electronic sound, dance rhythm and music arrangement referring to euro-disco style (the precursor of which was probably the group Silver Convention, and one of the most known representatives of the trend – the band Boney M, formed in 1976), the songs 'Service for Poland', 'The March of Friendship', 'We Are Building a New Home', 'Warsaw Day', appear especially archaic. Thus, contrasting the music of the 1970s with the music from the 1950s, additionally emphasized, in a way, the historical character of the latter. Thanks to this, it became for the director a perfect instrument of obtaining the effect of time shift towards the past.

CHARACTERIZATION

Another important aspect of historicization of film narrative and the presented world is characterization. Let us take a look at a few selected examples. *The Fall* (2004), directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel, depicts the last days of life of Adolf Hitler in besieged Berlin. The Führer, together with his

²⁵ 'Dalej, młodzi Słowianie, dalej, Grecy, Hiszpanie, młody Chińczyk do marszu powstaje. Wnet dołączą tu inni, czarni bracia z Wirginii, bohaterscy pospieszą Malaje'.

²⁶ On mass songs see: M. Sułek, *Pieśni masowe o Nowej Hucie*, 'Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów UJ. Nauki Humanistyczne' 2010, 1, pp. 152–160. Also see: K. Bittner, *Partia z piosenką, piosenka z partią. PZPR wobec muzyki rozrywkowej*, Warszawa 2017.

collaborators, friends, officers and devoted services, is hiding in a bunker in the cellar of the chancellery of the Reich. Waiting for the end of the war and final defeat, he commits suicide. Let us focus on the figure of Hitler. Watching the film, it is not difficult to recognize the leader of the Third Reich. It is because, thanks to characterization, the cinematic Adolf Hitler is very similar to the Adolf Hitler we know from preserved photographs, official film chronicles and private amateur film shot by, among others, Eva Braun for instance in the Führer's residence in Berghof. The issue of costumes has been already discussed, so I will skip it here. I will only focus on the physiognomy.

We can observe on the archival photographs and films from the epoch that Hitler was a rather slim person of average height. Depending on a photograph or film, Hitler's face appears as oval or oblong. There is the particular mustache on the face in the form of a rectangle with width not exceeding the lines marking the width of the nose. Narrow lips, often giving an impression of being pursed. Straight nose, proportional to the size of the face. Small eyes, narrowly apart. A bit protruding ears. Dark hair (dark blond), looking sparse, cut short with characteristic bangs combed to the left. When we are watching the film *The Fall* and the appearing figure of Hitler played by Brunon Ganz, we can see a face modeled on Hitler's face known from preserved archival images. The actor's face is a bit oval, lips narrow, pursed, eyes small. But when we are looking at the screen, the most typical features of the physiognomy of the leader of the Third Reich are immediately conspicuous: the mustache and the left-combed bangs. They are, in this case, important emblems which serve as an element of similarity of the film character and the figure known from archival films and photographs, and this way of the film character's historicization. The mustache and the bangs of Hitler are emblematic to the extent in which they can serve to denote a figure as Hitler, even if its posture or the face shape are a bit different from the pattern known from archival images. This means that characterization is a particularly important instrument of obtaining the screen effect of time shift towards the past and can serve successfully as a denotation of historicity of the narrative and the presented world.

Let us take a look at another example. In this context, films or series depicting the time of the First Polish Republic, where we deal with representatives of the Polish gentry and magnates, can be interesting. Also here I will be interested in physiognomy. In a good elaboration on the website kresy.pl, Radosław Sikora made, based on the iconography preserved from the times of the First Republic, a comparison of various presentations of Sarmatian faces. He distinguished a few types: (1) short or middle-long beard, mustache, not half-shaven hair, combed to the back;

(2) relatively short beard, mustache, not half-shaven, not combed but free-flowing hair; (3) lack of beard, mustache, not half-shaven hair, combed to the back; (4) lack of beard, mustache, almost completely shaved hair, except for a strand combed from above the crown to the forehead; (5) half-length beard or a long one, mustache, hair on the sides and in the back – shaved short, hair over the forehead thick, as if twisted with a curling iron; (6) half-length or long beard, mustache, hair on the sides and in the back completely shaved, hair over the forehead thick, as if twisted with a curling iron; (7) beard, mustache, head shaved except for a strand on the top²⁷. This list of course has a character of a model and for sure does not exhaust the topic. Nevertheless, it can serve as a point of reference for the reflections in this part of the article.

When we are watching films such as *Colonel Wolodyjowski*, *The Deluge*, *With Fire and Sword*, or TV series such as *Black Clouds* (from 1973, directed by Andrzej Konic), recognizing a Polish nobleman or a magnate is not particularly difficult. Despite characteristic clothes and weapon, the face appearance and the haircut are inalienable emblems of Polish nobility in the mentioned titles. The Polish nobleman, appearing on the screen, often looks in a way more or less similar to the aforementioned Sarmatian patterns. In *Colonel Wolodyjowski*, there is a lush mustache dominating on the faces of noble characters. Some of them, apart from mustache, have a haircut stylized as of noblemen in the form of head half-shaven on the back (e.g. Jan Sobieski). In *The Deluge* we deal with a bit more distinct reference to the Sarmatian look. Zagłoba has a solid mustache and hair half-shaven on the sides, above ears and in the back. Several members of Kmicic's team, with whom he commits robberies, also wear mustaches and hair half-shaven in the back and on the sides, with a strand on the top resembling a mohawk. Some of them have bit longer mustaches and not combed, free-flowing hair. In *With Fire and Sword*, Sarmatian physiognomy characterizes all main protagonists, for instance, Longinus Podbipięta – long bushy mustache and hair half-shaven on the back and on the sides above ears. A similar haircut is worn by colonel Wolodyjowski. There is a modest mustache also on his face. A model example of Sarmatian physiognomy is Zagłoba with solid mustache, hair half-shaved on the back and on the sides above ears, with a bushy hair on top. This pattern also appears in the TV series *Black Clouds*. It is represented by Jan Sobieski, on whose face we can see bushy mustache, and on whose head there is

²⁷ R. Sikora, *Sarmackie fryzury pierwszych dekad XVII wieku*, Kresy.pl, 20 October 2014, <https://kresy.pl/kresopedia/sarmackie-fryzury-pierwszych-dekad-xvii-wieku/> [accessed on: 26 VI 2019].

a haircut shaved a bit on the back and on the sides. Also, other Sarmatian models of physiognomy distinguished by Sikora can be found in the mentioned film examples. Nevertheless, the most characteristic pattern is a face with mustache and hair half-shaven round above the ears and on the back of the head, with a short bangs combed smoothly to the front. This kind of physiognomy in films depicting the period of the First Republic is like the bangs in the Hollywood productions depicting Ancient Rome that Roland Barthes wrote about. I will recall a fragment from his essay: 'In *Julius Caesar* by Mankiewicz, all the characters have bangs. Some curly, other others threaded, spiked, slightly greased; they are all well-groomed. [...] What then are these insistent bangs related to? It is simply about manifesting Romanness. So you can clearly see the action of the main spring of the show, which is a sign. A strand placed on the forehead gives confidence and no one can doubt that here he is in the old Rome'²⁸. Following Barthes' reasoning, we can say that the stereotypical Sarmatian physiognomy of the characters appearing on the screen is also an attempt at giving an impression that the history presented in a film takes place in the times of the First Republic of Poland. There is almost always a character with that typical Sarmatian physiognomy in the films about this historical epoch. This way, characterization, as well as styling the appearance of the protagonists according to the Sarmatian pattern of physiognomy, can easily play the role of a denotation of the historicity of film narrative and the world presented on the screen.

EVENTS AND CHARACTERS

A particularly important element of historicization of film narrative and the presented world are events and characters that the screen story talks about. Here comes the question: what kind of events and characters if every film depicts some events and some characters? I have in mind here characters and events which can be associated with the past, which are to some extent known from historiography, and for that reason are considered relatively 'authentic' and 'true', and, in consequence, historical.

²⁸ 'W *Juliuszu Cezarze* Mankiewicza wszystkie postaci mają grzywki. Jedni kręcone, inni nitkowane, nastroszone, lekko natłuszczone; wszystkie są dobrze uczesane. [...] Z czym tedy wiążą się owe natarczywe grzywki? Chodzi po prostu o zmanifestowanie Rzymskości. Widać więc tutaj jak na dłoni działanie głównej sprężyny widowiska, którą jest znak. Ułożony na czole kosmyk daje pewność i nikt nie może wątpić, że oto znajduje się w dawnym Rzymie'. R. Barthes, *Mitologie*, transl. A. Dziadek, Warszawa 2000, p. 47.

One of the procedures of historicization of film narrative and the cinematic world is depicting in film so-called big historical events – political, military, cultural, for instance, such as the Second World War, the French Revolution, great geographical discoveries, slavery, reformation, cultural revolution from the turn of the 1960s and 1970s, the collapse of the Soviet block, etc. Let us recall a few examples: *1942: Conquest of Paradise* (1992), directed by Ridley Scott, presents the oversea expedition of Christopher Columbus in order to find a route to India, in result of which new continents are discovered; *Enemy at the Gates* (2001), directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud, depicts the Second World War; *Danton* (1982), directed by Andrzej Wajda, depicts the French Revolution; and *Good Bye, Lenin* (2003), directed by Wolfgang Becker undertakes the topic of the collapse of communism in the Central-Eastern Europe. Of course, these big historical events are shown through the prism of the events of a smaller scale contributing to that big event on the basis of the figure *pars pro toto*. Great geographical discoveries appear on the screen as the Columbus expedition (*1942 Conquest of Paradise*). The Second World War appears on the screen in the form of the battle of Stalingrad (*Enemy at the Gates*, *Stalingrad*), the battle of England (*Battle of England* from 1969, directed by Guy Hamilton), the Warsaw Uprising (*Sewer* from 1956, directed by Andrzej Wajda, *Warsaw 44* from 2014, directed by Jan Komasa). The cultural revolution of the 1960s in the USA appears on the screen through the prism of the career of the band The Doors (*The Doors* from 1991, directed by Olivier Stone). Thus, the very act of showing on the screen the so-called big events known from historiography and confirmed by it, represented metaphorically (via synecdoche) through events of a smaller scale (so-called historical episodes that are parts of historical structures of bigger spatiotemporal range), results in historicization of film narrative and the presented world.

At times, the aforementioned episodes presented on the screen (e.g. the battle of England, Columbus' expedition, the Warsaw Uprising, the career of The Doors) also have their confirmation in historiography. This means that they can be recognized exactly as 'historical'. The procedure of historicization of film narrative and the presented world is then additionally convincing.

Not always, however, historical episodes depicted in a film have a confirmation in historiography. This means that the events taking place on the screen during big historical events have, in the case of many films, 'fictional' character, that is they did not occur in the past and were invented for the needs of an audiovisual tale. Such situation can be found in films *The Guns of Navarone* (1961), directed by J. Lee Thompson, and

Force 10 From Navarone (1978), directed by Guy Hamilton²⁹. The plot of the first picture takes place in 1943. A group of allied commandos has a task of blowing up a battery of German cannons located on the island of Navarone, threatening the lives of people on one of the nearby Cheros Islands. In the second story, a unit of commandos is sent to Yugoslavia occupied by Germans with a task of blowing up a bridge. The fate of partisans of Josip Broz ('Tito') surrounded by German army depends on the success of this mission. The events presented on the screen in both films are a creation of 'historical fiction', they do not have confirmation in historiography. However, the actions of commandos in the films take place during the Second World War, so a big historical event confirmed by historiography. Moreover, they perfectly fit in the logic and structure of that big event. The Second World War was indeed a military conflict between the Axis Powers: Germany, Italy, Japan and their smaller allies, and the Allies: the Soviet Union, Great Britain, Poland, France, Canada, etc. In the films *The Guns of Navarone* and *Force 10 From Navarone*, a group of commandos are soldiers of the Allies fighting against German soldiers. Historiography studies and presents activities of the Allies' special units against the German army during the Second World War³⁰. This confirms that such units existed and were realizing actions during the conflict of 1939–1945. Therefore, when we see on the screen 'fictional' fate of a commandos' unit which fits social imagination of this kind of actions having a source in historiography, they seem, during the screening of both films, so credible and probable that their 'fictional' character goes to the background. We are watching them as if they were 'factual' fate of an 'authentic' unit of commandos. The actions of commandos in both films have been historicized through their placement in the entourage of a big historical event such as the Second World War. This resulted in them being shown as historical episodes, similar to many other events of this type confirmed and described in historiography. This similarity to such actions of special units described in historiography served as an instrument of making 'fictional' events look more real, and, at the same time, of their metaphorical historicization – they became as if 'historical'. In consequence, these 'fictional' episodes undergoing the process of historicization were cast as functional elements of metaphorical historicization of the screen world and the film narrative.

²⁹ The films are screenings of novels by A. MacLean: *The Guns of Navarone*, Harper Collins 2010; *Force 10 From Navarone*, Harper Collins 2010.

³⁰ On this topic see e.g.: M. Królikowski, *Komandosi. Akcje aliantów w drugiej wojnie światowej*, Warszawa 1994.

We encounter a similar situation in the case of characters presented on the screen. Film protagonists, whose existence and activity realized in the past are confirmed in historiography, can also perform the function of historicization of the screen world and film narrative. Most often they are historical figures that left their mark in the so-called big history, that is, played an important role in historical events of a big scale (such as e.g.: geographical discoveries, the Second World War, the collapse of communism, the French Revolution, Cold War, etc.) and for that reason are recognizable – function in social historical consciousness. Let us take a look at some examples.

In the aforementioned film *1942: Conquest of Paradise*, we encounter representatives of the story about the oversea expedition of Europeans searching for the route to India, which discovers new continents instead. The initiator and leader of the expedition is Christopher Columbus, a figure functioning in social consciousness and imagination as the discoverer of America. Of course, Christopher Columbus is a person whose existence and activity are confirmed in historiography³¹. This way, as a recognizable historical figure – emblematic for geographical discoveries – may successfully serve in the film of Scott as a denotation of historicity of the presented screen world and the film narrative.

In the film *Casimir the Great*, directed by Ewa and Czesław Petelski, we deal with a representation of history taking place in the 14th century – of life and achievements of the last Polish king from the dynasty of Piasts – with an image of Casimir the Great as an excellent medieval ruler reinforcing and modernizing his state, developing economy and trade, building brick fortresses and castles. The king Casimir is a historical figure meaning that its existence, rule and activities are confirmed by academic historiography³². The fact that it is a recognizable figure may be evidenced by a popular saying: Casimir the Great found Poland wooden and left it bricked³³. It shows that the last Piast ruler functions in the social

³¹ See e.g.: J. Babicz, K. Walczak, *Zarys historii odkryć geograficznych*, Warszawa 1970; J. Świąt, *Kolumb*, transl. M. Kalisz, Warszawa 1979.

³² See e.g.: J. Wyrozumski, *Kazimierz Wielki*, Wrocław 2004.

³³ That stereotypical image of Casimir the Great has its source in the Jan Długosz's chronicle who wrote about the last Piast king: 'Taka wielka tkwiła w nim chęć uświetnienia i wzbogacenia Królestwa Polskiego, że podejmował bardzo trudne i znaczne wydatki na budowę murowanych kościołów, zamków, miast i dworów, dokładając wszelkich starań, by Polskę, którą zastał glinianą, drewnianą i brudną, zostawił murowaną i nadał jej wielki rozgłos, co mu się też i udało. On też obudził w Polsce u wszystkich zapał do wznoszenia murowanych budowli' ['He had such a great will of perfection and enrichment of the Polish Kingdom that he was undertaking very difficult and significant expenses for construction of brick churches, castles, town and courts, making all efforts to leave Poland, which he

imagination and consciousness of Poles as the one who modernized the kingdom and thanks to that received a nickname 'the Great'. This way, the figure of the king Casimir the Great shown on the screen, due to its recognition, may effectively realize the function of historicization of the presented world and the film narrative.

The film *Thirteen Days* (2000), directed by Roger Donaldson, depicts a dangerous episode from the time of the Cold War, the so-called Cuban Crisis. It was a series of events within less than two weeks in October 1962 after American spying plane U-2 discovered that Soviet ballistic missiles, which created a direct danger for the United States, were being installed in Cuba. On the screen, we see figures that at a certain stage of the Cold War played key roles. They include: the president of the United States, John F. Kennedy, attorney general of the United States, Robert F. Kennedy, the secretary of defense of the United States, Robert McNamara and a special adviser of the president of the United States, Kenneth O'Donnell. All these mentioned figures have been confirmed in historiography³⁴. The most recognizable characters are the Kennedy brothers. JFK was one of the most popular presidents of the United States. He was assassinated in Dallas in 1963. As a result of the tragic death, and controversies around explanations of the circumstances of the assassination, he became a figure, in a sense legendary, about whom many books, articles and films (among others the famous picture *JFK* from 1991, directed by Olivier Stone) have been made. Robert F. Kennedy, a younger brother of the president, performed many important functions in the state. He was killed in an attack in Los Angeles in 1968, shortly after he won the presidential primaries of the Democratic Party. A tragic death in the situation when he became a US presidential candidate, in the circumstances resembling the assassination of JFK, also contributed to him becoming to some extent a legendary figure like his brother. Many publications and films (among others a biographical picture: *Bobby* from 2006, directed by Emilio Estévez) have also been made about Robert F. Kennedy. Thus, seeing both politicians on the screen, we guess that the story in the film *Thirteen Days* takes place in the seventh decade of the 20th century. This way, showing John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy, who are recognizable figures functioning not only in historiography but also in films referring to the past, can successfully

found earthen, wooden and dirty, to leave it bricked and to give it great fame, what he managed to do. He also awakened in Poland, among all people, an eagerness to build brick buildings']. *Jana Długosza Kanonika Krakowskiego Dziejów Polski Ksiąg Dwanaście*, vol. 3, books 9–10, transl. K. Mecherzyński, Kraków 1868.

³⁴ See e.g.: H. Brogan, *Kennedy*, New York 1996; W.B. Breuer, *Vendetta! Fidel Castro and the Kennedy Brothers*, New York 1997.

perform the function of historicization of the presented world and the film narrative.

In films talking about the past, important characters are often 'fictional' figures, that is, whose existence does not find confirmation in historiography. Can they also serve in film as denotations of historicity of the screen narrative and the presented world? To answer this question, let us take a look at some examples. A good one is a miniseries of HBO production *Chernobyl* (2019), directed by Johan Renck. The series depicts the history of the catastrophe in the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in April 1986 and the process of dealing with its tragic consequences by the authorities of the Soviet Union, scientists, firemen, soldiers, miners, and other rescuers. In the series, there are characters known from historiography, such as, among others: the general secretary of CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, vice-chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Boris Shcherbina, or the vice-director of the I. Kurchatov Institute of Atomic Energy, an academic expert for removing the consequences of the failure of Chernobyl reactor, professor Walerij Legasov³⁵. The presence of these people on the screen makes us believe, while watching the series, that it is a picture depicting the 1980s. In the story, next to the aforementioned characters, there is a 'fictional' person, important for the presented story and invented by the creators of the film for its needs, Uliana Chomiuk.

The figure of Chomiuk undergoes, on the screen, the process of historicization. The protagonist is a scientist, a physicist from the Institute of Nuclear Energy of the Academy of Sciences of the Socialist Soviet Republic of Byelorussia and a member of the governmental committee for emergency response in connection with the reactor failure in Chernobyl. There was a large group of scientists working together with professor Legasov during coping with the consequences of the explosion. Chomiuk in the film is a person from such a group. We can say that she is a collective character, focusing in a metaphorical way the experience, attitudes, activities of all scientists being part of the emergency committee. In the film, the woman participates actively in the action, confirmed in historiography, aimed at removal of the consequences of the explosion in the nuclear power plant. She collaborates with professor Legasov, she is his right hand, she has the same competencies as Legasov who, in the film, is a 'historical' character. She meets and talks with the vice-chairmen Shcherbin who is also a 'historical' character. Through these dramaturgic

³⁵ D.R. Marples, *Historia ZSRR. Od rewolucji do rozpadu*, transl. I. Scharoch, Wrocław 2006. On the catastrophe in Chernobyl see e.g.: *Po Czarnobylu. Miejsce katastrofy w dyskursie współczesnej humanistyki*, eds. I. Boruszkowska et al., Kraków 2017.

procedures, the fictional status of the figure of Uliana Chomiuk is no longer important. It is because she becomes inscribed into the structure and logic of the situation presented on the screen, of an 'authentic' historical event in which 'authentic' historical figures participate. This way, the character of Uliana Chomiuk is metaphorically historicized. As such, she also can serve as a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented screen world.

Let us take a look at another example. An aforementioned TV series, *Black Clouds* tells the story of a Polish nobleman, a colonel in the Prussian army, Krzysztof Dowgird, who declines service in the electoral army, heads to the territory of the Polish Republic to serve for the Polish king. The series is a 'cloak and dagger' type of tale, which does not aspire to be a serious reflection about the past. Nevertheless, it is some kind of a record of culturally conditioned imagination of the past world of the 17th century on the Polish-Prussian borderland. Of course, the main characters are 'fictional': mentioned colonel Dowgird and his sergeant, Kacper Pilch. The adventures of the protagonists are also 'fictional'. At the same time, the main characters and their stories, have been historicized in a few ways.

(1) Scenery, scenography, costumes, that look like 17th-century attire, architecture, interiors known from iconography of the epoch, that is so-called historical entourage, in which the plot takes place.

(2) Language stylized as Old Polish used by the characters.

(3) These 'fictional' characters meet in the film 'historical' ones, known from historiography and recognizable. The colonel and his sergeant talk with the hetman Jan Sobieski, realize the politics he carries out orders of the famous magnate, the future king of Poland.

(4) The figure of Dowgird, although 'fictional', is created on the basis of the 'authentic' figure of colonel Krysian Ludwik Kalkstein-Stoliński, evidenced in historiography, who, in the second half of the 17th century, took the lead of the opposition against the elector Frideric, as a result of which had to flee from Prussia to Poland in 1670. After crossing the border, Kalkstein-Stoliński was tricked into the residence of the Prussian ambassador in Warsaw, captured by the electors' services, transported to Kłajpeda where – in 1672 – was sentenced to death and killed³⁶.

The character of Krzysztof Dowgird is based on an 'authentic' person whose existence is confirmed in historiography, and, for that reason, he

³⁶ On this topic see: K. Jarochoowski, *Sprawa Kalksteina 1670–1672*, Warszawa 1878, pp. 38–132. Electronic version: Robarts Library, Internet Archive, University of Toronto, 1 October 2010, <https://archive.org/details/sprawakalksteina00jaro/page/n5> [accessed on: 25 VI 2019].

appears as its cinematic avatar that represents it metaphorically in the screen through a reference to the non-film – historical – knowledge. As such, the character is historicized. Colonel Krzysztof Dowgird can be, as if, identified with colonel Krystian Ludwik Kalksten-Stoliński. Once we intellectually combine the ‘fictional’ figure with the ‘authentic’ one, the former may appear as a historical figure and this way serve as a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented world. This effect is supported by the strategies of historicization explained in the points (1)–(3). Watching the series depicting the fate of colonel Dowgird, we have an impression that it depicts the period of the first Republic.

Another situation can be found in the already recalled film, *Man of Marble*. One of the main characters of the tale of Wajda is a work leader, Mateusz Birkut. Of course, the young worker from the 1950s is a ‘fictional’ figure.

For these reflections, important is the fact that the protagonist of Wajda’s film refer to an ‘authentic’ figure of workers – work leaders making several hundred percent of the norm, evidenced in historiography, who in the 1940s and 1950s were promoted by the communist propaganda as workers’ avant-garde and the elite³⁷. This way, we can say that the character of Birkut, as the previously discussed character of Uliana Chomiuk from the series *Chernobyl*, is a collective protagonist focusing experiences, attitudes, emotions of many ‘authentic’ people that were part of the workers’ elite in Poland in the fifth and sixth decades of the 20th century. And we could stop here and say that this reference to a certain type of people, existing in the past and confirmed in historiography, is an effective way of historicization of the figure of Mateusz Birkut. This, in turn, allow us to think that Wajda’s protagonist may serve as a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented world.

In *Man of Marble*, we deal with one more way of historicization of the main character. It consists in the fact that the character of Mateusz Birkut not only refers to a certain type of people from the past but has his own concrete prototype. It was a worker, a work leader from Nowa Huta – Piotr Ożański³⁸. According to the rules of that time, Ożański was making on average 200% of the norm. He was also breaking records in laying bricks. The first one, when, on the occasion of 22 July, together with five bricklayers, he laid about 35 thousand bricks. The next one, on 26 September, on the occasion of the completion of the October Revolution; then 66 thousand

³⁷ H. Wilk, *Kto wyrąbie więcej ode mnie? Współzawodnictwo pracy robotników w Polsce w latach 1947–1955*, Warszawa 2011.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 278, 319–324.

bricks were laid. All the records broken by Ożański were carefully staged by the authorities. During the second action of breaking the record, Ożański got burnt by a hot brick, becoming a hero overnight. He received a state recognition – Silver Cross of Merit. He entered the Poviatic Board of the Polish Youth Association in Nowa Huta, was appointed a member of the Poviatic Committee of Peace Defenders and became a delegate for the Congress of Peace Defenders in Warsaw. Ożański's private life was also subordinated to the requirements of ideology and propaganda: the party selected him a work leader as a wife. After some time, he stopped being needed by the party, and press interest in him faded. The famous worker did not manage to bear the weight of the situation in which he was put. He succumbed to alcoholism, was expelled from work, forced to leave Nowa Huta and forgotten³⁹.

Looking at the short description above and the film fate of Birkut, it is not difficult to notice some far reaching analogies in the life stories of Piotr Ożański and the character of Andrzej Wajda. If we take into consideration the fact that the figure of Birkut has its prototype in an 'authentic' worker, we may treat it as a cinematic avatar representing him, in a metaphorical way, on the screen through a reference to non-film historical knowledge. As such, this figure becomes historicized. This means that the cinematic work leader Mateusz Birkut is, as if, the work leader Piotr Ożański. Combining intellectually, through analogy, the 'fictional' character with the 'authentic' figure, grounded in historiography, we get an impression that the first of them appears, as a result, as a 'historical' figure. In consequence, the 'fictional' character, which is historicized, can play the role of a denotation of historicity of the film narrative and the presented world.

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the reflections developed in this text, it should be said that the discussed strategies of historicization of film narrative and the presented screen world concern, first of all, elements of the presented world – so called *mise-en-scène*⁴⁰. They play particular role in films realized within the framework of the aesthetics of zero style⁴¹ characterized by a film form – consisting of, to simplify, such elements as picture texture,

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ On *mise-en-scène* see e.g.: D. Bordwell, K. Thompson, *Film Art. Sztuka filmowa: wprowadzenie*, transl. B. Rosińska, Warszawa 2010, pp. 128–159.

⁴¹ On zero style in cinema see: M. Przyłipiak, *Kino stylu zerowego. Z zagadnień estetyki filmu fabularnego*, Gdańsk 1994.

camera work, editing, structure of narrative – that remains for the viewer transparent, invisible. Thanks to this, the viewer focuses not on the ways of presenting historical world – places, events and characters, but on the things that the picture represents instead. This means, in the case of films of zero style, that the elements of *mise-en-scène* are the ones that play a fundamental role in defining historicity of the presented world and film narrative. The latter, formally being transparent in creating the screen effect of time shift to the past, in some way makes place for the elements such as characterization, costumes, scenography, language, music. Analyzing the staging strategies of historicization of film narrative and the presented world, I decided that it is also worth discussing two other elements appearing in the function of denotations of historicity but not being elements of *mise-en-scène*. They include the events and characters presented on the screen which can be associated with the past due to the fact that, to some extent, they refer to events and figures known from historiography. Thanks to these references, screen events and characters participate in creating the impression of the effect of time shift towards the past in the act of actualization of film work by a viewer/researcher.

The article devoted mainly to the role of *mise-en-scène* and events and characters in historicization of film narrative and the presented world does not exhaust the topic. It leaves, outside the scope of reflection, the role of cinematic form and formal cinematic means of expression in the process of historicization of the presented screen world and film narrative. Because cinematic form is an exceptionally important instrument of obtaining the screen effect of time shift, I discuss this issue in a separate text.

(translated by Anna Topolska)

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STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł podejmuje problematykę strategii uhistoryczniania filmowej narracji i świata przedstawionego w kinie historycznym. Pokazuje za pomocą jakich elementów filmowa narracja i świat przedstawiony są uhistoryczniane. We wstępie zostają skonceptualizowane kluczowe kategorie analityczne – filmu historycznego i strategii uhistoryczniania filmowej narracji oraz świata przedstawionego. Film historyczny jest pojmowany jako kategoria operacyjna wymagająca za każdym razem konceptualizacji zrelatywizowanej do kulturowego kontekstu jej użycia. Na potrzeby artykułu film historyczny określany jest jako dzieło ekranowe obejmujące różnorodne struktury genologiczne, którego temat odnosi się do przeszłości. Strategie uhistoryczniania filmowej narracji oraz filmowego świata przedstawionego są w tekście pojmowane jako rozliczne sposoby wyposażania filmu w różnego rodzaju oznaki historyczności, pozwalające uzyskać w akcie aktualizacji dzieła przez widza/badacza wrażenie efektu ekranowego przesunięcia w czasie ku przeszłości. W kolej-

nych częściach artykułu na przykładzie różnych filmów obejmujących szerokie spektrum dziejów od starożytności po współczesność analizowane są oznaki historyczności w funkcji uhistoryczniania filmowej narracji i świata przedstawionego. Składają się na nie: (1) sceneria, scenografia, kostiumy; (2) język; (3) muzyka; (4) charakteryzacja; (5) wydarzenia i postacie. Przeanalizowane w tekście strategie uhistoryczniania świata przedstawionego i ekranowej narracji odgrywają szczególnie istotną rolę w filmach zrealizowanych w estetyce tzw. stylu zerowego, charakteryzującego się przezroczystością filmowej formy.

Słowa kluczowe: historia wizualna, film historyczny, narracja filmowa, świat przedstawiony, inscenizacja, uhistorycznianie, scenografia, kostiumy, język, muzyka, wydarzenia, postacie, charakteryzacja, *mise-en-scène*

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