GENDERED ARTISTIC POSITIONS AND SOCIAL VOICES:

POLITICS, CINEMA, AND THE VISUAL ARTS

IN STATE-SOCIALIST AND POST-SOCIALIST HUNGARY

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that no parts of this thesis have been submitted towards a degree at any other institution other than CEU, nor, to my knowledge, does the thesis contain unreferenced material or ideas from other authors.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this dissertation has been to explore what factors shaped artistic representations of women and the artistic agendas and self-positioning of individual women cultural producers in Hungary's state-socialist and post-socialist periods. In using gender as an analytical category within the framework of a carefully conceptualized East/West comparison as well as a state-socialist/post-socialist comparison, the thesis historicizes and contextualizes gender in multidimensional ways.

Positing that particular state formations and the dominant ideologies therein interpellate individuals in particular ways and thus might better enable certain subjectivites and constrain others, the thesis sets out to identify the kind of messages that the two different political systems in Hungary communicated to women in general through their political discourses, actual legislation, and social policies. Within this socio-historical framing, the research traces how female subject positions emerge in the respective periods, and turn into speaking positions with women cultural producers in the specific fields of cinema and the visual arts. By carefully exploring the spaces, dynamics, and options available for feminist art production in both periods, the analysis critically reconsiders the alleged absences and presences of feminist art in Hungary.

The dissertation contributes to the gendered analysis of the two specific fields of visual culture, which in the case of film studies implies original primary research and theoretical analysis which for the first time applies feminist film theory to Hungarian film production in the second half of the 20th century.

The analysis emerges from an interdiscipinary research, both on the level of theoretical inquiry and methodology. It brings together the approaches and insights of a number of scholarly fields (feminist theory, art history, critical art theory, film studies, post-colonial theory, and feminist

social science) to explore the degree to which the material and ideological conditions of cultural production impact issues of both content and style as well as authorial positions. To argue a complex case, the thesis employs a range of methodological approaches (critical analysis, literature review, interviews, interpretation of art products). This approach—reading society as a heterogeneous "text" and regarding cultural producers as social subjects—maps the interplay and mutual determinations of social formation, the prevalent codes of art making, and the ideologies operating both within a given society and art world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CEU eTD Collection

ii

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1
Women's participation in various behind-the-scene positions of Hungarian feature film production, 1945-2005

Table 2
Number and proportion of women in selected behind-the-scene positions of Hungarian feature film production, 1945-2005

Table 3
Number and proportion of male and female artists selected for the individual parts of the exhibition series *The History of Hungarian Art in the 20th Century*

Table 4
Number and proportion of male and female artists mentioned in the individual chronological chapters of the book *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit: Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert*

Table 5
Number and proportion of male and female artists in individual exhibitions, 1945–mid-1990s

Table 6
Number and proportion of male and female artists in relevant artists' groups, collectives and initiatives, 1945–2000s

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation sets out to explore what factors shaped artistic representations of women and the artistic agendas and self-positioning of individual women cultural producers in Hungary's state-socialist and post-socialist periods. I distinguish these two periods because one of the hypotheses of my inquiry is that political systems mediate messages that shape female subjectivity and constructs of femininity through women-related legislation and politics as well as social-political discourses, whereby they better enable certain kinds of subject positions for women than others. I look at how these subject positions emerge and turn into speaking positions with women cultural producers in the fields of cinema and the visual arts in Hungary in the two respective periods, i.e., 1945–89 and from 1989 till today. Acknowledging that the interaction of social and cultural practices of representation is crucial to the constitution of identity, but not assuming that this interaction is direct and comprehensive, i[1] explore what other factors have come into play to upkeep or create gender identities and the forms of representations suited to them.

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[1] The usage of the lowercase "i" pronoun signifies my reservations about a unique convention in the English language. English capitalizes and thus prioritizes the first-person singular, which comes across as a remarkably self-centred disposition conveyed by the current *lingua franca*, and as such may deserve to be denaturalized. My usage continues T.R.O.Y.'s practice in his essay, "The New World Disorder—A global network of direct democracy and community currency", submitted for the Utopian World Championship 2001, organized by SOC, a Stockholm-based non-profit organisation for artistic and social experiments. The text is available from http://www.soc.nu/utopian/uwc2001/troy_text.html (accessed 11 July 2007).

My interdisciplinary investigation opens with a theoretical introduction (**Chapter I**) convening the most important questions and theories that have shaped the groundwork for my study and governed my research. Some of them will be picked up again at the relevant parts of the dissertation or will be re-introduced in greater detail, and supplemented with related theoretical considerations in this process.

In **Chapter II** i set out to draft a detailed picture about both the emancipatory and problematic (if not oppresive) tendencies within the "socialist mode of women's emancipation", its effects on women's consciousness as well as the reasons for its relative failure. The exploration assesses in a similar manner the developments of the post-socialist era. In piecing together this picture, i reviewed already existing scholarly literature on the subject. Besides academic sources, i also drew into the scope of my exploration public discussion events and recently made documentary films (Almási 2001, Papp 2006) that set agendas for themselves matching my own inquiry. Some of my sources turned to in-depth interviews as a research method to inquire into "emancipation" as lived experience, including the life expectations, self-constructions and career paths of women born and/or socialized in the two different periods (e.g., Goven 1993b, Neményi 1999, Neményi & Kende 1999, Volgyes & Volgyes 1977). Catherine Portuges pointed to the value of interview in mapping the worlds of speakers whose subject position *vis-à-vis* feminism is obscured (1993:1). Interviews are capable of bringing to the surface reflection on, and criticism of, the ways in which material and social conditions script gender roles and women's lives; these are reflections, however, which may not be framed in feminist terms. For this capacity, interviews were one of the tools that helped me explore the interrelated questions of gender and authorship when it comes to the analysis of female cultural producers' activity as well.

In **Chapter III** and **Chapter IV** i map how changing numbers of female cultural producers, the ideological and material conditions of cultural production, and a possible impact of emerging feminist tendencies interrelate and create particular subject and speaking positions for women

artists within a given social and discursive context. I chose cinema and the visual arts as two distinct fields of cultural production that possess different social status and production conditions, but are often tackled in conjunction within Cultural Studies. Outrun perhaps only by television, cinema is arguably a medium of mass appeal that enjoys the greatest exposure to audiences. For its wide reach and capacity to inscribe ideologies, various political or economic forces have seen film as an important propaganda tool—and so did their critics, including the feminist critique of dominant cinema. Unlike movies, visual arts is a highly marginal cultural form in Hungary today, although it enjoyed more prominence in the 1960–80s. Art professionals today often complain that no proper art market has developed yet in post-socialist Hungary, although the actual impact of market relations on cultural production rarely gets in the center of critical reflection. At the same time, occasional voices can be heard that point to a relative advantage resulting from the lack of an art market that would heavily influence and "streamline" artistic practice.[2] Situated on the margins of both economics and state interests today, contemporary art may conceptualize itself as one of the last sites of manipulation-resistant "free speech" and subversive attention; a counter-public sphere indeed to cultivate critical thinking.

Both Chapter III and Chapter IV open with an introductory section where i probe the applicability of the theses of feminist film and art theory and criticism for the analysis of Hungarian cinema and visual arts production in the chosen periods. As the critique of representation problematizes the dominance of male producers of representations, i also address the relation between the number of women cultural producers and the kinds of representations produced in my two chosen artistic fields. As most theorists agree, this relation is certainly not automatic, yet, transformations in dominant modes of representation will hardly take place without an increased number of women participating therein. After having shown in Chapter II.2 how state-socialist policies brought women's qualification and employment to a near-equal level

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[2] The subject was addressed from a multiplicity of viewpoints at the international conference "The Post-Communist Condition. Art and Culture After the Fall of the Eastern Block", Berlin, June 10–12, 2004.

as that of men, and thus generated an increase and differentiation in female employment, in Chapter III and Chapter IV i explore whether women's greater presence on the labor market also affected the sphere of creative work.

Hungarian films made from the second decade of the state-socialist regime up to the political changes in 1989 were marked by a diversity of styles and thematic occupations, and a steadily growing number of women participating, to varying degrees, in various ranks of the filmmaking process. Although there are no indications of any substantial influence of the emerging feminist film theory and practice on local filmmakers, a considerable amount of cinematic pieces exhibit a profound interest in female figures, and portrays their female protagonists in ways other than objectifying or glorifying them. By contrast, in the post-socialist period, and especially in the past 8 to 10 years, after a major restructuring of production conditions in the film industry, a striking change has occurred and revived conspicuously male-dominated, if not homosocial shooting and production processes, almost totally blotting out or plainly objectifying female characters. In the visual arts the dynamics have been different. Since the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, there have been a low but steady number of women painters and sculptors around, most of them working on the margins of the art world, except for a handful of notable exceptions. In the new political system after World War II, the art scene was severely polarized into an official and non- or semi-official segment, the latter one creating some kind of a "parallel public sphere" and characterized by a blatant male-domination, with hardly any central women creators. By the mid-1990s, however, a growing number of actively producing women artists had become visible and a feminist critical discourse was moderately forming around their work. But after a decade or so, this kind of art practice and discourse now seems to be declining.

Given the different status and production conditions of the two art forms, the analysis of both will have to follow a somewhat different logic and set somewhat different focal points. I will lay out these differences in the corresponding sections of Chapter III (III.1.iii) and IV (IV.1.ii).

4

The research is first and foremost informed by feminist approaches to certain fields of social theory as well as feminist cultural theory and critical practice. Cultural theory and criticism themselves draw on propositions coming from a variety of disciplines: feminist inquiries in literary, film and art theory have mutually inspired each other while they also borrowed from the insights of psychoanalysis, semiotics and Marxist social theory. In this capacity, they form part of Cultural Studies. The questions that arise from such multidisciplinary approach are enhanced by the cultural turn within the social sciences. This knowledge flow between previously autonomous academic fields led to the development of a strong cultural perspective to the study of social processes on the one hand and, on the other, to queries that situate the production and consumption of cultural products in social and historical contexts. These are tendencies that helped to shape my analytical frame for a discussion of cultural products in relation to other social practices, political structures and social hierarchies. My inquiry is also informed by the post-structuralist critique of representation and its feminist reworking, as well as the arguments of post-colonial theory and their "Second World reworking". Such reworking—i.e., shifting the terms and adjusting the focus of (Western) feminist scholarship within the various disciplinary areas that my project engages—is one of the two additional tracks, or analytical perspectives, that runs through the dissertation. Similar efforts have already been made by social scientists to map women-related social processes in Hungary in the time frame i have also set for my exploration; i substantially drew on these scholarly pieces in Chapter II. Within film studies, no comparable endeavor has been made to test the applicability of the analytical tools of feminist film theory; this is one of the tasks Chapter III of the dissertation accomplishes. In the field of the visual arts, a feminist criticism-aware discourse circulated for a few years; i spelled out my discontents with it in Chapter I, and set out to resolve these and propose an adjusted focus in Chapter IV.

The other additional angle has been employing a scholarly and historically concrete approach both to the study of the women-related social changes and the cultural production of the state-

socialist period. To achieve this re-assessment, i had to develop arguments to contest and overrule a persistent Cold War intellectual attitude. Pieces written with that stance are often reluctant to dedicate serious scholarly efforts to the analysis of the cultural-social history of the time, and instead tend to dispatch the social and cultural processes of more than four decades as unchanging and undifferentiated, and debilitated by "totalitarian" politics.

Minket a tánczene-szó, valami "I love you so" hozott össze.
Valami híres énekes valami angol szöveget énekelt.
Bár se te, se én nem tudtunk angolul,
mégis azt hittük, hogy ami belénk szorult,
ez kimondja helyettünk angolul.
Oh az az énekes énekelt angolul,
és mi azt hittük, hogy ami nincsen meg magyarul,
megírták helyettünk angolul.

Minket a tánczene-szó, valami "I love you so" hozott össze.
Valami dal, amibe azt magyaráztuk mi bele,
hogy du-bi-du-bap-da-di-bi-bu-bu-bap-du-bom
Óh, az az énekes bármiről énekelt,
úgy tudtuk róla mi, hogy jobb ő, mint mi vagyunk.
Hogy az ő élete sokkal többet ér, mint mi vagyunk.

És mi most itt vagyunk, és amit mi tudunk
és mi belénk szorult, nem tudjuk magyarul,
s nincsen megírva az angolul.
Hol az a tánc, amibe a mi életünk szorult bele, és járható?
Hol az a nyelv, amibe a mi táncunk szorult bele, és mondható?

Talán tévedtünk mi ott? Oh, az a rohadt énekes !
Kár, hogy angolul énekelt. Oh, az az énekes
miért nem énekelt minekünk bárhogyan,
akárhogy, valahogy, magyarul?

We hooked up over some "I love you so" dance music
Some famous singer was singing some English words
Although neither you, nor I spoke English
we thought whatever is jammed inside us
this singer expresses it for us in English
Oh, that singer was singing in English
and we thought that which we don't have in Hungarian
has been written in English for us

We hooked up over some "I love you so" dance music
Some song which we overinterpreted
as du-bi-du-bap-da-di-bi-bu-bu-bap-du-bom
Oh that singer whatever he sang about
we assumed that he was better than us
that his life was worth so much more than ours
And so we are here now, and what we know

and what is jammed inside us, we can't say in Hungarian
and it hasn't been written in English
Where is the dance that's got our life jammed insideand can be danced?
Where is the language that's got our dance jammed inside and can be spoken?
Perhaps we were wrong then. Oh, that damn singer!

Too bad that he was singing in English, oh, that singer
Why did not he sing for us somehow,
anyhow, no matter how—in Hungarian?!

Tamás Cseh & Géza Bereményi: *I love you so*
from the LP *Fehér babák takarodója* (Curfew for White Dolls)
1979

8

CHAPTER I   CONSTRUCTING AND BRINGING GENDERED IDENTITIES INTO REPRESENTATION

I.1 "Woman": a politically irrelevant category? Unstructured female identities in contemporary Hungarian society

My inquiry for the present thesis was prompted by a number of related observations in existing literature describing the gender-related changes of the transition period in Hungary. These were observations that seemed to validate a set of general perceptions of my own about the instability of the categories of "female identity" and "femininity" in today's Hungary. In this section i collect these observations and define the usage of some key terms for my project.

When collecting material for my MA thesis, *The Difficulties of a Feminist Discourse in Contemporary Hungarian Art and Society* (2002), i encountered a published transcript of a panel discussion (Babarczy 2000). The moderator, herself a cultural theorist, conversed with three Hungarian women actively engaged in questions of woman and/in society: a woman artist, a feminist historian and the editor-in-chief of a woman's magazine. The moderator expressed her dismay over the condition that, for many women in present day Hungary, being a woman simply means the adoption of the reproductive role, without any female identity or sense of self attached (117). Babarczy also made the related observation that a woman who exhibits a coherent female identity is instantly labeled a feminist, or else she is "merely a woman". Being instantly labeled a feminist (i.e., given an affiliation commonly considered extreme or radical) upon exhibiting an act or gesture of self-possession informs, i assume, about the non-availability of autonomous female subjectivities in this given context.

A second observation was made by Hungarian sociologist Mária Neményi, who cites the findings of a 1992 comparative research project. According to these, women in post-socialist countries are

less ready to tell whether some injustice they had experienced was inflicted because of their gender (Neményi 1994:244–45). By contrast, women from areas where the social critique of feminism has been endorsed by broader segments of society proved to be better able to identify when the source of the injustice was their gender. The research concludes that the answers show the interrelations between social formations, the social status of the individual, and the individual's perceptions of injustice. My additional—but by no means contradictory—comment is that women in post-socialist settings appear more willing to interpret gender-based injustices or structural asymmetries as the characteristics of an unjust social structure in general, rather than the oppressive effects of a patriarchal structure on their own personal lives as women. Such attitude might partly be resistance to victimization, but, presumably, it has also got to do with the double-edged effects of the "socialist way of women's emancipation" on the one hand; and on the other, with the related discourses which blurred the social asymmetries between women and men. Hungarian philosopher Mária Joó elaborates on the mixed effects of a "gender-blind emancipation", and concludes that, due to women's mass participation in education and the world of paid work during state-socialist rule, "women *perceived themselves* as men's equals, and this perception structured their experience and self-perception", whereby they became men's equals in their consciousness indeed—but not in their existence (Joó 2005:49-52).[3] For, in the state-socialist system, women only learned about the equality they were entitled to while they did not learn to recognize their inequality and difference as female social subjects. Thus socialism made women "equal" without making them conscious of the structural inequalities affecting their lives. Joó compares the ensuing "post-socialist female consciousness" to that of Simone de Beauvoir on the grounds of a common peculiar characteristic of both. This is an ambiguity concerning the actual meaning of equality between the sexes, and is reflected in the adoption of an always already subordinated role or, in other words, in a "deeply rooted and often internalized sense of

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[3] All translations of original Hungarian-language sources are my own, unless differently indicated. This also applies to the mottos to the individual chapters; there, however, i was only providing word-to-word translations, not keeping the rhytm and rhymes of the original lyrics.

inferiority of the female sex" (Bock 2002:241). The researchers cited in the previous paragraphs (and additionally Adamik 2000:203, Arpad-Marinovich 1995:90, and Goven 1993b:428, 438-39) add and emphasize that their observations hold true for members of various social strata, including intellectuals who may often embark on an emancipated lifestyle and career path, but in their private relations or self-positioning would rely on traditional gendered behavior patterns.

While Eszter Babarczy and the authors from various disciplinary fields i have just quoted address the non-availability of a self-structured female identity more on the personal or psychological level, some other analysts exploring the political climate of the "transition" period note a comparable dearth on the level of political identities. Granted, after the system change in 1989 there was no wide variety of refined political identities, for such identities were hard to develop in a one-party system only formally exercising democratic rule and nominally soliciting civic participation. As a result of a process that Birgit Sauer calls the feminization of privacy, women's identities had been efficiently de-politicized (2001:33) in the transition process.[4] Describing the situation from a similar perspective, Susan Gal saw no political subjectivity readily available for women, no discourse within which women would have been configured as independent social subjects whose interests and issues could be publicly defined and debated, while "all colors of political activity […] implicitly or explicitly support[ed] a naturalized gender order" (1997:96–97). In a later monograph that Gal co-authored with Gail Kligman, this point is further developed, and the authors spell out that, in order to advance "woman" as a pivotal social category, it must first be constituted as politically relevant (Gal & Kligman 2000a:106).

As my analysis in Chapter II will show, the status of the social category of "woman" underwent considerable changes throughout the six-decade period under my scrutiny, from being a recurrent point of reference in political rhetoric to the deeply de-politicized entity the authors i quoted above registered. Ignoring, or being oblivious of, these changes and the ways they might have

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[4] See also footnote 33.

implicated women, art historian János Sturcz expressed a widely held assumption—yet another remark that set my present inquiry into motion. If the works of some contemporary Hungarian women artists can be linked with feminist creative and interpretive strategies, stated Sturcz, it is because the artists now can resort to "the categories, strategies and discourses already transformed and expanded by international feminist art" (Sturcz 2000a:88). This quote reveals a viewpoint that sees feminist thinking as external to the scope of interest of Hungarian women artists. This view then is closely related to another stance commonly held by art professionals:[5] one should not expect, in the state-socialist and post-socialist arena, to find art that can be identified as feminist. The major underlying reasons for this position are that a) art practice in this context is not embedded in a grass-roots women's movement and a Western-like, relatively agglomerated feminist artistic platform; and b) women artists tend to exhibit a resistance to, or even refusal of, any feminist. My own presumption concerning the second argument is that ambiguity towards feminism and reluctance towards feminist identification in the present case is not so much a clear refusal or informed *non-choice* of feminism; rather, it turns out to be the resultant of the complex processes of subject formation that post-socialist Hungarian society conditions. One of the aims of this thesis is to explore these complex processes.

I took my above cue—the necessity to constitute "woman" as a politically relevant category—from Gal & Kligman (2000a:106) who call for this category so that it can serve as a mobilizing basis for social change. Other feminist theorists also stress the political importance of self-structured identities, insisting that transformations of subjectivity is a pre-condition of social transformation (Kristeva 1981:141; Hell, quoted in Hárs 2003:12).

Discourse approaches to politics, society and gender see identities as embedded within, and mediated through, discourses, both "dominant" and "alternative" types. Foucault, arguing for the

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[5] C.f. for example Keserü 2000; and art historian László Beke's contribution to the discussion in Cadre Rouge Gallery, Budapest, February 19, 2003; and, to give a regional dimension to the topic, Kivimaa 2001.

salience of the enabling or constraining force of discourses, explains that discourses must have already been "spoken" so that associated utterances can be produced (Foucault 1996:42–43). This recognition will be important when i set out to explore in Chapter II how the two systems defined their relations towards women through political rhetoric, women-related legislation and the implemented social policies.

I.2 Cultural perspectives on social processes: Defining key terms and approaches

Certainly, identity, subjectivity and discourse are the central terms for the argument i put forward in the section above. Here i intend to briefly explain my usage of these categories. I, like other authors in the field, tend to favor the plural word "*identities*" and the insight that underlies this usage. The idea that people identify simultaneously with a variety of social functions that are sometimes contradictory, sometimes interrelated, appears to be a valid point of departure because what is at stake here is not only starkly changing discursal practices in the two periods under scrutiny but also simultaneous, yet incompatible messages within their dominant discourses. Another premise put forward by Anthony Giddens is that identity is a process, rather than a state or set of stationary personal attributes (Giddens, quoted in Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:7). Accordingly, Giddens presents identity as a series of *choices* one continually makes about oneself and one's lifestyle. In a similar conviction, Roz Ivanic also proposes a non-totalizing but context-dependent conceptualization of the term when she sees it as "the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available to [people] in their social context" (Ivanic, quoted ibid.). My understanding of *subjectivity* has been informed by structuralist and post-structuralist conceptions (especially those of Louis Althusser and Michel Foucault) that see subjectivity (the property of being a subject) as a product of ideology and an effect of relations of power, and therefore an entity shaped by political, social, and cultural forces and relationships. Bringing

together the ideas of a number of theorists, the editors of the volume *Gender Identity and Discourse Analysis* offer some basic definitions of *discourse* as "language beyond the sentence", "a form of social practice", and "a recognizable way of seeing the world" (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002). In their capacity to structure the forms a particular topic or process is to be talked about, discourses constitute the recognizability and meaningfulness of our public acts (J. P. Gee quoted, ibid.,10). In Foucault's account, discourse is produced by various power systems, and is then accepted and internalized by individuals. Foucault also adds that we can talk about a discourse when something has warranted comment, when certain things have been topics, which can be talked or written about (Foucault 1996:19–32).

I.2.i Society as text

My thesis investigates the above-defined categories in the domain of politics and cultural production: cinema and the visual arts. This approach helps me to regard cultural producers as social subjects and to map the interplay and mutual determinations of social formation, the prevalent codes of art making, and the ideologies both of a given society and art world. This approach is also useful in an analysis that aims to explore how socially contrived orders structure the life and creative output of women artists.[6]

In an article reviewing the recent developments within scholarship examining social movements, Ann Swidler charts a trend that came to acknowledge culture as a salient factor in the emergence of social change, and studies how existing cultural templates shape, constrain, and are used by social organizations (Swidler 1995). This strong cultural perspective to the exploration of social processes reveals how the two domains—the social and the cultural—are interrelated and mutually inform each other. This integrated perspective throws light on how cultural systems can

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[6] Gouma-Peterson & Mathews summarize the methodology and practice of British feminist art historian Griselda Pollock along similar lines (1987:355–56).

set the ends people seek: how dominant representations and publicly available symbols can give form to individual consciousness. It also helps to register the transformative potentials of culture, or the ways culture can contribute to the development of new social and political designs. Revising "classical" Weberian and Durkheimian approaches in the sociology of culture, this more recent trend shifts the focus from universally shared meanings in individual actors' heads, and sees culture as operating in the contexts that surround individuals. Championing a notion of culture as a semiotic code, Clifford Geertz identifies rituals, aesthetic objects and other "texts"[7] as publicly available symbols that can include even such elusive things as the mood or tone that a cultural system gives to daily life. These coded signs then refer to "deeply held, inescapable relationships of meaning that define the possibilites of utterance in a cultural universe" (Swidler, 32). Endorsing this proposed line of analysis, and situating selected cultural texts in the rich web of associated cultural practices will allow me both to identify contextually defined meanings for these texts, and map available speaking positions within a particular "cultural universe".

Developing the point further, it is certainly not just culture, a set of socially organized practices, that so marks the "tone of daily life" and influences action; the systems of law and education, politics, religion, the family and the media do so as well. These are a host of institutions that Louis Althusser introduced as Ideological State Apparatuses through which ideology functions to construct the subjectivity of individuals, interpellating them into defined subject positions (Althusser 1971). Supplementing Althusser's conception, Teresa de Lauretis added cinema to the list of ideological state apparatuses,[8] and described gender as another social technology that functions to constitute individuals as men or women (de Lauretis 1987:13). Apart from such

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[7] The term "text" was originally used in linguistic analysis and literary theory where it denoted a communicational act or the literary work under scrutiny. The term gained a wider understanding in the usage of semiotic theories emerging in the 1960s and later in the analyses of Cultural Studies. In this latter meaning, "text" does not only denote verbal or written messages but any meaningful structure, cultural product, or set of representations composed of a combination of signs.

[8] However, as early as in her 1949 book, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir already identified movies as one of the vehicles—beside religion, traditions, language, tales, and songs—that carry the many myths created for and by a patriarchal culture (Beauvoir 1993:275).

powerful machines as mainstream cinema, de Lauretis engages with less centrally located creative and intellectual practices. She holds that such practices, even if operating on the margins of hegemonic discourses, have a capacity to intervene in the (re-)production of gender representations. This proposition is important because the category of woman, too, can be seen as organized and given structure by, as well as produced and reproduced in, the representations of a range of discourses. As it is reflected in de Lauretis's claim, discourses are seen as both representational and constitutive. Insofar as they maintain, reconstitute or produce social practices, they are an actual agent of social construction (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:13).

Representation, a fourth key term for my inquiry, is also characterized by a two-directional way of operation: an act of representation is always formative, rather than simply mimetic. What representations do is not simply "uncovering" or "revealing" the truth about human reality; they construct versions of the "truth" through structuring lived experience and articulating what is not yet fully expressed or rationalized (Evans 1997:81).

I.2.ii The political import of representation

The status of visual representation has long been a subject in art historical study, a subject rehearsed from various angles. Ernst Gombrich raised the issue of artistic illusion and perceptual processes at work in the reception of artworks (Gombrich 1969). Subsequently three major theories of representation were developed: the reflective (or mimetic) approach, the intentional and the constructionist approaches.[9] In the 1980s, on account of postmodern cultural philosophers' contribution, however, the formerly rather technically oriented interest in representation gained more political overtones. In the same decade, the practitioners of a host of related approaches emerging in the study of art that challenged many of the basic assumptions of

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[9] For a concise overview of these, see Hall 1997:24–26.

the discipline ("New Art History", "Visual Culture" and "Cultural Studies"; to be discussed in further detail in I.2.ii) came to think of art as one of the forceful, effectual and significant components that constitute culture. These writers no longer treated representation as a mimetic apparatus reflecting some ultimate reality, but rather reflecting a culture's vision of itself, thus legitimizing a particular culture's dominant ideology. Thus visual culture both reflects and constructs mental habits, cultural stereotypes, and society's attitude toward certain topics (Michelle Lagny, quoted in Ousmanova 2006). Any form of cultural representation came to be viewed as an inevitably political and symbolical act, and as such, a manifestation of relations of power. When considering how representation participates in the various relations of power within society, representation appears as a strategy of normalization and a form of regulation (Kuhn 1997:407).

As the postmodern critique of representation met the feminist critique of patriarchy, feminist critics turned to questions of cultural representation, conceptualizing it as the difference between male and female in society. The participation of women at both ends of the representational process—being represented and creating representations—was scrutinized. Through the analytical lens of representation, images of women and the ideological construction of the female in art and visual culture were seen to stow complex meanings and, at the same time, held up the potentiality of creating alternative representations. This "images of women" strand within the feminist critique of representation recognized and exposed the objectifying and stereotypical ways in which patriarchal culture has captured women. Although man-made pictorial or literary depictions of women are many, these most often offer imaginary formations or spectacles only, whereas women as historical subjects and products of social relationships have been largely absent in these images. This limited range of images of women also tends to be false and oppressive at the same time. "The resultant stereotypes serve to reinforce and/or create the prejudices of their male audiences, and to damage the self-perceptions and limit the social

aspirations of women" (Sharon Smith, quoted in Thornham 1999:10). Critical film studies and a critical re-reading of art history demonstrated that the active role in consuming images—that of "the bearer of the gaze"—has been historically assigned to men. These studies uncovered the implied right and power of man to look at women in a way that turns the signifier "woman" into a saturatedly sexual term which functions as a sign of masculine sexuality, a sign for what she represents for man (Pollock 1992:23, 35). To ward off these processes, a sort of stereotype-correction was called for which would offer positive role models for female audiences and, more importantly, advance *women-defined* characters. The underlying assumption here is that redefined and differentiated images of wom*e*n will be more likely to be produced if women themselves have access to shape those images, if they participate in the actual making of representations. Thus the focus of feminist engagement with the image moved from woman as observed, as passive object, as something represent*ed* to women as producers, as actively creative subjects, as those represent*ing,* and the makers of meaning (Kemp & Squires 1997:386). Initial efforts in the 1970s undertook a job of "intellectual archeology" which was directed at demonstrating the existence of women writers and artists, previously excluded from, or marginalized in, existing historical canons. In the meanwhile, an increasingly dynamic production of original works by women was emerging, incorporating the concerns of feminist cultural criticism. Film theorist Anette Kuhn has expounded the focus of these concerns:

> If it is accepted that "the cultural" may be subsumed within ideology and thus be considered as having effects in the constitution of the sex/gender system […], then it becomes possible to argue that interventions within culture have some independent potential to transform sex/gender systems. In other words, cultural struggle becomes a political possibility. (1994:5)

The frequently used terminology "textual politics" was born out of, and demonstrates, a similar persuasion.

I.2.iii The politicization of art theory, aesthetic terms, and art

As scholars in the humanities increasingly came to assert that culture was not only a social product, but also integral to the production of the social (Friedland & Mohr 2004:2), art history, art theory as well as art practice also took a socially-oriented critical turn. Art history, a discipline notorious for its conservatism and orthodoxy in subject choice and research, gave way to an emerging new approach that is known today as "The New Art History". Upon the call of T.J. Clark, a renowned practitioner of the new mode of art historical inquiry,[10] a scholarly practice that takes account of the realities of the social world in which art is produced was developing in the 1970s and 80s.[11] This view undermined the modernist belief in art as a discrete, transcendent domain with universally relevant thematic occupations and eternal aesthetic qualities unrelated to the social situation and the social structure in which it was produced. According to the new thinking that transformed art history from a historical to a critical discipline, art has been but one form of knowledge legitimizing—and, lately, increasingly criticizing—a constructed "reality" and its biases (Rees & Borzello 1988:9). The ideology carrying function of the seemingly pure and transcendental mode of perception, modernist art, was thus revealed. After having so questioned the status of art within society, and having eroded the most common assumptions of what art is, an appraisal of art for its alleged autonomy and capacity to transcend everyday social reality became a heavily contested stance. On a similar note, earlier preoccupations of the discipline (such as connoisseurship, quality, period style, iconography, genius, the hierarchy of genres) were replaced by a terminology closer related to the social sciences: ideology, patriarchy, class, methodology (ibid., 4). As Dawn Ades in an essay "Reviewing Art History" elucidates, the history of art of the last hundred years has been selective and partial, in the interests on the whole of a

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[10] T.J. Clark's work includes telling titles like *The Absolute Bourgeois: Artists and Politics in France, 1848-1851* (1973), or *The Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution* (1982), the latter with a theoretical introduction about the method.

[11] The art historian Svetlana Alpers, however, noted in her path-breaking essay that great art—whatever Alpers should mean by that—has always resulted from "conscious working out of this recognition", and has always been, in this sense, political in nature (Alpers 1977:2).

progressive, developmental model, a linear or "vertical" line from movement to movement until a more "horizontal" study of a range of objects came to be developed. This model engaged the conditions under which artworks were made: for whom and by whom were they made, how were they valued, received and understood (Ades 1988:12–13).

The theoretical renewal and the suggested methodological alternatives to address art's economic and political role in society owed a lot to the problematizations raised by the social and political movements of the 1970s, feminism among them. Feminist art historians rounded out the inquiry adding that "the nature of the societies in which art has been produced has not only been, for instance, feudal or capitalist, but in historically varied ways, patriarchal and sexist" (R. Parker & G. Pollock, quoted in Gouma-Peterson & Mathews 1987:355), and thus identified art and its institutions as a form of patriarchal culture, with values and conceptual constructs to be challenged. In the wake of this approach, parallel histories of art came to be produced, written from new perspectives and accounting for aesthetic judgements issuing from particular localities, rather than tracing universally valid developments and frameworks.

To interpret and theorize contemporary art production with perspectives, methods, and tools similar to those developed by New Art History, the approaches of Visual Culture and Cultural Studies can also be applied. The major proposition of Visual Culture is that the spectrum of cultural events of a visual sort is far broader than what fine art can hold. The study of these phenomena leads to a relativized understanding of the concept of art, and quits the practice of evaluative criticism in favor of exploring a variety of processes that produce artworks and culture, and the institutions of both. Cultural Studies, too, is a type of academic inquiry that mobilizes a miscellany of approaches while calling forth new questions and forming new methods for understanding a particular subject. Interdisciplinarity is a decisive feature of research carried out under the aegis of these new approaches. As the editors introducing a volume that takes stock of the work done in the preceding fifteen years of New Art History assert, "rather than a tidy

description of one trend, the new art history is a […] title that sums up the impact of feminist, marxist, structuralist, psychoanalytic, semiotic, and social-political ideas" (Rees & Borzello 1988:2). Cultural Studies and the study of Visual Culture "borrow" theoretical perspectives, methodologies and an array of analytical tools from various scholarly fields, and media and deploy these to arrive at analyses that exhibit a consciously critical nature.

In the 1980s, sociology, for its own part, was experiencing a "cultural turn" and developed an analytical praxis that advocated reading society itself as a text, rather than reading an array of texts as independent from each other. As New Art History was nearing to concerns and methodologies in the non-positivistic social sciences, the categories it introduced—gender among them—were to be examined not in isolation, but as parts of the construction of social, political and economic power, just as the meanings produced at the level of culture were to be considered in relation to meanings produced at other levels of the social formation (Nead 1988:124).

In the wake of 1968, a critically oriented art practice, too, has emerged, leaning towards research and intervention, and aspiring to work directly in the given social, political, legal, economic or ecological context, while also renouncing the creation of art objects in favor of "*practices*". Accordingly, both for their production and interpretation, these art practices require means of execution and analytical tools other than those of conventional formalist aesthetics. They too presuppose a sort of "intellectual endeavor [that] is likely to include political, cultural, and sociological as well as purely formal analysis" (Wallis & Tucker 1984:vii), and a constant creation of interrelations between artistic form, the available systems of visual representation, the current theories of art, other ideologies, and larger historical structures and processes.

I.3 Localizing feminist thinking

I.3.i The danger of self-colonization and East/West dichotomies when looking for feminism

Whereas in Chapter I.1. i forecasted that my inquiry would target an exploration of the particular subject and speaking positions that two different political regimes in late 20th-century Hungary conditioned for female cultural producers, in the sub-chapters that followed i discussed theoretical perspectives that seem to have been little concerned or impacted by experience rooted in this locality. Here i would like to bring the two strands together, pointing out, however, the ways in which i hope to avoid connecting them in an unreflective manner.

Commenting on the current globalization of both knowledge and cultural production, Angela Dimitrakaki points to how these processes "have indeed brought the centers closer to their peripheries, but have at the same time asserted a new form of oppressive universalism" (2005:282). Scholarship produced by scholars from the Central European region just relatively recently started to solicit descriptions and interpretations in various fields which would not "fix 'Western' arrangements as norms to be followed by other regions" (Melegh 2002:7).[12] Part of the aim of these scholarly efforts has been to uncover the imbalanced power relations between authors from the region and the (Western) producers of widely circulating current "master narratives", and, consequently, the differences between the possible impact of their intellectual contributions. This attempt is not unlike the undertaking of postcolonial criticism that set out to expose and heal the "epistemic violence of imperialism" (Emberley 1993:5), and to contest the compulsory subscription to unifying intellectual traditions of Euro-America (Sangari 1999:26). Third World scholars talk about "asymmetric ignorance" (Chakrabarty 1992:2) or "sanctioned

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[12] Only surveying the disciplines closely linked with my research, see e.g., Csepeli & Örkény & Scheppele 1996, Adamik 2000, Madarasz 2002, many of the articles in Palasik & Sipos 2005 for the Social Sciences; the papers presented at the regional conference *90's + : Reflections on Visual Art at the Turn of the 20th and 21st Century* (proceedings in Geržová & Kišová 2003) and Babias 2005 for art theory; and Iordanova 2003 for film studies.

ignorances" (Spivak 1988:287) to characterize the epistemic relations between hardly dislocatable centers and their peripheries, as well as the validational monopoly the former entity holds. While efforts to map the "geopolitics of knowledge" can certainly associate scholars working in/on "orientalized" and "demi-orientalized"[13] settings, the position of Central East Europe in this flow of corrective knowledge is not an unproblematic one. The countries and nations in this area, based on their geographical and cultural-historical location, have always belonged to the Eurocentric tradition, but they have always occupied a marginal position therein. Postcolonial analysis, for the convenience of upholding the binary distinction between the "West and the rest", has tended to divest actors outside the dominant European scholarly discourse of a speaking position by conflating the Western and Eastern halves of Europe, whereby in fact effectually reproducing the marginal position of Central-East Europe within the continent. Therefore, the demand to reflect over what "becomes sayable at particular historical conjunctures" and "to formulate an explicitly situated postcolonial intellectual agenda" (Mary E. John, quoted in Sarkar 2004:320) translates, in the East-Central European setting, into an awareness of this double locatedness. Indeed, several authors from the region (Dupcsik 1999, Kiossev 1999, Bartha 2001), some of them writing in the field of art theory (Zabel 1997, Piotrowski 1999, Timár 2000, András 2001, Babias 2005, Schöllhammer 2005,) have addressed the incapacity of postcolonial theory to provide quite an adequate key to the deconstruction of such an entity, "the Other within".

Feminist strategies of knowledge production have certainly been susceptible to the corrective operations of postcolonial theory, recognizing that "east and west continue to have a real salience, both in our imagination and in the world of economics and politics" (Bulbeck 1998:1–2). These two areas are understood here not exclusively geographically but also culturally, transnationally and/or even "psychologically", following the usage of a number of authors. Thus,

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[13] These formulations are adaptations of Walter Mignolo's and Larry Wolff's, respectively; see Mignolo 2008 and Wolff 1994.

the "West" is taken as a hyperreal term, a socially, economically, culturally defined "conceptual space that is neither restricted to the geographies with which the term is conventionally associated, nor necessarily representative of all intellectual/ political/ cultural/ social spaces within such geographical boundaries" (Sarkar 2004:319); while "the East" is a sort of temporal geographical term (and in my analysis it is meant to cover the state- and post-socialist "other half" of Europe).

In an attempt to challenge taken-for-granted theoretical and empirical preoccupations of Western feminism, a number of authors bring up aspects of other women's lives to juxtapose already existing scholarship with the writing by women from beyond the Anglophone West. Like in the case of many pieces written in the postcolonial vein (and in English), Eastern Europe is missing from Bulbeck's beyond-Anglophone scope.[14] Or, it is rather subsumed under the category of the "developed" world, since the meaning of the "Second World" is seen lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union, as the other remaining socialist countries are often classified as Third World (Bulbeck 1998:34). From Bulbeck's usage of the term "the white west" here, a corresponding term, "the white east" can be pointedly coined to designate an Other within Europe, and to acknowledge the degree to which the "epistemic violence" is also inflected on the non-Western half of this continent.[15]

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[14] I am making this generalization in the light of the writings of a number of East-Central European authors i am referring to more lengthily a few lines below.

[15] An innocent-looking but nonetheless severe instance of which is Gisela Bock's treatment of East-Central European countries in her recent *Women in European History* (Bock 2002); especially Chapter 6: "Civil, Political, Social Rights: A New Gender Debate" (pp. 233-55) where she discusses the second half of the 20th century. The disparity between the gender regimes of European state-socialist and capitalist societies in this period might have been worth reflecting upon, or at least being noted. Instead, the author purports that the whole of Europe is covered by including two or three casual sentences about the German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union, making no mention, however, of the socialist states' particular model of emancipation. When writing about Europe, the fact that the continent was politically-ideologically and economically divided in the given period, does not seem to earn Bock's scholarly interest while, in the preface to the book, she talks about her enterprise dealing with "all of European humankind" (Bock, x), and she does not fail to excuse herself for not having the space to expand on the links between the history of European and non-European women. True, the aim of the book series her text was written for has been to present major topics in European history in a concise form, which necessitated that certain issues be ignored or just hinted at, and comparisons among European countries were only possible with

Exploring cultural alterity, Ofelia Schutte cautions Western feminism against making "an 'other' of women whose path to emancipation it may fail to understand or recognize" (Schutte 2000:58). In the second half of the 20th century the simultaneous development of a second wave of the women's movement in the West and the implementation of a state-administered program to "emancipate women" in the countries of Eastern Europe was a clear case of such differing paths. After the state-socialist system was over and many Western feminists came into contact with post-socialist societies, these divergent routes proved to be an obstacle in recognizing comparable developments and aspirations within the two geographical locations. Often, Western feminist expected replicas of their own concerns, while local activists "felt offended by [such] missionizing and even imperialist attitude (Gal-Kligman 2000a:99, Watson 2000). In an intellectual climate more conducive to the endorsement of the histories of "peripherically Western countries",[16] a circumspect view from East-Central Europe could both renew our understanding of the West and the category of "feminism" itself (Gal-Kligman, ibid., 9–10). In their book *The Liberated Female* (1977)*,* Ivan and Nancy Volgyes offer an early assessment of why women's liberation in Hungary has failed to achieve complete success, and suggest, at the same time, "ways in which the women of the US and other Western industrial nations can learn from the Hungarian experience" (1).

For the sake of illustrating the possibility of diverging paths to emancipation on the one hand, and the one-directional flow of experience and knowledge on the other, let us recall how, at the time of the German re-unification, two different gender regimes were suddenly juxtaposed. At that moment the key concerns of grassroots feminist organizations from the two contexts proved to be quite dissimilar. The case of the two Germanies is a particularly clear example of how women in different historical-political contexts may experience inequality from different perspectives and will seek dissimilar solutions (Gal 1997:93). Mira Marx Ferree demonstrates that

respect to certain subjects (ibid.). Apparently, the divergent experience of women's emancipation in post-socialist countries did not qualify as such noteworthy topic.

[16] Wording comes from Geoffrey Kantaris (1997).

this case could not be captured by characterizations of the "more/less developed" kind. Legal unification replaced nearly all GDR laws with FRG provisions, thus abolishing e.g., the social benefits around which East German women had organized their lives. Issues that in the GDR had long been considered settled, now needed to be addressed, particularly the right to legal abortion and the need and possibility to combine paid employment and unpaid care labor.

> The goal of the [East German] women's movement had been to replace benefits targeted to women with reforms in the economy (such as shorter workday for all) and to complement affirmative action for women with programs that would actively integrate men into families and into female-sexed jobs. [...] At the same time, demands that had been central to the West German movement (more part-time employment, better reintegration of women into the labor force after an extended time out for child rearing) were [...] irrelevant to many ex-GDR women who had already raised their children while holding a full-time job (1994:609–16).

Consequently, shifts that occurred in the status of women after re-unification could have been seen as improvements in the situation of women in the "old" states of the FRG, but these were still substantial losses for women in the ex-GDR (611). Accommodating cultural alterity, leads to the acknowledgement that the very concept and meaning of *feminism* or *feminist* may alter in different parts of the world, thus invalidating any claim to fix a universal scenario for women's struggle against gender(ed) oppression.

The reverse of the medal is that many Central European gender theorists are ready to assume that there was, in the 1960-70s, a seamless, unified, and unproblematically present feminist front "elsewhere": in Western countries that "had" feminism.[17] Many theorists from the East looking westwards demonstrate little or no sign of awareness of, or concern for, divisions, fractioned alliances and the impact of later backlash operations that have characterized the Western movement, an oblivion that contributes to the creation of a simplified theoretical discourse favoring to retain a fundamental binary distinction between the "West and the rest". From such perspectives, the West comfortably features as the "have-it" party while the East self-taylors itself

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[17] However, their point of reference or the sources of relevant—because accessible and accessed—knowledge on "the West" is mostly limited by the validational monopoly of "Anglofeminism": feminist scholarship produced by English-speaking [white] women, which already excludes much European feminism and represses national differences (Bulbeck 1998:4–5).

the identity of the Other, or the "have-not". Authors like Alexander Kiossev (1999) and Bojana Pejić (2005) disclose the "technologies" of "self-colonization" or the "(self-)production of otherness". "We, as the margins or the others, actually produce the center ourselves and hence make it *the* center", writes Pejić (436); "I am interested in questioning *our share* in the constitution of ourselves as marginal and/or peripheral".

My broadest theoretical and methodological aim in the present thesis is based on the insights gained from critically engaging with the issue of self-colonization and the existence of an asymmetric ignorance between culturally dominant and peripheral locations. My work here is framed by a major aspiration of Central European contemporary research: to actually provide descriptions of local phenomena with (or even without?...) the hope that the dynamics in which "the return cultural traffic is more limited" (Bulbeck 1998:5) can be altered. In order to avoid charges and instances of getting locked up in national isolationism or false "authenticism" (i.e., overemphasizing local specificities without contextualizing them historically and theoretically within the context of unequal relations and uneven exchange), a language and theoretical framework are to be developed that can engage with internationally "spoken" theoretical discourses and, at the same time, retain the capacity of self-definition by recasting, when necessary, the available terms and by shifting the focus of inquiry. In conceptualizing my dissertation project, i was governed by the idea to in-build into my analysis itself the kind of critique i drew up in this section *vis-á-vis* epistemic hierarchies. In developing my methodology, i was also motivated by Angela Dimitrakaki's call for "a rigorous analysis of space and the subjectivities it produces, destabilizes or consolidates, and governs" (2005:271).

I.3.ii Contested feminist identification, intentionality and other dilemmas of operating with feminist perspectives on women's artistic production

The discourse of lack that frames some reports, delivered from a feminist perspective, on contemporary Hungarian women's political activity and female cultural producers' output tends to oversimplify a historically specific situation. Below i will argue that feminist concerns or the commitment to change gender-based injustices do not always and necessarily go together with conscious feminist identifications at various historical times and locations, and will offer conceptualizations that can account for such instances while preserving a distinctly feminist perspective.

One of the "irregularities" Western feminists frequently encountered upon setting foot in post-1989 societies in transition was that despite the obvious losses women as workers and citizens have experienced after the re-structuring of the economy, they did not become particularly receptive to the analysis and critique of patriarchal social relations that Western feminism had to offer. Ever since, local authors have often dwelled upon rhetorical instances when speakers reduce the words feminism/feminist/emancipated woman to a slur, and when the related argumentation functions to turn virtues (self-assertiveness, goal-orientation, self-reliance, etc.) into faults (the former features presented as "unwomanly"). Bearing such particularities of the social and cultural context in mind, i would buttress the caution Rosi Braidotti expressed when reflecting over the variations within international feminism. Braidotti insists that feminist perspectives should rest on a lucid analysis of the multifaceted significations that make up one's culture, without which feminists may find themselves waving an international flag as an empty rhetorical gesture (1992:7-8).

Not wanting to run the risk of reducing the terms "feminism" and "feminist" to mere empty labels to be filled with some fitting content each time they are used, i do acknowledge that a solid political vision and a dedication to change gender-based injustices and hierarchies are inalienable

properties of what can be called a feminist consciousness. Actually, tracking the dynamics and the consequences of the lack or presence of these properties will run through the dissertation. Yet, i continue to argue that certain actors' uncertainty about, or unwillingness to reflect upon, the challenges of feminism is not so much a fully calculated rejection of a set of commonly understood ideas, but is woven together from a number of factors. Insisting on that women in a state- and post-socialist context share the same feminist concerns would be one motive on the "waving blank flag" of international feminism. As Peggy Watson, one of the few writers critically engaging with the above-mentioned "surprise syndrome" of the transnational discourse on women and post-communism pointed out, such insistence posits "an underlying truth for feminist identity" which transcends political and cultural differences among women. As such, this approach comes across as a "feminism that is uncontested and white",[18] and prescribes a basic West-East political sameness for women whereby also produces "an idea of gender that is ahistorical in every respect" (Watson 2000:190–200).

The history of the women's movement, and especially that of the First Wave, provides ample precedents for instances when women working committedly in politics, scholarship or the arts for goals that we now clearly identify as feminist, would have a noncomittal relationship towards the word "feminist" or towards working in the movement itself for a variety of reasons. The current, postmodernly pluralistic usage of the word feminisms both signals and—theoretically—accommodates the disparity of viewpoints, ways of thinking and, equally importantly, political interests and social positionings. Already in the First Wave, women formed coalitions defined by these diverse criteria, and prioritized contrasting strategies and goals. Beside demarcations resulting from political convictions of these kinds, women who had otherwise been explicit feminists and notable political figures, proved to be profoundly ambivalent about upholding women's issues when getting close to the real locus of power within their parties, or about

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[18] I will come back to Watson's understanding of "whiteness" within the democracy vs. (post-) communism power matrix in Chapter II.1.ii.

decisions whether to establish women's separate party sections. Evidently, these women sought more reward and fulfillment in a non-gender-segregated public arena.[19] A comparable negotiation of one's public performance and feminist affiliation is detectable in the attitudes of women politicians, public intellectuals, and cultural producers in the post-socialist context. Sociologists have reported about the anxiety of women's disparate, single-issue interest-groups; the demands of these groups could easily qualify as feminist, yet, they often assume explicitly non-feminist self-definitions for fear of not being taken seriously if they form an expressly women-oriented platform (Einhorn 1993:183, Adamik 1993:207).

If issues pertaining to feminism, emancipation, and women's activism are handled in near-abusive ways and are defined in the popular press in sensational ways to mean extreme behaviors and life-styles, it produces a psychological background that further deters identification with such views. This psychological factor, however, does not only arise in Central European contexts. Susan Faludi documented such operations in the United States in her book-length essay, *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (1991), and a more recent account by Janelle Reinelt (2003) reports about how identification and even genuine interest are curbed due to such inhibitions and a morally detestable portrayal of feminism: "my young students […] today often want to admit to an interest in women's studies, or gender issues while simultaneously insisting they are NOT feminist." Uma Narayan points to another hardly negligible emotionally motivated factor: "Even when inherited gender roles […] are, and are even experienced, as oppressive and restrictive, they still often are central elements both to one's sense of self and to one's sense of one's social world" (1997:36).

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[19] Madeleine Pelletier, a remarkable theorist of radical feminist views and a prominent member of the French Socialist Party in the first years of the 20th century was a case in question, exhibiting conflicting feelings about women's groups within her party. Louise Michel, another feminist political actor and a contemporary of Pelletier, reckoned that "the women's movement was too narrow [and she] had gone along with men because action in the masculine political parties was greater and more interesting", given that public space was itself masculine (Sowerwine 369–77, passim).

Therefore, feminists are seen to embark on, and invite to, an emotionally difficult rethinking of one's most immediate intimate and social arrangements. One way to deal with this emotive factor is foregoing the significance of the term "feminism/feminist". The same tack was suggested by Gal & Kligman in relation with women's political activities in the region: "Given the discourses from which political organizing in East-Central Europe necessarily starts, we believe that insistence on the word 'feminism' itself is not crucial" (2000a:103).

Another factor contributing to contestations over feminism in non-Western areas is identifying feminism with "westernization", and using these terms to discredit one another. In contesting this identification, Uma Narayan lists a number of reasons why this indictment is "an epithet of choice". A wide range of concerns submitted by "authorized" feminists correspond with criticism and complaints voiced by many non-feminist women.[20] What distinguishes the allegations of "authorized" feminists or "indigenous" women is not the alleged "domestic" or "westernizing" nature of their complaints but the condition that feminism sees to make these issues matters of *general concern and public debate*, whereas in other settings women's privately disclosed complaints tend to remain just that, and their suffering is perpetuated by women themselves as they pass down attitudes and rigid expectations to younger generations of women (Narayan 1997:12). "My eventual feminist contestations of my culture", Narayan concludes, "have something to do with the cultural dynamics of the family life that surrounded me as a child" (7). Narayan's assertion aptly describes my own road to interrogate my culture and society from a feminist perspective, and forms the substratum of what propels, as i see, some contemporary Hungarian cultural producers' explorations into issues of gender, identity and authorship. I also find illuminating here Roz Ivanic's argument about how it is quite possible for an individual not to be conscious of

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[20] Hungarian sociologist, Mária Neményi conducted an interview-based research to find out why, despite the strong focus on the "women's question" in state-socialist times, the issue had never really become an accepted subject in local social discourse (Neményi 1999, to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter II). Neményi reports about responses that seem to reinforce Narayan's claim: "throughout the discussions, my respondents were connecting every aspects of their lives [...] to their being female. They presented their lives as a woman's life without being prompted so and without ever having engaged with issues voiced by the women's movement" (115).

a particular identity (feminist, in our case) until it becomes contextually salient (Ivanic, quoted in Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:8).

In feminist critique-inspired evaluations of women cultural producers' activity, too, their work is often assessed according to the presence or absence of a conscious and intentional feminist input. Such evaluation criteria are justifiable inasmuch as the Feminist Art Movement (FAM) of the 1960s and 70s developed under the impetus of the political activism and major concerns of the more general feminist movement of the Second Wave, and important theorists and critics joining the current were quite explicit in their definitions of feminist art. Thalia Gouma-Peterson and Patricia Mathews, in their comprehensive article on the feminist critique of art history, list a number of such positions (1987:344). For Susan Lacy, feminist art "must show a consciousness of women's social and economic position in the world", and for Martha Rosler it also means a "principled criticism of economic and social power relations and some commitment to collective action". Moira Roth stresses a similar commitment to political ideologies and to a "spiritual kinship between women" as "the underpinnings of virtually all feminist art in the 1980s". Harmonie Hammond's position entails that feminist art reflects "a political consciousness of what it means to be a woman in patriarchal culture". Various other authors, too, argue that feminist art is a result of a feminist political identity or implicate a social dimension as basic to feminist aesthetic considerations (c.f. Krumholz & Lauter 1990, Raven, Langer & Frueh 1994).[21] The way two British art historians, Griselda Pollock and Rózsika Parker identify the focus of their analyses appears to be somewhat broader: as they put forward in a co-authored work, feminist art is "women's practice as artists to discover how they negotiated their particular position" (Parker & Pollock 1981:xviii). Their approach (and, to a certain degree, Hammond's as well) opens up a way, i believe, to engage female cultural producers' activity who might not work within a relatively unified feminist platform but do negotiate their particular position as women

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[21] In line with the theoretical and political underpinnings of feminist art practice and criticism, incipient feminist art history has also been to an extent "a history of social relations rather than a history of the art object and its variegated transformations" (Dimitrakaki 2005:272).

and women artists in a given society and would self-consciously address, with a varying degree of critical edge, a wide range of issues pertaining to the gendered aspects of women's life. While these practices cannot be drawn into the scope of feminist art without diluting the meaning and political implications of the term, referring to them as women's art or critical women's art appears to be a viable usage. These latter designations are capable to recognize the self-consciousness with which the issues addressed are being handled even in the absence of a clear political commitment but, at the same time, set these practices apart from just any kind of creative activity done by female practitioners.[22]

Hungarian art historians have tended to follow the discourse of "lack" or of "Western import" when a discussion about Hungarian women artists' work began around the mid-1990s, at the time when a few women artists-centered exhibitions were organized.[23] In the course of these curatorial and critical endeavors a written and unwritten professional consensus has been formulated[24] that takes the practices of the US-based Feminist Art Movement and criticism as its silent referent. Accounts delivered in this idiom easily arrive at identifying the "lack", and lead to conclusions like the one by art historian János Sturcz quoted in I.1, assuming a merely external

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[22] To tie in with the above examples from the history of the women's movement, i remind here too that the (re-)appraisal of certain artists' work did not turn on a conscious positive feminist identification within the Feminist Art Movement either. Some "pre-feminist" artists, singled out as such by artists and critics of the FAM, refused to be grouped with other "women artists" and rejected any feminist reading of their work or creative strategies (Broude & Garrard 1994:17–21). They have earned the apellation for destabilizing male-dominated and male-defined mainstream artistic movements and challenging established paradigms. In the 1970s, for this older generation of North American female artists, "who had long struggled to negotiate their female identities and to find acceptance as "artists pure" within and despite […] "the misogyny of the New York School", [identifying the possible effects of their femininity] was an explosive and uncomfortable issue that bred both confusion and anxiety" (ibid., 17). As an article by Katy Deepwell (1997a) indicates, dilemmas surrounding a particular feminist aesthetic/s, and whether it is to be understood and used in the singular or the plural, and whether creating works within such idiom would enforce an act of self-labelling as feminist, did not yet appear as resolved questions for the US critic even decades after the initial debates.
Although feminist interventions in film study and practice earned a reputation and became part of academic curricula early on, recent developments suggest an aura of reticence: whereas earlier programmers of film festivals made it a point to include women's films, in the current mediascape where feminism has faded from view generally, it is harder to find programmers who will "out" themselves and exhibit such propensity (White 2006:148).
[23] This period and the exibitions are introduced in more detail in Chapter IV.
[24] See footnote 5.

relation between Hungarian women artists' preoccupations and feminist trends in art. Most other authors, even if they favorably comment on the subject, work without a theoretical framework of their own, or rather, they use the categories introduced by feminist criticism as just another tool of *aesthetic* analysis: they carefully stay away from an ideological feminism and thus divest feminist perspectives of their political weight.[25]

The consensual pillar that has been underlying the application of feminist approaches *vis-à-vis* Hungarian art production tells of a voluntary submission to the definitional monopoly of Western critical theory. The resulting critical output is fairly inattentive of the recognition that social and/or ideological movements (be they considered progressive—like feminism as a social movement and theoretical critique undoubtedly is) do not take an identical shape everywhere where they travel globally. Through this kind of knowledge production a normative assumption is being rehashed that "takes the existence of a certain social and political movement to be natural, [and] its absence needing explanation" (Goldfarb 1997:237).

The work of Edit András, the art historian who can be said to have introduced gender criticism to the Hungarian discourse on art in the second half of the 1990s, is an interesting case in point. András did note the disparateness of the historical background, the context and the language of Western and East European art production and theory making. Yet, she has been caught up within a perception built up from a vocabulary of expressions such as "deformity", "phases skipped" and "paths never taken"; formulations that presuppose a unilinear development and reveal a persistent implicit comparison with a "normal" or model course of events exemplified by the history of Western art.

> While the western model is a succession of phases logically and regularly superseding one another, the eastern model with its long periods of rigid stagnation, followed by dramatic breaches and intense abrupt movements has a vicious flaw. There is the price of deformity and

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[25] Inquiring into linkages of feminism and the visual art scenes in non-Western European locations (Hungary, Estonia, and Greece), Angela Dimitrakaki also identified an "inability and unwillingness to negotiate the articulation […] of a new radical consciousness in art and beyond" (2005:279).

inconsistency to be paid for phases skipped and for paths never taken step by step. (András 1999b)

In a more recent piece, however, András herself campaigns for that "this essentializing dual system [i.e., the West as Self and agent as opposed to Eastern Europe as a lacking quasi-Other and a victim of 'mental colonization'] should be altered", and urges to enter "into the discourse and subvert it" in order to clear up ways for practicing "more nuanced critique and analyses" (András 2005:107–8). However, when it comes to actual interpretations, Western theoretical configurations remain András's principal referent. She continues to muster a rich array of the interpretive tools of feminist art theory without an effort to possibly invent and implement context-bound categories that might have more explanatory value for discussing particular Hungarian women artists' works. This is a scholarly practice that Catherine Portuges, a North American researcher specialized in East-Central European cinema warns about.

> We must consider the vexing question of the critical appropriation of "second world" realities by "first world" formulations, despite the integrity of the appropriators' intentions. Such colonization, however unwitting, of the cultural products of a small, marginalized nation in the service of theorizing its discourse within the conceptualizations of a dominant Western discourse—oppositional though it may be in the context of its mainstream—risks misreadings and misapprehensions. (Portuges 1993:9)

Portuges is not the only author who notes the risks of, and aspires to counterbalance, a hierarchical geography of art. German art historian Hans Belting, for example, admits that "we usually ignore the degree to which we have imposed a Western view on the East by recognizing only Western traditions and by writing art history such as to exclude Eastern Europe" (Belting 2003:54). Beyond compensatory statements, the American Steven Mansbach offers an approach to re-assess the cultural history of early-20th century modern art. Although the procedures of collecting his material as well as the methodological assumptions, and even the theses of his books on Eastern European modern art (Mansbach 1991 and 1999) have been heavily debated, his methodology itself is noteworthy for my present enterprise. What is at stake in both Mansbach's case and my own is an attempt to move away from a uni-dimensional view of certain artistic/cultural movements that have turned out to have several variations. In his essay

"Methodology and Meaning in the Modern Art of Eastern Europe", he presses for more nuanced local readings, an awareness of local geography, and different methods for each area or even each artist (Mansbach 2002).[26] Mansbach's idea is carried on by Timothy O. Benson (Benson 2002a) and Péter Nádas (Nádas 2002) who understand the "world of locales" not as so many potential peripheries absorbing foreign influences, but as one's sole reality.

Among "peripherically European" researchers working in the field of arts and taking up the challenge to re-construct artistic geography, the directions that Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski, UK-based Greek art theorist Angela Dimitrakaki, and Bulgarian-born film theorist Dina Iordanova took, stand out. Piotrowski urges any revisionist geographer of East Central Europe to formulate an "other" paradigm and to put forward modified aesthetic categories (e.g., Piotrowski 2005 and 2006). "The point is not to reproduce the imperialist and hierarchical interpretive models", spells out Piotrowski, "but to revise the paradigms, to change the analytical tools so that they would allow us to discover the meanings of cultures of 'other' geographical regions" (2005:524).

Like Piotrowski, Dimitrakaki argues that the projected strangeness ("otherness") of cultural spaces that remain asymmetrical within persistent totalities "can be recast to disrupt the smooth flow of current hegemonic discourses" (2005:272). Iordanova, while embedding her immediate scope of study (film) in a broader landscape of culture, media, and politics, works both at abolishing the mental division of Europe and establishing a desirable cross-cultural image of the area (c.f. Iordanova 2001 and 2003). Taking a similar direction and applying insights developed by these and other authors, i hope to successfully move away from merely critiquing a totalizing Western paradigm, and actually suggest other methodologies and put those into work. One of my

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[26] Mansbach argues, for example, that there were several modernisms, and whereas in the West, shifting between contradictory styles was not approved, artists in the East displayed a much higher level of flexibility (Mansbach 2003:44). With this proposition he also counters methodological fallacies in traditional art history that Dawn Ades elsewhere identified as results of an urge to smooth over incongruities and provide clear contexts for the sake of arriving at a unified view of individuals and movements (Ades 1988:17-18).

aims is to demonstrate that the definitional monopoly of Western scholarly literature cannot describe the only possible face of late-20th century art by women.

As my brief review in I.2.i showed, the influence of New Art History, Visual Culture and Cultural Studies, arm in arm with feminist cultural criticism, revoked a purely formal aesthetic analysis of pieces of art. Proponents of feminist cultural criticism underlined, however, that every analysis is formalist unless it simultaneously maps the interplay and mutual determinations of the social and sexual arrangements, the ideological assumptions and the ways of mediation that influence the production and interpretation of cultural products (e.g., the conditions of possibly choosing to make art in the feminist idiom). It is this addendum that is often overlooked in arguments that want to recapture the problematizations, social and theoretical concerns as well as the strategies of the 1960-70s art movement in cultural products emerging in different historical moments and social contexts. Much of the critical work that has been produced on the activity of Hungarian women cultural producers, i believe, starts out from such outlook. Drawing on current critical theories, these writings do *thematize* the social constructedness of art, but in their actual analyses they tend to disregard the social function of art as well as the extra-textual experience of both producers and recipients. In my examination, i will attempt to incorporate these aspects as equally constitutive of my feminist readings of Hungarian cinema and visual art practice. The two guiding aspects i am putting forward in the section below (and which i will operate with in the coming chapters of the dissertation) do draw on issues developed by existing feminist theory, although they do not necessarily form part of the standard supply of interpretive tools used to assess individual cultural products.

I.3.iii Redefining the political: Two guiding aspects (a feminist counter-public sphere; feminist and/or feminine cultural texts)

The dilemmas surrounding the question of intentionality and conscious feminist identification, however, are not fully resolved with the thesis i proposed in I.3.i that the term "feminism" ought to be recontextualized when inserted into new and differently constructed discourses. My treatment of this claim so far has been framed by social psychology and insights rooted in postcolonial theory. Intentionality, however, has a record within art theory as well. Three decades of feminist scholarship has spilled a fair amount of ink on questions whether or not a "feminist aesthetics" can exist, and where one should look for "the feminism" of a piece of artistic creation. The questions came up in a variety of formulations, various authors stressing various aspects; a diversity which in itself shows that the nature of feminist cultural practice cannot be defined *a priori* and universally. Even artists and theorists working within the relatively conglomerated North-American and Western European Feminist Art Movement pointed to the necessity "to speak of feminisms within and across practices just as it is also necessary […] to recognize that there are differences in perception of what the stakes are for feminism and [to recognize] the different historical circumstances in which those distinctions emerge" (Deepwell 1997a). In this section i will delineate a number of approaches that waive a rigid insistence on the categories of "international feminist art" and allow more context-bound subject matters, strategies, and artistic attitudes to surface.

When surveying the terms of the debate about the possibility and nature of a feminist aesthetic and the relationship between artistic form and political impact, i found a proposition by Mary Evans especially illuminating. Evans says that these theoretical debates "can be seen in terms of opposition between those who interpret 'woman' literally, and those who advance a more metaphorical reading of the term" (1997:75). I myself can relate this distinction to the one rehearsed in projects of corrective feminist historiography. One strand within such history-

writing has been concerned with fulfilling a fundamentally *additive* task in order to unearth and demonstrate women's unrecognized achievement within male-dominated and -defined systems of intellectual production. Another strand has been more focused on *critiquing and undermining* the structures of domination, while unfixing male-defined cultural-discursive frameworks and the category "woman".

Creative strategies may also be seen as impacted by one of the above two tendencies. The duality can be captured as a choice between two stylistic options. Some authors/artists would advocate realist forms and standardized codes of expression over more experimental forms. Expressions in the realist idiom have a more affirmative (and therefore positive) impingement as they generate the illusion that "reality" and experience can be both grasped and represented in their totality as well as transparently reflected in the mirror of art. This postulation has been heavily criticized by postmodern theorists and practitioners of art, themselves accenting self-reflexivity in relation to the signifying process and the impact of ideology thereon. Feminist proponents of the realist idiom would not dispute such criticism[27] but would shift the focus from stylistic choices to the social function of artworks. From this perspective, the accessibility and unambiguity of meaning that result from realism's reliance on recognizable structures and familiar language are more efficient as "a potential force for social change" (Felski 1989:163, see also Evans 1997:69) than a perpetual quest for the new ways of expression or a predilection for experimentation and often hermetic meanings. Felski argues that the re-appropriation and re-working of supposedly outdated or conservative forms "possess continuing […] relevance for oppressed social groups" for such forms allow these groups to fill an established language and structure with new, previously unaddressed contents (Felski 1989:169). Other feminist theorists of art would confront this view and, drawing on Roland Barthes' distinction of "writerly" and "readerly" texts

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[27] However, Rita Felski, for example, does dispute it, pointing out that realist forms, far from being "closed" units, have been extensively drawn upon to develop new and challenging narratives (1989:154).

(Barthes [1970] 1990),[28] would favor "radical" textual practices that subvert, rather than affirm, dominant modes of representation and therefore possess the most emancipatory potential. Insisting on the social constructedness and ideological conditioning of art, Felski's criticism of the latter stylistic option is that the capacity to undermine standardized modes of communication cannot be hailed as subversive in and of itself for artistic expressions of this kind may often "bear little relationship to the reader's experience outside the text" (158).

Post-structuralist textual theory has greatly diminished the role of the artist/author,[29] and promoted the reader/spectator into "co-author", i.e., a greatly significant party in meaning production. Semiotic text-based criticism also maintains that meanings do not simply boil down to conscious authorial input but, to a degree, are being produced through the very act of interpretation.[30] In other words, it is texts, rather than authors that produce meanings. If so, the question whether a text is organized in a way that pre- or overdetermines interpretation while upholding a hierarchical mode of address, or whether its structure is open-ended and inserts the recipient into the meanings produced, appears to be a crucial difference when the re-orientation of dominant modes of representation is targeted.

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[28] Readerly texts offer pre-determined meanings to be passively consumed along the lines of a classical, conventional presentation of similarly traditional subject-matters. Writerly texts involve the reader in the construction of meaning for they offer no single meaning but a proliferation of codes for the reader to tackle and administer. "Texts", here again as well as in the coming discussion, are not limited to literary products but used in the expanded sense (as in footnote 7), and "reader" also denotes a broader understanding of recipient.

[29] See also Barthes [1977] 1990, Foucault 1992. In fact, the contestation of authors' privileged insight into the meaning of their texts goes back to the hermeneuticians of the 19th century (Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm Dilthey) who critically examined the active process of reading, rather than simply studying texts. The idea that meaning is created by the reader, and therefore is specific to each textual "performance" that occurres was carried on by reception theory, a 20th century development (hallmarked e.g., by Stanley Fish and Umberto Eco). The post-structuralist Roland Barthes challenged the author's status to the point where he declared the "death of the author", while Michel Foucault removed the onus of the construction of "meaning" from the author by introducing strategies of reading the social and cultural sphere.

[30] In their seminal work, *Semiotics and Art History,* Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson point to the relevance of semiotic theory for the study of art: "it helps us think about aspects of the process of art in society, in history, in a way that is not bound up with the artist's intention" (Bal & Bryson 1991:191).

Film theorist Anette Kuhn also deals with such an opposition between realist-conventional and radical stylistic practices (Kuhn 1994:10–18). Kuhn, however, is an advocate of the latter practice for its disruptive force, but not for its "revolutionary", ever-innovative nature in itself. Without making an explicit reference to Barthes and his terminology, the distinction between writerly and readerly texts governs Kuhn's analysis who genders this distinction. As an outcome, Kuhn claims that both kinds of texts are oppositional cultural practices inasmuch as they carry a "feminist input" and make feminist readings possible. They, however, hold different assumptions as to how to surmount dominant norms. One kind of "textual politics", insisting on the de-hierachization of meaning-production, relies on open-endedness as far as meaning production is concerned, while the other kind prefers closure of meaning[31] in order to mediate unambiguous contents (already constituted feminist ideas), and thus ensure that the political message is not lost. Semiotic theorists (including Barthes) regard texts that would consolidate and fix meaning problematic because the closed text is ideology's prime instrument, serving to perpetuate its messages. Under the feminist terms of Kuhn's argument, the closed text complies with a patriarchal system of signification. Meanings in a patriarchal system are informed by the imbalances of power inherent within that system. If meanings are not fixed—as semiologists argue—but complex and mixed, audiences will have to have some leeway in decoding them (Stafford 2001:233). Unlike mainstream modes of representation, feminine texts resist establishing a relation of mastery between text and recipient.

Another outcome of gendering Barthes's distinction is achieved through coupling it with the concept of *écriture féminine*. Kuhn does not use the term *écriture féminine* itself; its English equivalents—feminine language or feminine writing—do occur, however, and references are made to the French philosophers theorizing the concept (Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous). Kuhn poses the possibility of a *feminine text* as opposed to a *feminist* one. The two

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[31] I will come back to a more detailed explanation of these two strategies in Chapter IV when discussing particular women artists' actual artistic strategies.

strategies are distinguished on the basis of what cultural texts communicate through their content and what through their textual organization. The former strategy works with open-endedness as far as meaning production is concerned, while the latter relies on closure of meaning. What Kuhn names as *feminist text* would employ this latter kind of textual organization: aspiring to communicate already constituted meanings, such texts repeat the operations of dominant modes of representation whereby pacifying the recipient. *Feminine texts*, however, would set out to demolish patriarchal structures not only through their content but also through their textual organization and relationship to language and recipient.

Kuhn's concept of a feminine text owes a lot to the above-mentioned French philosophers although Kuhn neutralizes a basic attribute of *écriture féminine* as defined by those. While Kristeva, Irigaray, and Cixous notoriously originate feminine speech and writing in the body, the British theorist sidesteps this oft-critiqued essentialist move when she draws on their theories.[32] Introducing the feminine as a *relationship* to language and a principle of textual organization, Kuhn claims to have freed the argument from biologism (1994:11). Unlike those who think that feminism as a set of meanings can be located in the *content* of a given cultural text, or others who would locate the feminist input in specifically feminist *forms*, Kuhn holds that feminist intervention is not really the question of producing a "feminist text". Belying the "intentionalist fallacy" that would anchor a text's meaning solely in its author's conscious intentions, Kuhn extrapolates that a non-feminist is capable of producing a feminist text, or that a feminist is capable of producing a non-feminist text. It is because "no intervention in culture can work at the level of the text alone" (13), just as her feminine-as-relation is not a formal attribute of the text either. Drawing on Irigaray's argument for a feminine language, Kuhn characterizes this dominant (Western) discourse as informed by an "Aristotelian type of logic" and possessing the

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[32] From among the three, Kristeva's position is the least woman-centered. She extends her examination to male avant-garde writers, and values their production inasmuch as they adopt "woman's strategy" to "reject everything finite, definite, structured, in the existing state of society" (Kristeva, quoted in Jones 1985:86).

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"masculine" attributes of rationality, linearity, instrumentality, and limitation of meaning. By contrast, a feminine relation to language would pose plurality over against unity, multitudes of meaning as against single, fixed meanings, and actively engage the reader in the meaning-production process (Kuhn 1994:11).

A point where Rita Felski and Anette Kuhn agree is the act of reception: the moment when feminist readings emerge. Both theorists hold that this is a crucial moment, although their approaches and motives diverge again. Withstanding to locate the locus of feminism as a set of meanings either solely in the conscious intentions of authors or in formal attributes of texts, Kuhn stresses reception—the interaction between texts and recipients—as perhaps the most decisive instance in generating meanings. For her then, reception itself turns out to be a viable point of cultural intervention. Rita Felski builds her argument around the politicization of reception (as well as that of production). From this perspective, too, interaction between texts and readers appears to be the locus where radical impulses enter a text, as such impulses—and here the two theorists are on the same platform again—are not inherent in the formal properties of texts (Felski, 161). Thus, instead of narrow textual analyses of works formulated in any given style, Felski presses for the exploration of the emancipatory potential of a range of artistic forms and cultural activities by women. She then proposes the concept of a *feminist public sphere* to model such a diverse set of practices. For Felski, identity formation in feminist cultural practice is predicated on the assumption of "a gendered collective which self-consciously defines itself against society as a whole" (155). In conjuring such a community, Felski sees a parallel between, as well as crucial differences from, the processes of the formation of bourgeois subjectivity. To explicate this correlation, Felski draws on the model of the bourgeois public sphere/*Öffentlichkeit*, theorized by Habermas. The bourgeois public sphere first emerged at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries as a "critical and independent public domain that perceive[d] itself as distinct from state interests" (Felski, 164), and was a site for daily communication and the circulation of news,

issue formation as well as critical debates among citizens. Nancy Fraser, another feminist theorist, also working on the reconceptualization of an individualist, and at the same time universalist and separationist view of the public sphere, emphasizes that, in Habermas's understanding, the public sphere was a "body of 'private persons' assembled to discuss matters of public concern". Here political participation was to be enacted through the medium of talk (Fraser 1993:519–21). Both Felski and Fraser note, however, that the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere, although it saw itself as a "universal class", rested on a number of significant exclusions as it was limited to an educated male bourgeoisie and enlightened nobility (Felski,165–66, Fraser,521–22). After the bourgeois public sphere had suffered a gradual loss of critical function due to the dynamic of capitalist growth and the development of an industrialized mass society, newer and diverse critical oppositional forces, a host of competing interest groups appeared—the women's movement among them—in the place of a single, comprehensive public sphere. Felski calls these *counter-public spheres*, as they seek to define themselves against the homogenizing and universalizing logic of earlier (i.e., the bourgeois) or contemporaneous (pseudo)public spheres (i.e., the culture industry of modern mass communication).[33] Fraser underscores that "in so far as these counter publics emerge in response to exclusions within dominant publics, they help expand discursive

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[33] Various theorists have also pointed to the inequality of access to the public sphere in Habermasian terms, and to the emergence of counter-publics, understood "as particular parallel formations of a minor or even subordinate character where other or oppositional discourses and practices can be formulated and circulated" (Sheikh 2005:8–9). Prior to Felski, Negt and Kluge [1972] (1993) used the concept to refer to spaces organizing collective experience (such as the workplace and the home). Their aim was also to pluralize the public sphere, and what they added was the "proletarian" counter-public sphere in opposition to its normative "bourgeois" counterpart.

Mira Marx Ferree also points to the significance of a site of active political engagement that is situated beyond the scope of state policy and electoral politics and calls it "civic sphere for feminism" (1994:618). In an unpublished MA thesis, Réka Pigniczky targets women's absence, their stereotypical representation and the unequal opportunities women professionals have in Hungarian media (Pigniczky 1996). In her combined analysis of democratic theory, media theory and the feminist critique of the public sphere, the author conceptualizes the media as a strong form of the public sphere in today's society, and makes an effective connection between the way it functions and the changing status of women in post-communism. Pigniczky also implies that there might be a connection between these changes and the effects of capitalization and enforced consumerism. This antecedent is valuable for me as her focal points correspond to the guiding aspects of my exploration even if printed and electronic media are more readily conceptualized as public spheres than the lesser accessed domain of (art) cinema and especially contemporary visual arts.

space. [...] Assumptions that were previously exempt from contestation will now have to be publicly argued out" (528).

In this section i only cited a limited number of authors contributing to debates about the possibility of a feminist aesthetics on the one hand, and the salience of intervening in the public realm on the other. The reason why i chose to focus on the ideas of Rita Felski and Anette Kuhn is that juxtaposing their views illustrates how the feminist potential of cultural products can be differently assessed even when the divergent approaches follow a similar train of thought (identifying radical or more conventional textual practices, as well as the gains and drawbacks of both). Also, the point where their thought converges constitutes a basic motivation for my PhD project: they both see reception, including the production of feminist readings, as a political issue in its own right.

Kuhn's insistence that it is not authors but texts that produce meanings in always contextually determined moments of reception, and therefore no *a priori* and universal characteristics of a feminist text can be prescribed, is edifying. If it is accepted that meanings, rooted in (often only supposed) authorial intentions are not to be taken for granted, or not to be totalized, a vocal feminist stance on the part of cultural actors proves to be a precarious "requirement" even when their creative output is being assessed from a distinctly feminist perspective. Felski's feminist counter-public sphere, a gendered discursive collective, is important in making certain problematizations and subjectivities recognizable. Therefore, the question whether individual cultural producers and/or their works are willing and/or competent to contribute to the formation of a *feminist public sphere* in a given context may provide, i argue, a useful perspective when assessing their activity.[34]

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[34] I do not wish to overlook the particular re-configuration of the "public" and the "private" in state-socialist times that a number of researchers have underlined (Konrád 1984, Einhorn 1993, Funk 1993, Sauer 2001, Gal 2002). Under state-socialism, as Birgit Sauer summarizes some related arguments (32–33), a critical political public in the private sphere of the family developed against the "over-politicization" and

I.4 An interdisciplinary analysis

Discussions of interdisciplinarity recurrently negotiate the relative advantages and disadvantages of both disciplinary foundations—often entailing, as it is argued, (over)specialization and an arbitrary fragmentation of knowledge—and the alleged unfoundedness, "illegitimacy", or occasional superficiality of interdisciplinary inquiries. I do not wish to further rehearse these arguments here, or supplement the debate in any other way than declaring allegiance to those regarding interdisciplinarity a useful knowledge-seeking strategy, especially in the field of critical gender studies. Therefore, i shall limit myself to laying down why and in what ways i turned to an interdisciplinary perspective when designing and pursuing my dissertation project.

Authors who argue for interdisciplinary approaches (e.g., Klein 1990, Kline 1995, Boxer 2000, Pryse 1998 and 2000, Camic & Joas 2004, Liinason & Holm 2006) imply a criticism of the disciplinary organization (or compartmentalization) of knowledge,[35] and see interdisciplinary thinking especially valuable in answering complex questions, addressing broad issues, and solving problems that are beyond the scope of any one discipline (Klein, 11). As Marjorie Pryse contends, allowing to work across several categories of analysis at once and incorporating the approaches of two or more disciplines to produce new fields of study, interdisciplinary strategies may cause disciplines to expand and open up their borders to include previously excluded research questions, and thereby bring to visibility previously suppressed knowledge (1998:4–11,

state-infiltration of life. The family became a "substitute public" while the state and the party were "de-publicized" since members of the parliaments were only token representatives. During the political transformation discourses that de- and re-valuated the private sphere were alternating, while a new political public sphere was also rising. While the value assigned to the private sphere may have been changing, these privatization processes have ingrained, rather than destabilized gendered social roles. I do not think, however, that an awareness of these re-configurations invalidates my proposed analytical tool. Firstly, in Chapter IV, my references to the cultural underground of the 1960–80s as a "parallel public sphere" reckons with the understanding that the official public sphere was de-publicized, and confers some characteristics of a counter-public on this social group. Secondly, and relatedly, i propose a general conceptualization of critical art practice as an intellectual activity that takes place in a counter-public sphere (see more on this in II.5). In this perspective, my analysis of cultural producers' activity is already framed by a modified understanding of the public.
[35] Witness also how Liinason & Holm use the term "critical interdisciplinarity" to refer to interdisciplinarity itself as a critical position (2006:18).

passim). The introduction, by an incipient Women's Studies, of gender as a central category of analysis brought along interdisciplinary agendas for two most important reasons.

First, interdisciplinarity is often associated with problem-focused research (i.e., research *on* problems rather than *in* disciplines) and is therefore characterized by a degree of instrumentality (Klein 2000:5–14, passim), an orientation on problem-solving and pragmatic criticality, as opposed to "extreme specialization or a lack of utilitarian accountability to social and other pressing issues" (Liinason & Holm 2006:118). In the 1970s women's (and later gender) studies grew out from, and retained a strong connection with, activism, starting out from the ambition that feminist research should produce liberatory and empowering knowledge for women. Many of its practitioners have seen themselves as change agents and producers of transformative knowledge, aspiring to bring closer, rather than separate, academic and activist work, whereby also melting down artificially constructed barriers between the academy and various other institutions or aspects of life. In seeking complex answers to formerly unasked questions, gender studies as a field of research has developed into "an (inter)discipline of its own" (Liinason & Holm 2006:116). Several authors see an inherent relationship between women's and gender studies as a subject field and interdisciplinarity; as Marjorie Pryse relates it, "[f]or 30 years Women's Studies has lived with casual and unexamined understandings of interdisciplinarity" (2000:106). Marjorie Pryse presents an exemplary project by Maria Mies in which the researcher worked with a wide array of knowledge forms, not all of which would fall in the scope of so-called scientific form of inquiry or method (Pryse 1998:12). These included practical, everyday knowledge; political knowledge and "skills"; self-recognition; critical knowledge (the ability to critique ideologies and to demystify); theoretical knowledge (the ability to relate empirical findings to theoretical statements); or social knowledge (the ability to relate to others, to recognize social conditions).

Secondly, with intersectionality theory coming to the forefront of feminist analysis, the praxis of working with several categories of analysis at once and combining the insights of various fields of study, has gained further impetus.[36] Such work, as well as the striving to integrate theory and praxis, also led to the development of a hybrid methodologies. Pryse describes this "trans/feminist interdisciplinary methodology" as an intellectual space in which scholars have access to a variety of analytical tools and multiple methods including textual analysis, qualitative and quantitative research, ethnography, reading strategies, and various other concepts and frameworks (Pryse 2000:113). While the most frequently named interacting categories in gender studies are gender, class, race/ethnicity, and sexuality, some researchers are careful to keep the list open to include other social divisions that might shape social hierarchies with a varying force in different contexts; Pryse herself adds "the structures and policies of nation-states" as they impact women's lives (1998:4). This affix is especially valuable from the perspective of my own research in which i wish to explore the kinds of—social, political and cultural— factors that may have shaped the artistic identity, agendas and output of women cultural producers in Hungary in two distinct periods. I do not conceptualize my inquiry as a research in contemporary art or film theory, or an aesthetic analysis of cultural products; rather, i am trying to map subject positions from which individuals produce artworks and to analyze the interconnectedness of these with the social world. Accordingly, i regard artists as social subjects who happen to work as cultural producers, but are integral parts of society and whose lives and experiences are impacted by the same gender regime and social structures as the lives and experiences of other individuals. My introduction to this dissertation provides a detailed layout of the disciplinary areas and scholarly approaches that i attempted to connect and integrate throughout this exploration.

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[36] Intersectionality arose (first in the 1970s, and more emphatically in the 1990s, with the work of Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins) as a critique of the developing theory of the feminist movement. Although this movement was multiracial, it initially failed to recognize that the forms of oppression or inequlity its various members experienced were defined by an interrelating (intersecting) system of discrimination, within which gender was only one category.

tudod hogyan szeretem őket?

így, pont így

így szeretem őket, hogy sosem tudják, melyik fiókban van az alsógatyájuk

és így, hogy nem tudják kimondani, de érzed, érezned kell, hogy milyen nagyon mélyen szeretnek

és így, hogy sokszor nem kell más csak a tested, mert nincs mibe meneküljenek

és így szeretem őket, hogy lenéznek, kinevetnek, nem hiszik, hogy tudod, amit ők

és így szeretem őket, hogy nem találják helyüket egy kisbaba mellett

és így, hogy megcsalnak, elhagynak, feleségül vesznek, gyereket csinálnak neked, aztán nem tudják mit kezdjenek a hirtelen jött családdal

és így, hogy nem tudnak tisztességesen elmosogatni

és így szeretem őket, hogy inkább homokba dugják a fejük, semmint hogy megbeszéljétek a problémákat

és így szeretem őket, hogy ha szeretnek, eléd hordják a fél világ kincsét

és így szeretem őket, hogy pont nem azét a fél világét, amelyiket szeretnéd, hanem a másik fél világét

és így, hogy szőrösek, büdösek, és szúrnak

és így szeretem őket, hogy annyi fájdalmat okoztak, amennyit nem tudok vinni

így szeretem őket, igen

így, ahogy vannak

http://bocs.nolblog.hu/archives/2009/03/09/hogyan/

do you know how i love them?

that's how i love them

i love them as they never know in which drawer to find their boxer shorts

as they cannot say it, but you feel, you must feel how deeply they love you

as they often only want your body because they've got no other escape

as they look down on you, make fun of you, because they don't beleive that you also know what they know

as they are so helpless with a baby

and as they cheat on you, abandon you, marry you, have a kid with you, and then don't know how to live their sudden family life

and as they cannot do the dishes properly

and i love them as they'd rather bury their head in the sand than talk over problems

and i love them as they, if loving you, will pile the treasures of half the world in front of you

and i love them as they will pile up the treasures of the wrong half of the world, not the half that you long for

and as they are hairy, stinky, and stubbly

and i love them as they cause so much pain that i cannot bear

that's how i love them, yes

i love them as they are

excerpts from a blog entry @ http://bocs.nolblog.hu/archives/2009/03/09/hogyan/

March 9, 2009

CHAPTER II   EMANCIPATION: AN EXPENDABLE POLITICAL GOAL

In this chapter, i set out to assess key dimensions of gender-related developments in Hungary in the state-socialist and post-socialist periods. I distinguish these two periods because one of the hypotheses of my inquiry is that political systems mediate messages that shape female subjectivity and constructs of femininity through women-related legislation and politics as well as social-political and cultural discourses. Thereby they better enable certain kinds of subject positions for women, than others. The evaluation, and even re-evaluation, of the gender-related developments during the state- and post-socialist periods has its own extensive literature by today. Analyses produced by both local and international scholars gauge the discontents and achievements of the state-socialist way of women's emancipation as well as the changes that resulted from the transition to market economy and political pluralism. It is beyond both my aspiration and capacity to enrich the existing body of studies with newer empirical or factual findings here. I do hope, however, that the perspective i develop when tackling the subject will buttress problematizations and queries only partially thematized before, and will lead to novel conclusions about gender and identity formation in the chosen contexts.

Neither is my intention to provide a comprehensive and exhaustive account of gender-related social changes over a span of sixty years. The perspective i develop and the aspects of the subject i am considering, are governed by the general objective of the dissertation and are meant to prepare the ground for the analyses to be carried out in Chapter III and IV. One of these aspects is the exploration of what kind of gendered identity constructs become *thinkable* under particular gender regimes and what are the ways political authority defines or insinuates these? Another set of questions inquires about how gender regimes in both periods condition the *discursive climate* within which cultural producers can formulate and articulate their messages, and how those

messages get interpreted within such environments? Another line of inquiry interrogates whether particular ideological arrangements may aim to reify or mitigate women's relative powerlessness in society?

A number of feminist authors posit that women's oppression is reproduced and mediated through both material conditions and ideological arrangements (Asztalos-Morell 1997). This premise presents itself as an employable axiom to follow up the two political systems in Hungary—the state-socialist one-party rule and the post-socialist democracy and market economy—from a gendered perspective: how have both related to the above-mentioned basic building blocks of women's subordinate role in society?

In an attempt to discover whether gender regimes might be significantly different in capitalist and state socialist societies, sociologist Éva Fodor has observed that, within different economic and political systems, dominant classes rely on a different combination of resources to legitimate and exercise their power (2003:18–20). When comparing capitalist Austria and state-socialist Hungary, Fodor found that a combination of economic and cultural capital defined relations of domination in the former case, while in the latter, economic capital only played an insignificant role in social advancement and was replaced by another type of resource: social capital. In the sections to follow i will explore the mechanisms and dynamics of women's share in the above resources of power.

In II.2. i will follow up the self-assigned role and the ideological arrangements the states in the two periods adopted *vis-á-vis* women's issues. I chose to focus on the states' role in shaping conditions of gender equality despite the fact that feminist theorists' opinions about the desirability of the state's participation in women's struggle for social and political equality greatly vary. In my view, those authors have good arguments supporting their position who propound 1) that states have always been one of the most important catalysts in shaping gender relations; 2)

that the production of female subjects has, to a great extent, been concentrated in the state; 3) that feminist political agendas in any national context need the cooperation of the state, and therefore "actions and organizations necessary for feminist political contestation are dependent on the nature of the institutions and policies of the states under which we live" (Narayan 1997:38).

I also wish to accentuate the two states' clearly articulated political platforms and their explicitly stated or more subtly instilled dominant ideologies. The socialist state conveyed its political goals and the ideology underpinning them more directly, which may have had a more immediate impact on the individual's social consciousness than the more dispersed ideology of post-socialist governments. As Gal & Kligman exposed, the force of official ideology may have even overshadowed lived experience: "people in the region reacted as much to the representation of themselves in official communications as to the often unforeseen and unintended consequences of state policies"(2000a:5). Mária Schadt partly explains this immediate impact with the fact that mass media at the time was the monopoly of party bureaucracy and as such, rendered official ideology as reality itself (2005a:61).

Another sequence of questions concerns women's employment as a basic determinant of women's material conditions. In what ways have the two regimes facilitated or constrained women's participation in paid labor? What sort of work and professions have been open to women, and what sort of career patterns have been attainable? What happens at a stage when wage work becomes an internalized objective for women and individuals come to develop a positive career orientation? Volgyes & Volgyes writing, in 1977, about state-socialist Hungary, hypothesize that in societies where "women have the legal right to do anything and everything they wish, it is obvious that their number will be spread evenly approximately in the same ratio as that of men, throughout all professions and occupations" (1977:41). Is it obvious indeed? Do

they gain entry to political office, top-level directorial, managerial, or in other professionally authoritative (because decision-making or potentially trend-setting) positions?

In Eva Fodor's monograph cited above, the author herself is not so much concerned with cultural representations under the rubric of social capital,[37] but she does remark that cultural capital played an important, if secondary, role in state-socialist Hungary too (2003:19). Combining my above concern with ideological arrangements potentially reproducing or lessening women's subordinate social position on the one hand, and Fodor's insights about the relative centrality of cultural capital in both political systems on the other hand, in II.3.i set out to explore to what extent women gained access to authoritative positions in professional and cultural life. In other words, to what extent could they possibly gain control or influence over their public and cultural representation? This preliminary inquiry will be supplemented with more thorough-going explorations of women's position and representation in the specific fields of cinematic production and the visual arts in Chapter III and IV.

II.1 Re-assessing the state-socialist past and taking a perspective on the present

II.1.i An emerging feminist scholarship on Central and Eastern Europe. Localizing knowledge-production revisited

After the collapse of state-socialism, a gradually growing body of literature has emerged to provide a general assessment of the gender politics of the previous regime and of women's experience of the system change. A significant portion of these pieces came to existence as contributions to volumes focusing on the reshaping of the social, economic, political and cultural landscapes of post-communist countries, most often edited (and occasionally authored) by

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[37] Fodor's primary focus is the type of social capital that took the form of party membership, also labeled as "political capital".

Western scholars, with contributions by Western, and to a varying degree, local authors (Einhorn 1993, Gal & Kligman 2000a, Jähnert et al. 2001). The majority of these volumes and the articles therein adopt a country-by-country methodology of description (Corrin 1992, Funk & Mueller 1993), often lacking, however, a differentiated approach for dealing with the countries of Eastern, Central and South-Eastern Europe, or neglecting the analysis of inner-state differences (Kašić, quoted in Jähnert et al. 2001:18). When comparisons are also solicited, they do not normally go beyond a regional framework. As a consequence, even in cases when the editors/authors come from Western Europe or North America, these collections or the texts included rarely make explicit comparisons between state-socialist arrangements and contemporaneous Western settings, or rarely address themselves to the fact that the post-socialist transformation takes place within an environment in which social and economic relations are increasingly being regulated by international political and economic forces. The relatively little scholarly attention these actualities of the policy environment have received contributes to the (re-)production of an ahistorical idea of gender, already signaled in Chapter I.3.ii.

Some of the pieces focusing on the socialist period appear to "ahistoricize gender" in that they exhibit a sort of corrective hope inasmuch as they implicitly weigh the state-driven emancipation against some absolute "feminist dream", as if the authors were not to analyze the gender politics of a particular historical formation but to measure the success of the implementation of an ultimately just and democratic society. In detailing "forced emancipation", several authors adopt a totalizing view both on the state-socialist period (neglecting the changes that took place in governmental policies in the course of nearly five decades) and women as a social group (neglecting how various sub-groups of women are differently positioned within society and therefore differently affected by economic and social developments and the responding governmental policies). Thus, even if most of the authors are ready to register the accomplishments of the state-socialist "women politics" too, they tend to formulate their

assertions in a vacuum, i.e., tend to consider East-Central Europe isolated from its historical context and parallel developments at other geographical locations. This "vacuum-effect", that puts broader political-economic terms beyond question, generally characterizes accounts of the transition period as well, allowing for "an unimpeached narrative of westernization as progression" (Watson 2000:200).

The political and cultural forces that drove the institutionalization of gender studies in the region expedited, though in a very peculiar and potentially restrictive manner, the mushrooming of an interest in gender analysis;[38] the number of local scholars steadily engaged in researching contemporary society and politics from a gendered perspective has been on the increase from the early 1990s on. As a result, the amount of empirical data available for further research is growing, and just as importantly, a good deal of these research projects or analytical enterprises now set for themselves more complex agendas than those carried out amidst the rapid positioning of earlier years.

There is also a distinctive group of literature that much pre-dates this flux of new feminist scholarship on the region, and the pieces that i think belong here pride themselves on providing layered analyses of the effects of socialist employment policies on women (e.g., Heller 1970, Márkus 1970, Szalai 1970, Scott 1974, Volgyes & Volgyes 1977, Molyneux 1981, Ferge 1982 and 1983, H. Sas 1984, Koncz 1985, Kruks, Rapp & Young 1989). Or, by carefully considering the attainments of both Eastern and Western patriarchies, they relativize the differences between them and detail the reasons underlying their respective failures (Márkus 1970, Molyneux 1981). When juxtaposed with the ideological narrowness of the pieces that were written in the spirit to justify the systemic change, these older studies strike with their free, inventive and creative approaches and make it clear that scholarly output from before the transformation is not by

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[38] For a detailed analysis and critique of this process, see Zimmermann 2007.

definition less valuable; rather, it is political booms that are more enabling or disabling for various analytical trends.

Recent explorations with more complex agendas disengage from a scholarly practice that would impose pre-existing frameworks when accounting for the state-socialist way of women's emancipation or women's activity in the transition period. Instead of homogenizing women as a group in sweeping attempts to account for "women's experience" of "work, family, politics" in socialist regimes or "women's experience" of social change, a great deal of recent feminist scholarship on the region leaves room for considering experiences of women from different social classes, backgrounds and generations (e.g., Neményi 1999, Schadt 2001, Palasik & Sipos 2005, Tóth 2005 and 2007). Also, these pieces no longer take the strict differentiations between state-socialist and capitalist social-political regimes for granted (e.g., Kruks, Rapp & Young 1989, Ferree 1994, Molyneux 1995, Watson 2000, Fodor 2003)—especially not insofar as the gender regimes of these systems are concerned. Shifting the focus of the inquiry from the oft-repeated differences between these regimes to the rarely analyzed parallels and continuities between them, and zooming on various well-defined sections within the broad subjects of "women under state-socialism" (e.g., Adamik 2000, Madarasz 2002, Horváth 2004 and 2005, Schadt 2005a, Magó-Maghiar 2007) or "women in the new democracies" (e.g. Goven 2000, Antic & Ilonszki 2003, Krizsán, Paantjens & Lamoen 2005, Palasik 2007, Zimmermann 2007), the authors look differently at key subject-matters of state-socialism and post-state-socialism. Recognizing that the source of certain forms of social inequalities differed in capitalist and socialist systems, and therefore it might be the case that "Western feminist theorists have practically nothing to say about the form of male domination in societies that subscribed to a strict antiliberal, communist ideology and that abolished private ownership [...] as well as capitalist profit" (Fodor 2003:24, see also Asztalos-Morell 1997), some researchers developed novel problematizations and methodologies, and created corresponding theoretical frameworks. On the basis of this

expanding new scholarship, Anna Wessely projected that these standpoints would pose challenges to the existing literature that feminist theory cannot afford not to face (2001:137), while Myra Marx Ferree called upon the feminist movements of the West to "listen to these new voices and welcome their distinctive perspectives" (1994:619).

II.1.ii Some difficulties

It is under this heading that i wish to further underscore the explanatory value of approaches that take pains at every turn of their investigations to put a given phenomenon into context, be their focus on the most disagreeable shortcomings or unresolved tensions of the women's policy of the socialist state or, for that matter, the most rational, inevitable and "natural"-looking facets of the period of economic restructuring. The above-described "vacuum"-thinking divests its subject from its context as if assuming that societies develop in an unhindered free space at any given time. In the case of state-socialism, such context-blindness is generally combined with a firm rejection of the whole "package" of socialism with no regard to its real benefits and quantifiable social goods that Kruks, Rapp and Young lists as follows: "childcare, maternity benefits, access to middle-level political power and more equal earning power" (1989:12). Multi-party democracy and neo-liberal market economy have also arrived as a "package" to post-state-socialist Hungary—which has fostered an understanding that takes the broader implications of the unfolding state-economy changes as given. In viewing this transformation as part and parcel of an inevitable changeover having one single fixed scenario, there is a blindness to the possible variations in transition strategies. Thus looming capitalist economy figures as a monolith and so does the ensuing adjustment in social organization. Meanwhile it remains blurred that the kind of path the country has embarked on is not the only conceivable transition strategy even if the country maneuvers in a context that is largely defined by the pressures of a globalizing economy.

As Gal & Kligman exhort, in post-socialist Hungary there has been "little public discussion of the *different* sorts of state arrangements, and the *different* possible effects of welfare schemes premised on, say, conservative *versus* liberal *versus* social democratic ideals, or […] on the different positions of a state within the global economic system" (2000a:67).

The kinds of treatment that, among a few others, Éva Fodor (2003), Gal & Kligman (2000a), Maxine Molyneux (1981) or Kruks, Rapp & Young (1989) employ, giving a balanced attention to the differences as well as the less frequently articulated similarities of socialist and capitalist systems, help evaluate the state socialist experiment in a more carefully drafted, comparative frame of reference. For the most part, these authors juxtapose socialist developments with contemporaneous capitalist arrangements in order to evaluate the attainments of the former in its own terms: in the framework of the tensions of socialist theory and practice. For a typical examples, few local authors contributing to the emerging gender scholarship of the 1990s were mindful of the fact that the countries of the ex-Soviet Bloc were relatively poor (even if the standard of living was not identical in all these societies and was improving over time in some of them). This circumstance did not escape the attention of authors who had a different geopolitical perspective on state-socialist developments. Maxine Molyneux, for instance, gave due emphasis to the fact that socialist countries embarked on their modernizing tracks while having limited resources of capital, technology and skilled personnel.[39] "Any critique of the record of such societies in emancipating women, especially given the difficulties encountered in materially much better endowed societies", Molyneux says, "must take this background of scarcity into account" (1981:171). What makes Ivan and Nancy Volgyes's essayistic book *The Liberated Female* a valuable record of the times is that the authors carefully detail the very material everyday aspects of such deficiency (161–74).[40] While practically all Hungarian analysts establish that the state

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[39] Molyneux considers non-European socialist countries as well, stating that this condition of deficiency was even more acutely present in their case.
[40] The authors consider what proportion of families had washing machines or freezers and present details about the unupdated organization of foodstuff supply that required to go to, and queue in, a number of

infrastructure, that was supposed to relieve household work and family care, was gravely insufficient, few view this defect as also partly conditioned by budgetary insufficiencies (as does e.g., Asztalos-Morell) rather than being purely an indication of a task-avoiding dishonest state. Molyneux's caution to consider different types of societies when evaluating the women policies of the state-socialist governments can be extended to the comparison of state-socialist societies and their successor states: in what ways have the corresponding governments related to and tackled various aspects of women's social equality and their needs?

Another line of argument about what may hinder adequate analyses of the potentially appealing facets of state-socialist government policies has received little scholarly attention and remains largely impressionistic as of now. It is the presumption that a certain "*class bias*" of the intellectuals writing up "communist" history defines the basic terms of many of these accounts. Conceding though that different groups view reality from different positionings, it is clear that such situated knowledge is always partial. This epistemological premise is, however, conspicuously absent in large parts of the study of postcommunism (Watson 2000:188). Watson refers to such position as "whiteness" (or, at times, she says "middle-classness"); a speaker with such attitude claims a universal and moral standpoint while neglecting social differences defined by class (or wealth) and race, and, equally importantly, neglecting the partiality of his/her own experiences and social position. In the study of post-communism, an arguably partial perception resulting from a mistakenly claimed universal perspective is a kind of communism/democracy juxtaposition frequently constructed in terms of the presence/absence of freedom. According to the evaluation criteria of those assuming such universal viewpoint (for the most part, intellectuals or *literati),* a fundamental charge against socialist party dictatorship is the non-democratic, oppressive mode of power wielding preventing the exercise of basic human rights, including freedom of expression and assembly. Revealing, however, that these values are falsely constructed

different types of stores that made everyday shopping heavily time-consuming. Volgyes & Volgyes also register the state's repeated, albeit infirm and inefficient, efforts to alleviate these chores.

as universal ones, these kinds of social restrictions, while grievous, may turn out to have affected the real life-activities of different social groups to substantially different degrees. At the same time, some other arrangements of the same state were beneficial and progressive[41] for broad segments of society, but these, too, affected different social strata differently as some groups, intellectuals and professionals among them, had already been entitled to them. These newly extended practices and entitlements included the universal right to work and livelihood, and the right and opportunity of education. They opened up of earlier unthinkable routes of social mobility for men and women of disadvantaged strata, legally curbed patriarchal family and/or marriage arrangements, and eliminated rigid class, religious and even political barriers that strongly determined the individual's life choices earlier on.

As i said above, scholarly evidence for this line of argument remains impressionistic at this point; i have encountered, however, a few concordant remarks in the literature. Although the beneficiaries of the state-socialist emancipation program were, importantly, women from various social strata and age brackets, the reception of the "program" itself greatly varied. Interrogating the intersection of class and gender in her dissertation on Hungarian socialism, Joanna Goven states that she had encountered, during her interview sessions, more vocally anti-feminist women among the intelligentsia than among her respondents from lower social classes (1993b:438). Women working both in factory management and on the shop floor did not generally denounce "emancipation". Their protests were rather focused on the fact that they were not given equal treatment with men in the workforce and on the strongly felt injustice regarding their position within the family. Some had no doubt that, rather than going too far, emancipation had not gone far enough (ibid., 425–32). These voices, however, do not normally speak from authoritative (or authorial) positions, and may not get heard in the "middle-class-biased" literature. Hence my

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[41] The progressive nature of these measures becomes evident when one compares them to pre-war social conditions.

acute interest in interview-based accounts of the period, academic or other, where these voices are recuperated

When accounting for women's situation in democratic Hungary, Katalin Fábián does not use the term "class bias" but talks about "cultural biases in the assessment of what is good and why", recognising that assessment is a matter of social membership (1996:31). "Is it better to be forced into paid work for economic or ideological reasons?", she continues. "Is exclusion from paid labor better if it is based on economic grounds or on ideological or social ones?". With her questions Fábián implies a similar need to contextualise the estimation of particular social processes as i expressed above. She also reveals the bias in the widely used term "forced emancipation" (most often used to refer to women's compulsory employment) by disclosing that democratic Hungary also does not seem to offer genuine alternatives to the majority of its citizens, though the terms of the coercion differ.[42] Sociologist Zsuzsa Hegedűs put forward a similar view at a panel discussion (*Nők a kádárizmusban* 2005) also relativising, against the backdrop of today's deepening social segregation, the supposed damage that the propaganda to elevate the working class did.[43] Some other authors (Volgyes & Volgyes 1977, Goven 1993b) also point to the unique opportunity of states "to bestow official dignity on professions and thereby actively encourage the development of professional egalitarianism" that the state-socialist government did utilize (Volgyes & Volgyes, 206).[44]

Although the above passage might seem as a divergence from my subject, i adverted to this direction for several reasons. One is to illustrate how the choice of values and value judgements

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[42] Diane M. Duffy talks about "forced domestication" in reference to gendered patterns of unemployment and the pressures on women to return to the home after the turn of 1989–91 (2000:231).

[43] Another participant of the panel, Judit Gáspár gave further hues to the picture by adding that such relative privileging of the working class—culture was literally brought to the workers in the form of mobile book-sellers visiting factories, opera tickets sold at the workplace, etc.—developed a sense of social usefulness and belonging in the people targeted

[44] The Kossuth-award can be regarded an example of a gesture "to officially bestow dignity". Established in 1948, it has been the highest state decoration to reward excellence in cultural and artistic activity as well as, up to 1963, outstanding performance in socialist production.

are a matter of social membership. Secondly, Volgyes & Volgyes as well as Judit Gáspár (a participant of the panel discussion i referred to in the previous paragraph) make a case for the effect of a state's explicit political message on the self-perception of the individual: workers, in this case. By a similar token, i will argue in the following that the political message of emancipation may have impacted women's self-concept and, as an official discourse, was likely to enable subject positions other than those acquired in societies that openly legitimate male privilege or rely on a different type of gender equality ideology. Yet another reason for my above digression was my intent to comment on the process, implicated here by Hegedűs, and more directly addressed by Goven, of how certain social groups—workers and sizeable groups of women—had become "political *personae non grata*" after the collapse of state-socialism (Goven 1993b:440).[45] During the immediate transition period, no party have addressed itself explicitly to workers or women and their concerns, Goven underscores, also pointing to the fact that advocating anti-statist, pro-capitalist policies on the basis of a liberalized economy had little to offer workers and working mothers in any case. Finally, the perspectives i briefly presented here combine gender and class aspects in their analysis, a rarely encountered analytical approach in the evaluation of state-socialism, especially in those produced locally.

I hypothesize another factor why alternative accounts of the state-socialist experiment with women's emancipation have been delayed. According to the observation of a number of gender scholars engaged in the analysis of gender-related recommendations and directives of the European Union, or involved as advisors in the drafting of such documents or leading preparatory research projects, EU policy making is profoundly disinterested in Eastern Europe's prior experience with many of the policy issues pertaining to gender-based discrimination and the ways to address them.[46] From the perspective of such neglect currently, the assessment of the Hungarian emancipation project by Volgyes & Volgyes (writing in 1977) is unique. Beside

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[45] On the marginalisation of workers in both the public and academic discourse, see also Szalai 2005.

[46] Mária Adamik and Éva Fodor, personal communication (Budapest, March 5, 2005 and Budapest, January 21, 2008, respectively).

pointing to US feminists' greater headway in the sphere of public life, the authors acknowledged that some other conditions of "women's liberation" had been implemented to a much greater extent in East-Central European socialist states. Furthermore, the authors projected a mutual learning process between the two geopolitical entities (4).[47] I am using the case of the German reunification here for similar purposes as in Chapter I.3.i,[48] as well as to recall GDR feminists' similar anticipations of a two-directional exchange of experiences in order to show how a degree of political naïveté in such visions looms large. The political expectations and concrete suggestions of GDR feminist groups that the new democracy amend the misguided emancipation measures of a non-democratic system, were quickly shattered as their demands turned out to be utopian and irrelevant in the new political economy (Ferree 1994:615).

Bearing in mind my contentions (spelled out in I.3.i) about the hierarchies in knowledge production and definitional monopoly between East and West, it would be plausible to interpret this inattention towards the historical experience of the other half of Europe in the matrix of the East/West epistemic inequality. While this inequality is certainly part of the problem here, some indicators that i will briefly present below suggest that the reasons for the pretermission is more complex. What is at stake here, i surmise, is more than intellectual narratives competing on unequal terms. As i have said earlier, even if the experience of state-socialist emancipatory policies could help forecast the potential efficiency or expected failures of comparable EU measures, policy makers prove to be deeply reluctant to integrate the lessons resulting from a

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[47] They even project that Central Europe might become the trendsetter: "We do not mean to suggest that the path American women are following will be the same" (ibid.). Witness also the subtitle of a book, edited and authored from a socialist-feminists point of view, and published around the time of the political changes in East-Central Europe: "Promissory Notes: Women in the *Transition to Socialism*" (Kruks, Rapp &. Young 1989; emphasis added). The formulation of the subtitle of this volume is remarkable if one bears in mind the language of "transitology" (developed only after the publication of this book). Transitology came to life as a new field of scholarship, or "democracy industry" (Tőkés 1998:32), to chronicle the events in the Central-East European region after the collapse of state-socialism. Its major term "transition" has been contested by many scholarly critics on the grounds that the word "implies an unproblematic trajectory and a destination that is known" (Watson 2000:186).
[48] In Chapter I.3.i, i briefly referred to German unification as a glaring example when feminist interests grown out from different gender regimes collide.

development that traveled a different route. "Letting east European difference be heard is a real challenge and a risk", contends Peggy Watson, because it means having to interrogate the unspoken assumptions and interests that keep ideas of the underlying sameness of West-East political identity[49] so firmly in place" (2000:194). Problematizing the transnational relations of power that structure post-communist feminist discourse means opening up a new set of issues that so far have been farthest from analytical view: the interrogation of the political order *within* Western democracies. Hence the general unwillingness, i opine, to give a hearing to standpoints that would not reinforce the neo-liberal underpinnings of much of EU policy-making. This suppression effectively shapes EU Gender Mainstreaming policies. As Anna Pollert spells out,

> Within Europe, the spectrum between social democracy and neo-liberalism seems to be a major determinant of EO [Equal Opportunities, B.H.] progress. Whatever the distinctive legacy of the Communist regimes, it could well be that the [above, B.H.] political distinction may be more critical for the trajectory of EO policies than the East-West divide. (2001)

Susan Zimmermann puts forward a conceptually similar view although she does not examine gender mainstreaming in EU policy but the institutionalization of gender studies in higher education in Central and Eastern Europe (Zimmermann 2007); a perspective that might relate more immediately to my speculations about why only few studies dedicate serious analytical efforts to evaluate the gender-related developments of the state-socialist period. Zimmermann proposes that the motive of decision makers to promote the institutionalization of gender studies in the (partly) internationally financed sector of the "new" higher education system in Central and Eastern Europe has not, or not only, been to strengthen the equality of women and men and the protection of the human rights of women. Rather, their objectives were a) to adjust to the institutional standards operative in (largely Anglo-Saxon) Western democracies; and b) to express

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[49] Watson explains this posited sameness of political identites in connection with the "surprise syndrome", i.e., Westerners' amazement over the facts that a) democracy has brought greater difficulties to many women; b) that this did not lead to a spontaneous embracement of feminist identity in democratizing Eastern Europe; and c) that the first gender-related policies and social developmenst were different than those that "*should have* appeared" in a democratisation process. The normative assumption implied in this "surprise" posits postcommunist social processes as deviatons, "inexplicable in [their] own terms, the result of 'distortion', and not really 'true' " (190–93).

a commitment to the respective values of a liberal social order and liberal-capitalist market economy at large. As the author explicates, such alliances of professional actors create a contradictory conceptual space to bring out the socially critical potential of women's and gender studies. To the extent that part of this critical potential would be a critique of global hegemonic interests, as Zimmermann implies, i can connect her argumentation to my above concern. Within the configuration she introduces, there are assumptions as to how the narrative of "transition" can, or cannot, be told, and accounts that do not conform to a particular scenario and the implied value assignments, may not receive sufficient attention and legitimacy. Without these more layered accounts of the "transition" period, however, that will not only focus on male-female relations of (in)equality but will contest the broader implications, the means and ends of the system change, a feminist critique of transition is not just partial but becomes an accomplice to the political processes that produce and precondition much of the discontents themselves (Watson 2000:206).

II.2 The metamorphoses of the state's political message for women and related social changes since 1945

In structuring my overview of gender-related social changes spanning six decades, i relied on a model list of factors usually referred to when examining gender equality/inequality, as charted by Judit Hell (2002:327–28). These are a) equality of political and civic rights, women's participation in legislative and executive power and their lobbying capacity; b) education and training; c) women's position in the economy: labor market, work place, wages, career paths; and d) women's status within the private sphere and civil law (partnerships, marriage and family). To better serve my own analytical purposes here, i modified this standard list by supplementing two more factors. The factors i add are 1) ideological goals and political promises as articulated in political rhetoric, and 2) the feasibility to reconcile employment and family life. I incorporated 1) for

reasons i stated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. I chose to punctuate the viability of combining working life and family responsibility because, as a number of scholarly works i consulted emphatically state, generations of women now have been facing the challenge, in capitalist and socialist worlds alike, to make "emancipated" women's life tracks compatible with traditional family roles (e.g. Neményi 1999:158, Bock 2000:245; Brown 1992:8). Or, resorting once more to the lesson of the German re-unification, the most dramatic change resulting from the collision of two different gender regimes evolved around exactly this dilemma which may have been insufficiently resolved in the GDR, but nevertheless, the idea to enable women to combine these two functions of social life at least served as a social norm (Ferree 1993:91).

I also found it helpful to group the above factors into two sets. One set of factors can be more readily recognized as political means to shape gender relations and produce particular subjects (c.f. W. Brown above), that is: political messages materialized in the conferring of political rights, employment-related legislation and policies, and official ideology itself. The second set collects factors that fulfill the above functions (shaping gender relations and interpellating, in the Althusserian sense, individuals as subjects [Althusser 1971]) through channels that are less readily recognizable as political.[50] In this capacity these factors can also be conceptualized as society's reaction to the political message, sanctioning, re-interpreting, and/or stalling it. Viewing social processes from this angle also permits to think about citizens of either hierarchical-directive or more democratically structured regimes in a more dynamic way than solely regarding them as passive recipients and executors of directly imposed or more subtly dispatched political commands and messages. The more diffused means of interpellation that i grouped in the second set also affect women's status within the private sphere; and this is where i will talk about the possibility to combine paid employment with unpaid labor in the home. I do so because here i want to explore aspects and environments that influence the actualization of social processes pre-

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[50] Surely, the recognition that "the personal sphere of sexuality, of housework, of child care and family life *is* political" (Okin 1989:126) underpinned most feminist thought already in the early second wave of the women's movement and the beginnings of feminist theorising.

conditioned by legislation and policy-making. By the same token, this is where i will revisit the topic of job segregation, to be first rehearsed under b) "education and training". Taking up Éva Fodor's argument, summarized in the brief introduction to Chapter II., about how social and cultural capital are important resources of authority and power in both socialist and capitalist systems, this second treatment of the subject will engage with processes of segregation within the scarcely studied fields of creative/artistic professions and professional elites.

As a basic attempt to evade what i termed "vacuum" thinking in the previous section (II.1.i), throughout my overview of how the above sets of factors operated during the two economic and political regimes in Hungary, i intend to be keen on the distinction whether a certain phenomenon is directly related and intimately linked to the given economic and political regime, or it is part of some broader development and thus less directly related to the given socio-political formation. Also, instead of only positing stark discrepancies or dramatic breaks and raptures in the policies and ideologies of the two regimes, i will look out for notable continuities as well.

II.2.i Women's political and civil rights and political participation. Sharing political capital

Women in Hungary were enfranchised in 1945, and the new constitution of 1949 granted full political rights to women, ruling that "men and women in the Hungarian People's Republic shall enjoy equal rights". The introduction, in 1954, of identity cards to both women and men conferred equal personal rights on citizens regardless their gender. The significance of all new legislation, including labor law, the right to (higher) education (1946), and the new family law of 1953, lies in that it ended the legally guaranteed social privileges, or positive discrimination, that men had enjoyed up to then. Replacing a patriarchal legal order, the new family law of 1953 was definitely progressive at the time in international comparison (Schadt 2005a:64-68). It abolished

women's inequality within the family and regulated in detail the conditions of implementing the laws regarding marital cohabitation. Through such legislation the constitution may have given "legal support to women's demands for equality in the face of opposition from their families and the traditional social milieu" (Molyneux 1981:173).

Women's newly conferred political rights did not only include the right to vote but to be elected as well (Schadt 2005a:63). Agreeing with many other authors in the field, Schadt adds, however, that political participation in Hungary at the time only meant the formal exercise of political rights;[51] a fact with which she actually explains the relatively high number of women in politics. (When political participation gained substantial meaning, Schadt continues, the proportion of women dropped—as we will see below.) Another qualification she makes (again, in concordance with other authors, e.g., Goven 2003b:4, Ferge 1999:13, Jähnert et al. 2001:13, Fodor 2003:147–50) is that hardly any women were found in the highest levels of the party hierarchy or holding senior government position. Let us remember again how Eva Fodor defines political (or social) capital as the major resource needed to get in positions of authority in socialist societies in which private property was reduced in amount and had a different standing. As Fodor registers, while "women were allowed, even welcome, in the workplace and at universities, their entry to political positions and their attainment of the most critical resource, political capital, was much more restricted."

Although no legislative change curbed the political rights of women, their political participation and the representation of women's rights and needs have considerably declined after 1989.[52] The trend, already observed under socialist rule, that showed a higher proportion of women on lower levels of political power (and in smaller towns and villages) continued to exist in the new democracy. The process of the male appropriation of the re-opened public sphere, the

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[51] Birgit Sauer expresses similar views remarking that men and women alike were, in state-socialist parliaments, only token representatives (2001:32).
[52] For a detailed account see, among many others, Kiss 1999 and 2005, Fodor 1998, Lévai & Kiss 2000, Antic & Ilonszki 2003, Ilonszki 2006, Palasik 2007.

masculinization of the parliament, and the re-affirmation of gendered hierarchies and gendered power relations in public and private realms have been widely observed (eg., Fábián 1996, Duffy 2000, Pollert 2001, Metcalfe & Afanassieva 2005, Ilonszki 2006, Gal & Kligman 2000b). Some authors point out that democracy is not anti-patriarchal *per se*, and convincingly demonstrate that "current attempts to create a liberal democratic Hungary has done little to empower women" (Fábián, 2). In their engaging analyses, Peggy Watson (1997) and Joanna Goven (1993b) reveal how the democratic transition in East-Central Europe did not eliminate but *produced* anti-feminism. Watson directs attention to how women's exclusion from politics was not an obstacle to democratization but one of its constituents. In the former political system, the voicelessness and powerlessness of the individual was a genuine universal, not a form of oppression pertaining only to women. "It is only with democratization that the 'absence of political voice' [...] can become a meaningful aspect of the subordination of *women*" (Watson, 160). Thus, "the democratization in East-Central Europe may be said to entail the mobilization of the very differences which under communism had been a matter of political irrelevance".[53]

In an 1995 report on the post-socialist region, Susan Gigli still drew a more optimistic scenario showing that, at the time of her report, women's participation in grassroots politics lagged by only 5 or 6 percent behind that of men, and projecting that women's participation in politics was shifting from the symbolism and tokenism of the socialist past to a more real and meaningful role (Gigli, quoted in Acsády 1995).

A genuine mobilization on the grassroots level is certainly welcome news of the political change. Besides several of the surviving pre-war women's organizations, Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége (MNDSZ; Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women) was established in 1945, and was a multiparty umbrella organization until the early socialist state banned most civil

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[53] As Wessely (2001:137) and Pollert (2001) portends, women's absence from politics in the early phase of transformation, the taken-for-grantedness of the lack of their voice may have been one circumstance that also fostered the emergence of conservative political forces.

associations in 1949. MNDSZ first survived, and was later (in 1957) replaced by Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa/National Council of Hungarian Women (Fodor 1998:148). This organization was called to life to convey the state's proclaimed goals of gender equality and equal treatment and, at the same time, to cover up for the daunting problems women encountered on the path to emancipation (Goven 1993b:47). This circumstance led many analysts to denounce the state-socialist emancipation project as a whole on grounds that it was a series of top-down measures not responding to women's own needs or representing their interests. While the prevention of any independent organizing is certainly a strong argument, it is perhaps worth juxtaposing it with the challenges that the newly established women's NGOs have been facing in the post-socialist period. Civil organizations now need to possess powerful lobbying positions and strategies to effectively counteract those processes that brought the greatest losses to women, material or otherwise, during the transition period, and to convincingly thematize new issues (such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, trafficking in women). Hungarian women's NGOs, however, as a 2003 report says, are largely invisible to society, the questions they formulate cannot mobilize a wider public, and they generally lack funding and employees with expertise (Nagy 2003:290, Fodor 1998:162–65). Apart from this general list of difficulties, i argue that women's NGOs have to contend with the prerogative power of the state. Prerogative power is the state's "legitimate" arbitrary aspect in policy making, allowing for operation through incessantly changing criteria for welfare benefits or rights protection rather than through tight, coherent strategies (Brown 1992:13).

In the lack of substantial lobbying force, and facing an increasingly withdrawing liberal state, neither the vindication, nor the enforcement of women's special social and political needs and interests is guaranteed. Since 2004 when Hungary joined the European Union, as well as in the preparation period, external agencies (EU recommendations and directives and international issue-oriented committees) have been monitoring the country, trying to pressure governments to

target gender equality and women's human rights protection—with little to no effect so far. But even when EU requirements are formally endorsed and put into law, the related government documents often only reflect intentions, objectives and declarations, as a 2004 report on the main principles of Hungarian regulations concerning equal opportunity of women and men and the institutional background of enforcing these goals and laws shows (Laky & Neumann 2004). In the authors' assessment, the activity of the surveyed organizational bodies (government secretariats, commissions, and councils, frequently renamed and re-structured, and lumping together women with other "endangered" social groups such as the disabled and the Roma) appears to be limited to repeated sessions to evaluate the "draft version of the anti-discriminatory law" or "promoting the realization of the general equal opportunity strivings" (21). It is against this backdrop that the relevance several gender scholars' assertion about how emancipation processes "were similar to demands voiced by Western feminist groups and *were also founded on practicalities*" (Madarasz 2002, italics are mine; see also Fodor 2003:12, and Goven 1993b:50) comes out. While the inconsistency of government policies on women is a point of continuity between the successive regimes in Hungary (Ferge 1999:17, Pollert 2001), whatever inconsistent state-socialist policy makers' agendas were, under the general principle "to secure the conditions under which greater social equality can be achieved" (Molyneux 1996:247), they passed decrees that had real-life consequences. Acknowledging the relevance of these practicalities and actually implemented measures, i now turn to the conditions of women's employment.

II.2.ii Patterns in women's education and employment. Sharing economic/material capital

One of the most famous, but also infamous, attainment of the state-socialist women policy was the unprecedented level of women's economic activity, reaching 95% by the end of the 1980s (Tóth 1993:218). As there was no declared unemployment, the vast majority of working age

women were employed, reaching not only the socially but the "demographically possible maximum" (Frey 2001:9) of female employment. Women's labor market participation surpassed the corresponding rate in developed industrial societies, including Scandinavian countries, traditionally producing trail-blazing indicators (ibid.; also H. Sas 1984:96). Parallel with an increasing degree of female employment, women's participation in secondary and tertiary education was rapidly growing and, by the mid-70s, women's educational standard was higher than that of men (Tóth, 219).

Women could first enroll in Hungarian universities in 1896 and were accorded equal rights to education by Act No. XXII. of 1946, including entry to all types of higher education (Ladányi 1996:375). After the law came into force, the number of female university students steadily grew. Compared with the academic year 1938/39, their number in higher education was already three times as many in 1946/47, and almost four times as many in 1947/48 (385). But as the testimonials of the respondents in Joanna Goven's fieldwork interviews reveal, pursuing tertiary studies was still not considered an ordinary trajectory for young women even in the 1950s (1993b:93–108). In the early 1950s, the National Planning Department took measures and set quotas to increase women's participation on all levels of training and education, from vocational training to universities (Palasik 2005:88). By the mid-1960s, however, women's proportion in higher education reached 40%, and went beyond 50% from the mid-80s on (Ladányi, 386). But even if the rising educational level of women became a marked feature of state-socialist regimes, a relatively great degree of gender-typing persisted. While some professions became feminized, women's inroad was eased only into a limited range of graduate professions, and their under-representation in secondary vocational training was conspicuous. Due to this latter circumstance, women had lesser chances to integrate in rapidly growing productive work. Industry and construction also offered few opportunities for women to be promoted into mid- or top-managerial positions (Palasik, ibid.), and this is a circumstance Anna Pollert refers to when

explaining women's greater numbers in intellectual professions and humanities departments (2001).

The broad opportunities and high levels of education show a continuity in the periods before and after 1989–91, as do the corresponding gender imbalances. All the opportunities at every educational level are open to women today; still, there are gender-specific differences in educational paths. As Laky & Neumann summarize the particular nodes of these processes,

> more women than men in the labor market have only completed primary education while those women who continue their education are much more likely to enter higher education than men, although more men complete PhD or DLA. Despite the generally low educational attainment of the population, one can safely say that on the average young women constitute one of the highest educated groups in Hungarian society. (2004:9)

In higher education, women constitute the majority of students studying full-time; in the assessment of Beáta Nagy, the feminization in higher education in itself is already a sign of the undervaluation of some of the related jobs (2003:283). Nagy mentions health and teaching, but i will show in Chapter IV.2.ii that a very similar process has been taken place in the professional terrain of visual arts.

Analysts attribute women's high-level integration into the workforce during state-socialism to the combination of two factors: an ideological one and another of an economic-pragmatic nature. Ideologically, paid work was regarded, in the early Marxist conviction and the workers' movement, as the primary means of the self-development and self-fulfillment of the individual. Women's emancipation and equality, too, were to be brought about through their equal participation in productive work. Accordingly, the newly drafted constitution ensured the right to work for all citizens. The great achievement of the right-to-work, however, came to be soon reframed as an obligation to work.[54]

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[54] State-socialist Hungary instituted laws that compelled individuals to be employed. In 1955, unemployed status became a legally punishable one. The term to define the offender was "közveszélyes munkakerülő" [ca. "destructive job avoider"], and the offence only ceased to be a crime in 1989.

The post-war reconstruction as well as the rapid industrialization and the planned economic growth of the country required the mobilization of an unskilled and cheap labor force to compensate for the low level of industrial technology and limited investment into innovation. A large part of this reserve labor force were women.[55] It was recognized, at the same time, that a necessary precondition for women's mass employment would be the socialization of women's reproductive labor, i.e., parts of housework and childcare. Various preliminary policies were introduced to enable women to combine full-time employment and reproductive work. Some of these measures are widely known: establishing crèches and kindergartens (many of them at the work place); introducing maternity allowance, paid and unpaid maternity leave (Gyermekgondozási Segély; from here on GYES, with the availability of one's job guaranteed upon return).[56] The State Planning Commission (Országos Tervhivatal), the State Economy Council (Népgazdasági Tanács) and the National Council of Workers' Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa) were also experimenting with and considering an impressive array of further suggestions on how to mitigate women's domestic workload, down to ironing. These detailed visions, unearthed and rehearsed by a number of researchers (Scott 1974:130–31, Goven 1993b:50–53, Ferge 1999:15, Fodor 2003:25, Palasik 2005:89–99) effectuated (at least informally) more flexible and shorter work hours, a monthly household day-off for mothers with at least two underage children; childcare (with breastfeeding breaks for mothers) and hot meals provided at worksites; and made recommendations to sell foodstuff on company premises or prolong the opening hours of groceries in the vicinities of factories and companies, and demanded better

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[55] Mária Palasik points to a political interest underlying the efforts to so intensely develop industry and so extensively increase labor force: in January 1951, Stalin adjudged the scale of armed forces each European socialist country was to equip. This edict marked a turning point in the political economy of the affected countries; it was this treaty that set eventually irrational and impossible conditions for the the already exacting targets of the command economies. In preparation for an impending war and military mobilization, women were to replace men in many types of heavy-duty physical work. (2005:81–82).

[56] While most sources (e.g., Scott 1974:134, Palasik 2005: 89) state that Hungary was the first, in 1967, to financially compensate for women's childrearing work, Martha Lampland so informs that Austria established maternity leave in 1960 (1989:313).

supply of deep-frozen or precooked meals, the opening of laundries and cleaning services, and the introduction of graduate work commencing hours.

The efficiency of these plans and measures, including the contradictory effects of GYES to help women combine productive and reproductive labor, and the impact of these measures on women's life and career-expectations will be discussed in more detail in the coming sub-chapters. Before engaging with that discussion, i want to introduce a more general query: to what degree and in what ways did these measures altered a male-universal pattern of employment and public participation?

Sociologist Éva Fodor pointed to a far from negligible resultant of reproduction-related policy measures: "As women entered the labor force in Hungary and their presence was constructed as a necessary and unavoidable part of state socialist life, the workplace also changed. […] Unlike in capitalist societies, the workplace experience and even the career track were no longer based exclusively on the male experience" (2003:25–26). Fodor bases the above comparison on a notable difference in how the mechanisms of women's inclusion in the labor market were conceptualized within different political and economic regimes.[57] Using the model of mirrored oppositions, Fodor compares how policy makers in state socialist societies relied primarily on the *difference principle* when encouraging women's participation in social production, while in capitalist countries the most important pieces of the related legislation were based on the *principle of similarity* (33-37).[58] The difference principle recognizes that women, both because of their biological difference and their social roles constructed often with reference to this biological difference, have specific needs or interests as workers, and cannot fully adopt a male lifestyle and

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[57] Although the immediate focus of Fodor's book is Hungary and Austria, some of her findings, the author asserts, hold true in a more generalized context (i.e., for a juxtaposition of state-socialist and capitalist countries) as well.

[58] In mirrored oppositions the elements under scrutiny (here: the difference principle vs. the principle of similarity) are each other's functional equivalents operating in different contexts (state socialist vs. capitalist labor policy) in which they fulfill the given function (women's inclusion in paid labor force) in differing ways.

career pattern. By contrast, the principle of similarity treats women as similarly situated to men whereby it universalizes the male experience. Another sociologist, Ildikó Asztalos-Morell, however, interprets the same mechanism with less sympathy. "Women's biological reproductive capacity", Asztalos-Morell writes, "was regarded as some type of abnormity to be corrected. Women-related labor legislation was supposed to compensate for this deviant character of the female labor force in an economy regulated by the male social norm" (1997:37). Asztalos-Morell does not specify in what other ways the "deviant character of the female labor force" should have been dealt with, but she certainly does not appreciate in state-socialist employment policies a readiness to attend to women's "particularity". I would argue that Fodor's proposition about the two different principles of inclusion is of crucial importance, especially if we consider how the handling of exactly these two factors (sameness/difference) later became a recurrent dilemma in more feminist theory-conscious Equal Opportunity policy formation worldwide.[59]

Despite early efforts to evade gender-typing and despite specific measures to help women improve their qualifications and gain access to male-dominated occupations, the female labor force was over-represented in lower-paid occupations and was underrepresented in positions of authority. Job segregation itself is seen as the source of hierarchical power relations (Witz and Wikander, quoted in Asztalos-Morell 1997:32–33) and as the material basis upholding patriarchy,[60] through systematically excluding women from technologically developing and financially rewarding occupations.[61] Studies in occupational history also reveal that it is less the content of the particular occupation that determines whether its practitioners are predominantly male or female, but it is the social status assigned to it (Belinszki 1997:144). Social scientists distinguish horizontal and vertical segregation; the former refers to a situation in which men and

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[59] On this see Pigniczky 1996:35–36.
[60] According to Heidi Hartmann, segregation provides the material basis for both patriarchy and capitalism, creating a link between the two (1976).
[61] Despite centralized efforts, wage discrimination between male and female employees never disappeared (H. Sas 1984:113–25, Fodor 1998:143) and women were discursively constructed as unreliable workers— which they may have been indeed, given their "second shift" in the household, their caregiving duties, and either the unavailability or unaffordability of the few socialized services replacing household work.

women typically work in separate occupational groups and separate branches of economy or industry, while vertical segregation stands for their uneven representation on various ranks of organisational hierarchy. This latter phenomenon is also described by the metaphorical expression "the glass ceiling". The term gives a graphic illustration of the invisible barrier that blocks the career advancement of women: the glass ceiling lets them see where they want to go, but won't allow them to get there. The barrier is not only invisible and unregulated but proves to be resistant to legislative efforts to break it down.

Already the first surveys of the economic landscape after the system change, published during the "shock-period" of 1989-92, registered the dramatic fallback in the number of women officially employed. This fallback occurred in a wider framework of the erosion of socialist employment structures offering relative opportunities for women (Metcalfe & Afanassieva 2005). Women continued to be segregated in low-income occupations, and the gender gap between male and female wages has not disappeared either. While occupational segregation continued to be high (Neményi & Tóth 1998:11), it declined somewhat in the past 20 years (Bukodi 2006:41) and a narrowing wage gap was registered between 1986-96 (Nagy 2003:285). Meanwhile, pronounced discriminatory practices became operational in recruitment and selection[62] (registered especially in the growing private sector; Frey 2001:9) but state benefits continued to be tied to employment. The re-structuring of the labor market primarily affected women above 40-45 years of age and unskilled workers—social groups typically pushed out of a competitive capitalist labor market; social groups, however, whom compulsory employment kept employed, and sustained, during socialism. The above processes lead to the feminization of poverty.

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[62] In Anna Pollert's view, the withdrawal of earlier *de facto* positive discrimination measures returns Central and Eastern European policy to the androgenic model implied in the EU's Equal Opportunity paradigm (in which "women should be 'allowed' to become more like men") despite the fact that Western European policy makers have come to realize that afformative action is a much needed strategy to remedy structural gender inequalities (2001).

A marked discontinuity between the two economic arrangements is that whereas state-socialism increased women's individual material security even while overburdening them, women have found themselves in precarious working conditions and among vulnerable social groups following the system transformation (Szalai 1991:156). Any partially successful or failed implementation of the difference principle in employment policy was ultimately swept away by adherence to the universalized male pattern.

In closing this section, i would like to debate with some strongly criticized aspects of state-socialist women-related employment policies. One of these is the claim that large-scale female employment—and the concomitant "emancipation"—was *forced*. While the fact of the coercion is beyond dispute, i assert that individual women may have had, and did have, personal reasons to work.

In the first decade of socialist rule, coming to participate in productive labor certainly had different meanings for women from lower social classes and in traditional rural areas than for urban middle classes or intellectuals who were often also politically discriminated, and channeled to professions and workplaces that were below their skills or expectations. It remains true throughout the state-socialist period that one cannot homogenize women as a group when evaluating government policies, and that it depends on a number of factors how individuals in various social situations were differently affected by those measures (Scott 1974:117–32; Ferge 1999:14–16, Zimmermann 2009). More importantly for members of the former groups than for the latter ones, joining the world of paid labor brought a degree of financial independence, while entering the workplace as a public place also enabled them to form relations other than familial ones (which). The lives of these women were improved in significant, meaningful ways. "Many who would otherwise have been trapped in narrow and impoverished lives were able to study and find satisfying work. […] It was a time of rapid upward mobility for those [...] entering rapidly expanding professions [...] into which women in particular were drawn" (Goven 1993b:91–92).

Workplace networks were critical sources of identity and support for women (Ferree 1994:603), offering responsibilities and relationships other than familial ones— especially in the context of often rather patriarchal familial bonds as well as tight government regulations rendering any other civic sphere of association virtually absent.

Taking a deconstructionist line, a number of analysts highlight further biases in the "forced employment"–view. Susan Gal and Gail Kligman disclose how this terminology presupposes that "only in communism was women's labor force participation coerced" (2000a:75). Joanna Goven takes the general argument on coercion further apart: talking about "women's forced employment" also implies a view that nature assigned reproductive work for women, and outside-the-home labor is only self-evident in the case of men, whether they willingly do it or not (1993b:22).

A second most severely objected aspect of state-socialist employment-related measures has been that women's massive labor force participation in the first two decades of state-socialist command economy was a mere "side-product" in the process of the exacted economic growth, and later on continued to be conditioned on wider economic and political interests, circumstances and aspirations. This, however, appears to be a continuing and standard feature of economic policies, although different social and political arrangements might use different techniques to (mis-)present or veil it. "Under communism", Peggy Watson submits, "economy was recognized as overtly political […] as an explicit aspect of the exercise of power", whereas the economic program of market rationalization after the political change has been framed mostly in technical terms and thus was effectively removed from the arena of public discussion, even if the process of "deregulation" does not mean the removal of power from the economy, but its denial (2000:202–07). Within multi-party governance, interfering internal economic and political ambitions shape the policy environment, and, within a global economy, external factors come to play an increasing role. Joanna Goven closely follows up how the policy

recommendations of the World Bank—and their overeager fulfillment by Hungarian parliamentary forces (on this, see also Ferge 1999:79)—defined the terms of the structuring of social services and benefit payments (Goven 2000). Within this debate, women featured as "economic assets more or less valuable" (293).

The third bitterly spurned aspect of state-socialist emancipation has been that while incoherent policies on women may indeed prove to be a shared characteristic of both Western- and Eastern-style patriarchies, in state-socialism such incidental treatment was in sharp contrast with the dominant and professed ideology (Ferge 1999:14). The title of Mária Adamik's doctoral dissertation "State-socialism and the "woman question": "The greatest promise—the greatest humiliation" (Adamik 2000) refers to the same thwarted political promise, the severe discrepancy between party proclamations and the pragmatic measures taken, as well as between ideological goals and lived experience. In another article targeting post-socialist gender politics, however, Adamik herself pointed to a similarly tart contradiction that surfaced after the political change. The contradiction has been between interests calling for full-time motherhood (in order to so reduce female unemployment and bridle declining birthrates) and a general situation in which women cannot afford to give up their jobs (1993:210).

Rather than invalidating any of the above criticism directed at state-socialist gender politics, my aim here was to remind that not all wrongs conventionally attributed to the period resulted from the specific political-economic arrangement of the Hungarian state. Instead, some of the most forcefully negated outcomes of state-socialist aspirations and policies are in fact standard features of a patriarchal social structure. In what follows i am turning to the questions why and how these elements survived or were reproduced, and what is the responsibility of successive state formations in their survival and reproduction?

II.2.iii Declared political promises—undeclared intentions. Reading between the lines of the message

When talking about women's "forced" employment in state-socialist societies, virtually every analyst makes the point that women's inclusion into the labor force was an economic necessity and thus instrumentalized women rather than answered to a genuine demand of theirs. In Mária Adamik's uncompromising words, this type of emancipation was by no means an intentional assistance to liberate women, and thus was not a genuine merit of socialism (Adamik 2000:63). Another set of scholars, however, do not so expressly detach this economic necessity from its emancipatory consequences on the one hand, and, on the other, do not so squarely discount the official ideology and rhetoric about the state's intention to achieve women's equality.

Of the latter view, Maxine Molyneux asserts that the role or "behavior", so to say, of states is an "issue of principle": "[F]rom its inception there has been a core element within feminism […] which had made demands on the state", seeing progressive legislation and egalitarian provisions as essential parts of the struggle to attain equality (1996:246). Without making the state accountable, Molyneux asks, "what underlying premises will inform the rights that women can expect from the state, and how will these rights be guaranteed?"; a question especially pertinent from the vantage point of today's political and economic realities as briefly surveyed in the previous subchapters. Elsewhere Molyneux explicitly compared state-socialist and capitalist arrangements, and identified a crucial difference: in socialist states, the constitution, the party programs and policies recognized women's subordination as a social-political problem requiring intervention, whereas in most capitalist countries each related achievement was a result of long struggles on the part of women (1981:173).[63] Molyneux's claim has been subsequently confirmed

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[63] The author admits that some Western feminists would stress exactly this non-autonomous feature of state-administered "emancipation", and would therefore deny that anything at all has been achieved for the benefit of women. While Molyneux agrees that the presence of autonomous and non-hierarchical women's groups is an irreducible requirement for what can be called a "feminist movement", she does not limit her discussion and concept of progress to developments achieved by such organizations.

by a number of other analysts. Starting out from a similar recognition, Jeanette Madarasz submits that

> Emancipation processes in the GDR were similar to demands voiced by Western feminist groups […]. The main difference was the role of the state, which, in contrast to Western societies, did not oppose related legal and social changes but initiated them itself without women's support, as part of wider Bio-Political, specifically economic and political, considerations. (2002)

Éva Fodor calls state-socialist women's politics, tainted though it was, a unique experiment in history inasmuch as the state experimented with an old feminist dream: the purposeful and centrally sanctioned inclusion of women in the world of work and politics while taking their specific differences into account (2003:136). Myra Marx Ferree places equal emphasis on the "ideological anchoring of equality" and the set of concrete policies to enable an employment-centered way of life;[64] its significance as a social norm, Ferree continues, should not be underestimated (1993:91). Once again, Maxine Molyneux highlights the importance of advocating a new social norm and official ideology. On the one hand, through these channels, the newly forming socialist states expressed an objective to incorporate women in their modernizing project and, on the other, they *created expectations* towards bringing about gender equality (1981:173, my emphasis). The expectations thus created and the life trajectories that thereby became *thinkable* are relevant for my analysis because, during my research, i came to see both as a most salient attainment of state-socialist "emancipation", especially for the groups of women i examined (cultural producers: an urban, educated layer). My interviews with women visual artists who started their career in the 1970s (Maurer, interview, 214–20; Simon, interview, 035–88; Ladik, interview, 078–133) clearly show that this change and its communication strongly impacted their self-definitions. Some of the interviews also confirm (e.g., Simon) Joanna Goven's assessment that the early project of state-socialist emancipation offered a much wider array of options for women as those available within the pre-war social order, as well as the possibility of loosening their dependence upon, and subordination to, husbands and fathers. Elusive as they may be,

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[64] For a post-structuralist and anti-neoliberal critique of the very idea of "an employment-centered way of life", see Lampland 1989:316–20.

expectations and ways of thinking have been addressed—explicitly or implicitly—in a few other social-psychological studies (Neményi 1999, Duffy 2000), where both expectations and ways of thinking were identified as profoundly affected in times of rapid societal adjustment. Authors writing about identity construction on a more general plane, point to the interactive nature of the processes of adopting roles and self-images, and underline the impact of the ideological frameworks out of which individual and group identities emerge. The concept of "cultural scripts" is used to describe how particular ideologies influence public discourse or individuals' cognitive image of themselves and their relations, and define the behavior patterns certain groups or communities accept or require (Berán 2006:247–51).

Molyneux also remarks that, under state-socialism, developmental goals were most closely aligned to the commitment to improve the position of women in the immediate "post-revolutionary" period (1981:171), and that this commitment was to grant women more than mere juridical equality with men; the state was to secure the conditions under which their equal participation in social and economic life could be realized (Molyneux, 1996:247, see also Schadt 2005a:70). This is the short period in which "the political promise" (see Mária Adamik's dissertation title cited above, Adamik 2000) was announced, and when women's emancipation was still a recurring reference in political and ethical argumentation (Adamik, 4).

However, the ideological basis of the emancipation program and the political will to implement it was far from consistent throughout the decades of socialist rule. The political aspirations in the background of policy measures were inconsistent, and, in Zsuzsa Ferge's view, no political thinker has attempted to come forth with a comprehensive leftist (socialist or social democratic) family support policy or gender policy (1999:17). The Politburo knew, from the nineteenth-century Marxist theoretical basis, that women are to be involved in productive work—and this is how women became, in the shorthand of Arpad & Marinovich, "technically liberated" (1995:86). But authorities retained, in their discursive backdrop, rather conventional views of womanhood

and gender relations: rudimentary theoretical principles and biologism were conflated in their communications (Molyneux 1981:178) and, albeit disguised to a certain extent, the bourgeois family form endured as the social norm (Kruks, Rapp & Young 1989:9). Apart from the lack of a sustained political commitment, these authors note that party authorities have always regarded women as a sort of particularity or exception; and therefore their interests, just as any other interests of the particular kind, were secondary as compared to the common cause. But by the 1980s, apart from women's emancipation that had been repeatedly subordinated to other goals, "the ruling party had almost entirely jettisoned the ideology of socialism," including the notion of social justice and the goal to abolish significant social inequalities (Goven 1993b:319).

Mária Adamik and Joanna Goven outline two comprehensive scenarios of the trajectory of the emancipation program and the erosion of the state's political promise (Adamik 2000) or the changing contents of the state's latent or overt messages for women (Goven 1993b)—and, for that matter, men. Mária Adamik's inquiry seeks to answer the question how a particular discourse became dominant, from the end of the 1950s to the end of the 1980s, in which the original focus on male-female *relations* was removed from the social-political agenda, and in which this agenda came to concern women only, and which only constituted mothers as female subjects. The author registers a turn away from the initial ethical-political argumentation in which *women's emancipation* was a standard point of reference towards what came to be referred to as "*the women's question*". In this narrowed-down understanding, marital relations were no longer a subject of contention, and attention was diverting from conflicts issuing from gendered social role. What Adamik calls the "GYES[65] discourse" eventually superseded any such consideration and focused exclusively on questions concerning reproductive functions.[66]

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[65] The paid maternity leave (Gyermekgondozási Segély), see more in II.2.ii and II.3.ii.
[66] A similar shift from "stage one: equality politics" (urging female training and employment) to "stage two: mommy politics" (*Muttipolitik*; actively encouraging women's reproductive duties) was detected in the GDR too (Ferree 1993).

Joanna Goven (1993b) tracked down how gender was reconfigured in the Kádár-period[67] in a way that produced, and passed down to post-socialist society, a politics of anti-feminism. While most authors writing on post-socialist transformation point to a newly emerging neo-conservative social climate (among numerous others, Watson 1997, Pollert 2001), or seem to be befuddled by the paradox that "anti-feminism arose spontaneously and with the characteristics of a movement, while (at least since 1949) there has been no spontaneous and movement-like feminism in Hungary" (Ferge, quoted in Goven, 365), Goven unveils the *continuity* of anti-feminist discourses across the two regimes. A discursive anti-feminism, practiced by both groups of the political opposition,[68] came to form a solid part of public debates in the 1980s, mostly unfolding in the printed media, and created a situation in which a conservative gender ideology became a form of opposition to the state.[69] In a context of worsening economic conditions, this polemic possessed anti-statist overtones, yet were permitted, even harnessed by the state because, Goven suggests, it helped to deflect responsibility for the state's own economic and welfare failures (410). Instead of thematizing a number of plausible factors that would have pointed to the state's responsibility, contributors to the debate were blaming "emancipated women" for much of social pathologies.[70] Goven tracks down through what kind of discursal practices emancipation became one of the expended political goals when the legitimation of the liberalizing Kadarist state was at stake.

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[67] János Kádár (1912–89) rose to power when Soviet troops put down the 1956 uprising; he was the general secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Labor Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt, MSZMP) between 1956–88. The era under his rule was marked by the development of a more lenient and prosperous "goulash Communism" in Hungary.

[68] The spectrum of the political opposition contained a group of liberally-oriented intellectuals embracing the idea of individual rights and bourgeois civic traditions, and a more "populist" group, defending the interests of the nation both against communist emancipation and internationalism (Goven 1993a:287–88).

[69] I am borrowing Éva Fodor's definition here to clarify my usage of the term "conservative" or "traditional" gender ideologies: these are meant "to describe trends of thought that emphasize the view that a woman's 'natural' place is in the home and that her primary role and function in life is motherhood. This idea propagates the family wage, the abolition of abortion and public child care in order to encourage women to have more babies and stay at home to look after them" (1997:478).

[70] On this note, I might hazard the suggestion that these discourses were not "only" anti-feminist but squarely anti-woman or mysoginist, as their attack was not only directed at changes effected by emancipation but was based on a firm belief in women's inferiority and secondary role in society's life beyond their reproductive duties.

The two strands of "para-opposition"[71] later came to dominate the post-socialist political spectrum in the early 1990s. This created a continuity of attitudes toward the issue of women's social, economic, and political in/equality in a very literal sense. Despite the professed concerns with the rights of disadvantaged social groups and despite regular contact with and travel to Western countries in which feminist struggles were a conspicuous part of the social and political landscape, the issue of women's rights was met with indifference, trivialization, or overt hostility even within the "democratic opposition" (Goven, 418–19). In the post-1989 Hungarian Parliaments none of the new parties have laid down stable views about equal opportunity measures and their implementation, while consecutive governments have passed makeshift political decisions in those questions, says Katalin Lévai, director of the Secretariat of Equal Opportunities at the Ministry of Labor at the time, later on Minister without portfolio of Equal Opportunities (1999:30).[72] The new democratically elected governments made no attempt to revise and amend an erroneously implemented but in itself approvable political endeavor: the procurement of women's social equality and a sustained commitment to the recognition of their social-political rights, although suggestions aiming at such amendments have been repeatedly articulated from the early 1960s onward in various public forums. This might sound as a naive political expectation, nevertheless, Diane M. Duffy reports that in early transition period cross-national surveys, women were indeed "welcoming democratization and marketization in the hope that a still better life would be available to them" (2000:225). On the contrary, the transition to political democracy and market economy exhibits a distinctly regressive character; the new "masculinist democracies" have given strikingly little space to women's needs and interests (Molyneux 1996:248); an address very different from the earlier political promise and intent to

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[71] Here, Goven borrows a term from George Schöpflin to refer to a kind of "opposition that does not overtly question the ideological bases of the system, but does accept the leeway for a semi-autonomous political role permitted by the system" (112).

[72] To consult the documents of individual parties, see Kiss 1999:82–83. In the author's summary, up to the date of his writing, the image of woman party documents reflected was limited to her role in the family, as if in Hungary women lived in families only, and as if taking care of the family were their responsibility alone (ibid.).

incorporate women into a process of social and economic transformation.[73] As to the changes that the transition effected in the policy environment, there is very little disagreement among researchers, and hardly any dormant aspects that may be differently interpreted. This assessment is often summed up in the terse statement that the ultimate losers of the transition to a competitive market economy are women, and—as Mária Frey, citing the acute diagnosis of the 1999 MONEE report[74] specifies—especially women upbringing children (2001:14; see also Fodor 1998:153).

Some authors would nuance this grand simplifying evaluation by capturing some relative advantages of the socialist legacy that the transition from socialist redistribution to capitalist markets had brought for women. As Éva Fodor proposed in a 1997 article of hers, state-socialism left women with some specific assets that they are "more likely to hold than men and which they can use [in the new situation] to counterbalance other disadvantages and forms of discrimination" (Fodor 1997:471). These are resources—primarily high levels of education, experience and seniority in the tertiary sector—that became revalued through the economic restructuring. This shows that communist employment policies did contribute—albeit unwittingly—to a relative reduction in gender inequality in a few examined post-communist countries (ibid., 473).[75] The actuality of this contribution, Fodor suggested in her 1997 study, was

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[73] C.f. Molyneux's emphasis above on the socialist state's expressed objective to incorporate women in its modernizing project. Granted, this is also attributable to the difference between socialism and liberalism as political movements and political philosophies. While socialist political movements have historically conceived of women's liberation as an *integral* part of their revolutionary projects, women's rights and liberation has not played the same role in liberal thinking (Kruks, Rapp & Young 1989:7).

[74] The UNICEF's MONEE Project (MONitoring Eastern Europe) was launched in 1992 to map the social side of the political transformation and market reforms in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Anna Pollert (2001) presents such monitoring report to assess the overall impact of the transition to capitalism (to be consulted with qualifications, as the interpretation of the indicators depends on a host of factors). The indicators Pollert cites are HDI (Human Development Index) and GDI (Gender-related Development Index). By 1995, GDI in CEE dropped to below Latin-America (as part of a general drop in HDI). After 1995, HDI was ascending in the region, but the GDI rank showed further deterioration. Women lost, Pollert concludes, both absolutely , in the general economic decline, and relatively in terms of gender equality. Despite its limitations, she adds, the communist era left a legacy of relative gender equality.

[75] In her book *The Red Riviera*, Kristen Ghodsee takes the example of tourism in Bulgaria as a branch of the service sector that had its peculiar trajectory during totalitarian Bulgaria and the transition period.

going to be conditioned on whether or not women would be able to hold onto these resources. Four years later, in an article co-authored by Fodor (Emigh, Fodor & Szelényi 2001), the authors registered that the transition to capitalist market only temporarily benefited women (9–10). Young men were rapidly entering the service sector, leading the analysts to project that a next generation of women will no longer possess such relative advantage.

This reverse development of the last two decades is an outcome of policy baselines that became inverted in an East-West comparison. Having expended emancipation as a political goal, economic and social discrimination against women in Eastern Europe might, as Claire Wallace projects, "escalate to a level which would be unacceptable in most Western countries" (Wallace 1995:48). Some analysts (like Fodor above) treat the "women = losers of the transition" equation with greater circumspection. Instead of reinstating this paradigm, these authors urge to look at the new stratification among women (and compare this with male stratification). There is now a new women-upper class stratum, Fodor contends (1997:470). Even in lower social segments, some male lower class strata are much less able to make the best, in a flexible manner, of their bad situation than equally law class women do. It is party because women's educational and labor market experiences have undergone a greater and faster improvement than the comparable indicators of male workers (Nagy 2003:285). Also, recently educational attainment levels have showed a greater impact on the labor market chances of women than they did in earlier decades (Bukodi 2006:41).

Having taken the lion's share of these jobs, women have been able to acquire kinds of economic, political/social and cultural capital (tips in hard currency; party membership and professional network; experience of working with foreigners and foreign language skills) which helped them survive, even thrive, after 1989. (I thank Eva Fodor for bringing this book to my attention.)

II.3 "Only themselves to blame": Society's codicil to the political message

II.3.i Political rhetoric versus the reality of life-practices. Sharing social/cultural capital

Researchers who, either in a cursory or more substantial manner, engage with the subject recognize that we have very little solid knowledge about how changing social relations have impacted gender relations on the more personal, private level (Neményi 1999:7, Schadt 2005a:61). Nevertheless, i will try and piece together a rudimentary picture of how social changes, and the discourses attached to these, affected women's status within the private sphere. While doing so, i will also look out for the working of what Joanna Goven identified as two parallel but often contradictory levels of ideological discourse that circulated in socialist Hungary since the 1960s (1993b:14–15). One level was the formal platform of Marxism-Leninism, the second was an "everyday" ideological discourse that may have been more widely endorsed than the official platform. Emancipation figured as a political goal in the first, while the second very much relied on the familiar binary gender order. Mária Márkus directed attention to this duplicity as early as in 1970: "While official ideology fully embraces the notion of women's emancipation, in everyday praxis—both on the level of ideology and general public opinion—this ideal is coupled with rather traditional views about homemaking and motherhood as women's major function in society" (299).

Among the more personal or private level of changing(?) gender relations, i will briefly revisit the new family law, issues of sexuality and reproductive rights, the representation of women's issues in a selected sample of printed media (women's magazines). Finally, i will revisit the question of job segregation in relation to professional elites and creative professions as an indicator of shared or monopolized cultural capital.

Despite the progressive new legislation on marriage and family (1953), little changed within the private sphere, researchers claim. By this they mean that some of the social processes,[76] if not the women-favoring policies themselves[77] were eventually reinforcing traditional family roles and fixed men as breadwinners and women as caregivers. They also emphasize that, parallel with such an intent focus on women's traditional (mother and caretaker) and newly added roles (worker), men's roles remained unmodified and unexpanded, and their potential responsibilities in the private sphere unaddressed.[78] Equally importantly, through not proposing that men's social roles need to be re-defined and expanded,[79] and through never explicating why men could and should welcome their prospective new roles, both levels of the ideological discourse refrained from any theoretical discussion of women's inequality and the structural critique of male domination. Thus the necessary erosion of patriarchal power that women's expanding civil rights and public participation implied, remained both unthematized and unjustified (Goven 1993b:66).

Even if the new family law ruled that "socialist marriage is a union built on the mutual affection of two free and equal parties" (quoted in Schadt 2005a:64), Volgyes and Volgyes note that "the backward tradition of a wife's role remain[ed] firmly entrenched in the Hungarian male's psychology" (1977:125), and Mária Adamik points to men's standard refusal, even in highly intellectual and educated circles, to conceive of marital partnership and intimate relationship as the union of two equal partners (2000:203; see also Neményi & Tóth 1998:16). Also, habitude

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[76] Julia Szalai brings the example of the "second economy", an increasingly important informal sector of Hungarian economy during the last two-three decades of state-socialism. Relying, for its functioning, on the existence of the family as a unit of social organization, the division of labor the second economy anchored matched the traditional pattern (1991:153–55).

[77] Most notably the maternity leave, to be discussed later.

[78] An inevitable consequence of full-time female employment was that women were able to devote less working hours to household management. This, however, did not entail an increase in men's household working hours. While women were drawing near to the male norm in the domain of productive work, men got nowhere nearer to the female norm within the domain of reproductive work (Asztalos-Morell 1997).

[79] In her 1970 article, Mária Márkus gave a detailed and insightful criticism of a "dead end" where women's emancipation through paid work had arrived worldwide (Márkus 1970). At the end of her study, Márkus proposes ways to find a way out of this fix. It is worthy of note that while her ambitious proposals are not fettered by pragmatic considerations in offering something like a commune as an alternative family form, or targeting the humanization of social relations at large, she makes no mention of involving men in household/reproductive work as a viable way out of the dead end.

ruled that a "woman's duty is to suffer quietly and *accept* her situation" with the concomitant injustices (Volgyes & Volgyes 1977:127). On this, Adamik cites the laconic view of a (male) observer: "Accepting, without much revolting, one's own inferior status serves as a coping skill to evade neurosis" (Juhász, quoted in Adamik 2000:103; see also Neményi 1999:109 on the schizophrenic tendencies resulting from the "coping" mechanism of unconditional submission). Adamik also relates how Western feminists have frequently been stupefied by repeatingly witnessing the docility of women (from all social strata) in subjecting themselves to their men as mother, housewife and sexual partner (ibid., 200). In fact, Ivan Volgyes, a relatively early chronicler of Hungarian women's life under state-socialist "emancipation" (looking at these lives from the perspective of a half-insider, half-outsider given his status as an emigré political scientist), appears to be utterly obsessed with this role socialization that continued to have a dominant presence, parallel with very different, at least partially emancipating identities.[80] He deems that "this attitude of self-oppression does perhaps the greatest disservice to women and they have only themselves to blame for it" (Volgyes & Volgyes 1977:48). I will come back to this subject in Chapters III (to discuss film director Márta Mészáros' handling of the issue) and IV (to discuss the ways women visual artists naturalize a social environment in which men have certain privileges, and—instead of sharing or confronting the resulting private and professional impairments—seek individual coping strategies).

Next i want to touch upon a fairly under-researched topic. It may be argued with some certainty that "socialist patriarchy" had a different message, regarding the subject of emancipation, for men and for women. Under the terms of the argument about a double-level ideological discourse, it is plausible to suggest that misogynist and/or counter-emancipationist voices were allowed in order to compensate for male egos and masculine authority undermined by formal-level ideology

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[80] Social scientist Lynne Haney, for example, delineates the practical and discursive ways Hungarian women used their status as entitled mothers to maneuver within a context of gender inequality (2000).

and the real-life effects of the related state measures.[81] In a Master's thesis focusing on representations of sexuality in a highly popular humor magazine of the times, *Ludas Matyi* (Ludas Matyi is the name of a folktale-hero, a peasant boy who repeatedly tricks over a vicious landowner)*,* Ana Magó-Maghiar suggests that a sort of agreement was offered for men. Cultural politics tolerated the excessive use of women's naked bodies in cartoon illustrations because this was how an oppressive regime sought to buy the patience of its male citizens and to keep up the image of "constructing socialism with a human face" (2007:67–68) This trade-off was reached at the expense of women while a "brotherhood of men" was created and the traditional unequal sexual contract was kept in place.

Conservative, even anti-feminist, approaches both to gender equality and gendered social roles continued into the post-socialist era, with Hungary standing out among Eastern European countries with its traditionalist attitudes (Pongrácz 2006). The messages coming from the popular press, television and print advertisements as well as campaign interviews with politicians, now overtly state that there exist separate spheres for men's and women's activities (Duffy 2000:226), and that women themselves had become much more conservative than they had been a decade or so earlier (Fábián 1996:24, Neményi & Tóth 1998:15). In a published discussion, Neményi illustrated this conservative turn with the growing number of dependent young women without their own career and income (Mihancsik 1999:17).

It is a perplexing task to give a concise characterization of sexuality as lived experience in state-socialism. It is because relatively little has been written on the subject in a substantial manner, while remarks of the more cursory kind tend to contradict each other. There is, on the one hand, a usual portrayal of the period as one that suppressed, even denied, sexuality, clinging to puritanical mores. Depicting the 1950s, Joanna Goven tells about the de-sexualized image of

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[81] To my knowledge, no research has been conducted in Hungary to map and size up men's psychological response to this purported loss of authority, although the "fact" itself is commented upon every now and then.

woman and the prudish advice on appearance and behavior that the publications of the MNDSZ (Democratic Association of Hungarian Women) mediated, calling for modesty, functionality, and cleanliness while denouncing make-up or self-decoration (1993b:71–76). Goven, however, cautions that this cannot be seen as the equivalent of "Western feminists' efforts to encourage self-acceptance and free women from the imposed aesthetic of the male gaze", for authority was not turned over to women: instead of the controlling gaze of individual men, they were now controlled by that of the state. Yet in this respect again, the continued existence of double discourses was documented (Magó-Maghiar 2007:26–34) as well as a tension between official morality and private life practices. Competing with the construction of the sexually ideal socialist citizen as asexual and sanitized, popular culture, including pop-psychology, was articulating a sexualized alternative discourse, one which drew on the contemporaneous transnational trend of sexual revolution. And in privatized discourses and practices, (hyper)active sexual life elevated to a form of political subversion. On the pages of *Ludas Matyi*, too, quite radical political criticism was coupled with, and mediated through, sexualized images of women (ibid.).

Obviously, attitudes towards "socialist mores" and sexuality have also changed over time during the decades of socialist rule. In 1977 Volgyes & Volgyes report about a "nearly complete relaxation of mores": "Even in villages […] the hold of the anti-sex morality of the traditional society was falling apart. […] The general attitude of modern Hungarian youth toward sex tends at least to be as liberal as that of their American counterparts, if not more so" (74– 75).[82] Both Volgyes & Volgyes and Magó-Maghiar list sexual tourism as a flourishing "business" in Hungary in the 1970s and 80s. When Goven provides extensive quotes from the anti-feminist press debate of the 80s, references to the unleashed sexuality of emancipated women, young people's obsession with sex and the reputedly wild sexual life of urban intellectuals keep surfacing (Goven

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[82] See also Szilágyi 1978 and 1993.

1993b, 228–35).[83] As Péter György, reviewing a recent exhibition of "Sex and Communism"[84] cautions, even if the de-sexualization of public discourses may come across, from today's perspective, as ridiculous suppression, aspects of sexuality under communism form a lot more intricate web of interrelations (György 2002). Drawing on Magó-Maghiar's study once more, the case of sexualized cartoons, too, may be placed in a highly complex frame. Magó-Maghiar emphasizes the politically transgressive tone of the magazine *Ludas Matyi*, even explains the magazine's popularity with this severely critical tone (2007:29). She also establishes that the tacit "agreement" between the regime and its male citizens recreated the conditions of the sexual contract with the implied universal right of men to women's bodies (71), whereby this otherwise rather subversive press product turns out to have been complicit, in this respect, with conservative views and political ideals (52).

Like others commenting on the subject (Molyneux 1981:180, as well as Goven and Fodor, both quoted in Adamik 2000:181; Tóth 1993:216), György does not so much object the de-sexualization, in state-socialism, of the public sites of life but the intolerance toward non-normative sexualities, the resistance to recognize the sexual facets of women's subordination and to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence, rape, or sexual harassment, and the falter over reproductive rights. Granted, contraceptives were only openly sold from the late 1960s on[85] (Volgyes, 100, Adamik 2000:172) but, after the ill-famed Ratkó-period (1950–53, when abortion was completely banned for reasons of desired population growth), fairly liberalized legislation made abortion practically available on demand. As in many other countries in transition, the tightening of the abortion law was high on the agenda of the new Parliament, but a concerted protest of citizens, a singular occurrence of its kind (Bozzi & Czene 2006:56–61, Körösi

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[83] Interestingly, this includes the famed sexual licenciousness of the inhabitants—not only intellectuals—of the socialist model town, Sztálinváros [Stalin City], now Dunaújváros. For this, see Horváth 2004:197–207, Horváth 2005:31, and Volgyes & Volgyes 74–75.

[84] Galéria Centrális, Budapest, November 28, 2002–February 16, 2003.

[85] This is an approximately one-decade delay compared to the US where the Pill was invented and approved by Food and Drug Administration in 1960, three years after the oral contraceptive *Enovid* had been in general use (Junod & Marks 2002:117).

1996:293), thwarted a complete ban. As laws and legislation on rape, violence against women and sexual harassment were first passed from the early 1990s internationally, this area of women's rights could be one where the post-socialist Hungarian state could act just as purposefully as its predecessor in some other matters, and show a definite progress in gender-oriented public policy. Legislators, however, have hardly been receptive to civil initiatives and the lobbying efforts of women's organizations (Fodor 1998:154–55), and did little to observe international standards in women's rights matters. Marital rape was recognized as a legal offence in Hungary in 1997 (the same year in which the European Union started to deal with the issue), and this date also marked the time when the problem started to earn some public attention (Krizsán, Paantjens & van Lamoen 2005:74). In 2002, civil organizations launched a public campaign to initiate public and political discussion on the question. This concerted action, together with a 2002 CEDAW report, led to a parliamentary debate. In April 2003, the Parliament adopted a document to draft a national strategy for preventing and handling cases of domestic violence against women. After the deadline to introduce the relevant bills and fulfill a number of pre-defined tasks expired, four major women's rights organization issued a statement (HCM 2004) in which they pointed to the fact that only one task was—inadequately—tackled, and criticized the government for having virtually "sabotaged" the parliamentary resolution about the national strategy against domestic violence.[86] Yet, violence against women is a still better received and more readily discussed issue than sexual harassment in the workplace, for which there is no formal definition in the Hungarian Criminal Code (Nagy 2003:285);[87] sporadic initiatives to thematize it are massively rejected by the general political and legal opinion shapers, disregarding binding European Union directives to ensure a uniform legal environment for the free movement of labor. In the absence of a pertinent legislation, particular acts can be, and are, played off against women's rights (HCM & NANE 2002). As Géza Juhász, founding member of HCM (Habeas Corpus Munkacsoport

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[86] Reportedly, legislation has not advanced since (verbal communication, Géza Juhász / HCM, February 1, 2008; dr. Enikő Pap / Hungarian Women's Lobby, May 31, 2008).
[87] For the current state of legislation see "Hungary: Country Page;" available online: http://www.stopvaw.org/Hungary.html [last accessed June 2, 2008].

/Habeas Corpus Working Group for women's human rights protection and legal aid service) explained, the measures introduced since the political change in 1989 to protect women's rights do not form a coherent system; rather, they exist as sporadic motions, resulting in hardly enforceable pieces of legislation (personal communication, Juhász, February 1, 2008). Other traditional rights—e.g., right to property and/or privacy, the presumption of innocence—can overwrite human rights at any given moment.[88] Both Juhász and Krisztina Morvai (2004) remark that, in post-socialist legal thinking, preference is given to the formal rule of law over material justice or a critical and deconstructionist approach to law, although the latter perspective characterizes current Western trends of legal thought. The practice of law enforcement in state-socialism had an openly political character; it both recognized the social constructedness of the law and regarded it as only one of the means to achieve a social aim (Morvai 2005:102). This material justice-oriented law gave preference for substantive outcome over an adherence to the black letter of formal law. The general understanding of the rule of law after 1989, however, broke with this practice and shifted its basic principles to a belief in technically enforceable, neutral and value-free "good" laws. As far as women-related legislation is concerned, this choice of law also entails what Morvai calls a gender-blind construction of "equality" (103–04). Such "equality", while supposedly treating women as men's equals, actually treats them as if they were men, which has severe consequences for court decisions in sex-related cases. It is beyond my capacity and far from my intention to engage in a discussion of factors that govern a particular choice of law. My broad theoretical aim with making an admittedly sketchy pass at women's human rights-related legislation was, again, to draw attention 1) to the dubious equality the endorsement of the principle of sameness creates, and 2) to the various ways states can communicate messages to their citizens via legislation, their particular choice of law, and policy measures.

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[88] See also Morvai 2004, where the author presents in detail three case studies/court judgements to illustrate the hidden/sub-conscious gender bias and at times openly discriminatory attitude of the judiciary.

Géza Juhász pointed to another change in legislative attitude that concerns yet another women-related social and judicial concern, the attitude toward prostitution. To illustrate the related changes, he reminded how, in the 1950s when brothels were closed down, prostitutes were given training and were re-directed, forcibly, to legal employment. Clearly, this did not mean a complete suppression of prostitution (Betlen 2007).[89] Also, while the New York Convention called for the protection of prostitutes,[90] in state-socialist Hungary prostitution was forbidden, and as such, a crime (Betlen 1998:111). In 1993, prostitution was re-qualified as a minor offence; since 1999, prostitution is a legal gainful employment in Hungary and prostitutes are tax-paying unionized workers. The country thus situates itself at the most lenient end of the legal spectrum (whereby it also conforms to the key international trend today).

Leaving aside the field of justice administration and connecting back to the life world, social scientists (e.g., Goven 1993b:71–75, Acsády 1995, Burrows 1997, Joó 2005:50–51) repeatedly spell out how pornography and prostitution rank among the fastest-growing industries in the new democracies of Central-East Europe (and particularly in Hungary), with advertisements increasingly sexualizing and objectifying women. In the emerging uses—both in practices and representations—of the (female) body and ideas about sexuality, Gal & Kligman detect a stark discontinuity with earlier experiences (2000a:82), also noting that all these transformations take place within a context of absent regulation (or lacking law enforcement) and an absent political will to tackle problems that adversely affect women. In a passage i quoted earlier on, Joanna Goven discounts the liberating potential of the squeamish advice that the official woman's

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[89] Betlen (2007) substantiates this by quoting reports issued by the National Institute of Criminology, while she provides empirical evidence to inform about prostitutes having virtually been "employed" by the state and functioning as "*pro tempore*" spies. Ana Maghó-Maghiar lists prostitution as a frequent and almost naturalized subject of sexualized jokes in *Ludas Matyi* (2007:53)

[90] The UN's New York Convention of 1949 aimed at constraining trafficking in women. The Convention required that prostitutes be de-criminalized and registers of prostitutes be abolished, and instead called for the punishment of those who financially profit from prostituting others. Hungary joined the Convention in 1955.

organization of the socialist state issued to women *vis-à-vis* their appearance and self-care. Yet, elsewhere Goven expresses a view that is more appreciative of this less objectifying practice:

> Certain forms of the commodification of the female body, in particular in advertisements, prostitution, or pornography, were strictly forbidden and largely absent from overt practices. […] Women's bodies were under less publicly approved scrutiny than in western societies. (Goven, quoted in Adamik 2000:181)

I would suggest that this practice may have even been liberating indeed by virtue of diminishing the myth, or terror, of beauty. Providing evidence to support this claim will be one of my governing perspectives in Chapter III, where i will be surveying women's cinematic representation in both the state- and post-socialist periods. Here i would only elliptically submit that a less oppressive approach to, and representation of, the body and sexuality in the state-socialist period was very much conditioned by the relative insignificance of advertisement in the media and in visual culture in general and, in particular, by the absence of the type of advertisement that rampantly uses sexual representation as an instrument to increase consumption.

Within the scope of the present inquiry, other than pointing to a few aspects, i will not be able to carry out a substantial analysis of how the "women's question" or women's issues have been mediated in the Hungarian media during the past six decades. Yet, wishing to make a barest gesture towards acknowledging the major role of the media in initiating, sustaining or stifling public debate on the related topics, i am casting a curt look at *Nők Lapja* (Women's Review), the only magazine of state-socialist times explicitly targeting women, comparing it with its post-1989 successor, still published under the same name. *Nők Lapja* was first published by the official women's organization in 1949; since 2000 it is one of the numerous women's magazines in the Hungarian portfolio of a Dutch publishing company. In pursuing the metamorphoses of the image of woman in three 20th-century Hungarian-published women's magazines, Judit Kádár follows up the transmutations of *Nők Lapja* too (Kádár 2002). In Kádár's characterization, in the period leading up to 1956, *Nők Lapja* was essentially a weekly political picture magazine to serve

the ends of the ruling communist party, mediating an ideal radically different from the pre-war image of woman: the ideal of the working woman. The weekly targeted women working in the industries and services, in agriculture and in the professions, and illustrated its pages with the photos of these very women. From the 1960s on, the growing independence of the magazine mirrored the consolidation of the society, and by the 70s it became a "liberally-minded, open and modern societal and cultural magazine" (ibid., 89.), while it remained committed to the ideal of emancipation and equality, continuing to address a wide spectrum of women. The magazine was literally a feminist one (even reviewed the Western second wave), Kádár contends, only the editors would not declare so. My own survey of some 1960–70s volumes of *Nők Lapja* confirmed Judit Kádár's observations as i came across a number of issues that were problematized and discussed from an informed feminist perspective.[91] Like Kádár, i found that the "Private matters" column, as well as the personals and the editorials deserve special attention. All three are direct means to formulate messages and thus influence patterns of thinking and behavior. The kinds of advice on relationship and life management conveyed in these columns strike one as open-minded, liberated and liberating indeed, relatively unfettered by traditional social expectations. Kádár also emphasizes the disappearance of advertisement from *Nők Lapja* in the 1950s as the nationalization of the industries left no room for competition between manufacturers and retailers (90). Today's successor *Nők Lapja* (like most new women's magazines published in the country and across the region) teems with advertisements, and both the ads and the very contents address a limited range of audience: young, wealthy (or at least middle-class), "successful" women. The number of publications targeting women has increased but their contents hardly ever go beyond dietary and body shaping counseling, beauty and sexual practices, horoscopes,

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[91] Among other topics, reproduction, the double burden of working mothers, women's "naturalized" denigration indicated by the forms of addressing them, women's health issues, the daring critique of the maternity leave allowance, the problematization of pornography, even a tirade on the gender-biased book offer of a publishing company.

gossip and celebrity columns.[92] Women's magazines now subserve the beauty myth and only engage with the lives and concerns of celebrities or otherwise "exceptional" women who embody unattainable role models for the average reader. While these women prove to be proud of their achievements, in their interviews they often express the frustration issuing from "the triple burden"—performing as an accomplished housewife, a devoted career person and a professional beauty (Naomi Wolff, quoted in Kádár, 92)—that the "successful" woman of the 21th century is to toil. The trajectory and present incarnation of *Nők Lapja* gives a testimony to Barbara Einhorn's claim: in current glossy magazines "market forces reflect and amplify the new traditionalism about women's roles" (1993:244) while this implicit ideology is not even recognized or articulated.[93]

At this point i am returning to the issue of job segregation. to discuss to what degree and in what ways women's large-scale participation in social production, combined with their escalating level of education, expedited their acquisition of cultural and social capital. This discussion is also to lay the ground for my explorations, in Chapter III and IV, of the workings of the glass ceiling, and hypothetically that of a "glass wall" between creative and other professions.[94] The general course of the feminization of professions shows that none of the jobs and positions that are likely to absorb female labor in large quantities are very high in social prestige and financial

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[92] In surveying the less sleek weekly *Kiskegyed*, Andrea Szabó remarks that these are topics women traditionally *thought*, by men especially, to be interested in (Szabó 1993). Therefore *Kiskegyed* is not so much a magazin focusing on women but an image (a snapshot, as Szabó puts it) about women. The author connects this result with the fact that the editorial board of the magazin, at the time of her exploration, consisted only of men.

[93] A few, usually short-lived "alternative" publications variegate the offer. E.g. *Nőszemély* (Damsel; the first admittedly feminist journal of the post-1989 period, sporadically published between 1991 and 1998, edited, mostly as a "community project", by the members of the Feminista Hálózat (Feminist Network); see Acsády & Bullain 1993, Bozzi & Czene 2006:56, 91); *Tűsarok* (Stiletto), a "magazine of autonomous women"; first published independently, later as an irregular supplement of a social-political-cultural weekly, now available only online; as well as most recently emerging periodicals for sexual minorities.

[94] The metaphorical expression "the glass ceiling" describes what social scientists call vertical segregation. Both expression stand for a social group's uneven representation on various ranks of organizational hierarchy. The glass ceiling lets women (or members of other groups) see where they want to go, but an invisible and unregulated barrier won't allow them to get there. Horizontal segregation refers to a situation in which men and women typically work in separate occupational groups and separate branches of economy or industry.

remuneration. In assessing the problems of women's powerlessness in society, Katalin Fábián cites a study dealing with the composition of elites in contemporary Hungary. Its author, Ágnes Utasi pointed to sex as the second most important factor determining elite status closely following the locale where the person was raised (Fábián 1996:11). Other authors engaging with the question of women's location in social hierarchy unanimously state that women's disadvantaged situation was, and continues to be, most pronounced in positions of authority and decision-making within the spheres of political, economic and social life. Even if women's opportunities have considerably expanded compared to what the pre-war society had to offer them, their relative disadvantage *vis-à-vis* men has made little progress (Schadt 2005a:67). It has been an especially typical occurrence within the professions that an increased number of women employees actually improved the career chances of men, allowing them to move on to positions requiring higher qualifications and offering higher wages (Andorka 1982:72).

It is perhaps some sort of a productivist bias within the research on women's employment that intellectual, and especially creative occupations do not seem to earn any serious scholarly attention in either periods in Hungary or abroad. Rare and fairly recent exceptions are the few film-related studies i am going to consult in Chapter III.2.iii (Lauzen 2002 and 2006, Knudsen & Rowley 2004, Evans 2008), and the research projects on the economic aspects of the cultural/creative industries initiated in German-speaking lands in the past years (Söndermann 2007, Manske 2008, Weckerle, Gerig & Söndermann 2008, Grüner, Kleine, Puchta & Schulze 2009), some of which Helene Kleine reported about in a public talk (Kleine 2009). One of the first such inquiries was the Enquete-Kommission 'Kultur in Deutschland' (Study Commission on Culture in Germany),[95] launched by the German Parliament, having recognized that cultural and creative industries are a strong and growing factor in German and European economy. The work

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[95] http://www.bundestag.de/htdocs_e/parliament/bodies/study/culture/index.html

of Kleine and Manske as well as the film scholars also engage with the gender dimensions of the subject.

In the lack of similar prior research done on those working in the creative sector in the Hungarian context, here i am drawing on inquiries mapping the constitution of professional elites in other fields: economy and scholarship/research to establish some general trends. The general trend of women's professional progress in leadership and management in the field of economy is that although women's numbers and proportion have been gradually growing in these positions, we still have not witnessed a real breakthrough into senior corporate positions (Nagy 2006:48). Women's lesser chances (also documented in Neményi & Tóth 1998:11) cannot be explained with their differences in qualification as, with the exception of technical universities, women have participated in higher education in the same proportion as men. Neither can men's better chances be explained with the differing economic activity of the two sexes since women have constituted nearly half of the actively employed population (ibid.).

Within the field of scholarship, career paths follow a comparable pattern. After the world of academics was opened up for women in the time of state-socialism and women took advantage of their new opportunities, the proportion of women in the learned professions has been steadily increasing. Yet, the occupational pyramid and the pattern of both horizontal and vertical segregation are clearly visible here too in the early 2000s: very few women have reached the highest echelons of the profession and work as full professors, senior fellows in research institutions or national academies (Novák 2002:340), and in few scholarly fields do they appear in considerable numbers (Haraszthy & Hrubos 2002).

II.3.ii "Double burden" versus "choiceoisie". Reconciling work and family life

In the second half of the 20th century, the number of working women was growing everywhere in the Western world (now including here the whole of Europe), and it was connected to industrialization and modernization processes at all locations. Women's increasing participation in out-of-the-home "productive" labor had to be inserted in a historically developed sexual division of labor in which "almost all women do unpaid reproductive work, almost all men do wage work, and the majority of women do both", and consequently, "ever-larger numbers of working- and middle-class women are doing all of life's work—wage work, childcare, domestic labor, sustenance, and repair of community ties—within an economy that remains organizationally and normatively structured for male wage earning and privilege, and assumes unpaid female labor in the home" (Brown 1992:20). Viewed from this perspective, the problem of the "double burden" (or "double day" or "second shift"; i.e., reconciling reproductive work with gainful employment) turns out to be a common question in different systems, rather than a particular feature of socialist states having sent masses of women to work outside the home, and the problem did not disappear with the break-up of socialist rule. But whether particular state formations would make conscious efforts to enable women combine reproductive work and wage labor, or would take less accommodating attitudes toward the idea of combining family and career, depends on the welfare distribution premises of the particular state. As i put forward in an earlier section (II.2.iii), such premises and the related policy decisions address more than economic issues; in the formulation of Gal & Kligman, "they simultaneously engage moral commitments, ideas about justice, demographic patterns, and gender relations" (2000a:65). Whereas state-socialist governments indicated a willingness to recognize the value of reproductive labor and "make family labor an economic function of a woman's life" (Dolby 1995:121), contemporaneous Western societies did not view reproductive work in the same way.

Another approach to the dilemma of work and family life is leaving the dilemma as it is, regarding it an essentially irreconcilable predicament, requiring a choice between two options. Elspeth Probyn calls the new traditionalist discourse presenting this plight as a genuine choice, *choiceoisie* (1997:127-131). Probyn points out how this approach aspires to re-position women in the home, urging them "to buy into the old as new", and how the underlying ideology portrays women in the frame of the choice, they allegedly have to make, between home-making or career. The suggested offer, however, contains no option of *choosing both*, and does not drive *men* into the same fix.

I am introducing these two patterns of "solution" because, i think, they aptly characterize the difference between the pre- and post-1989 states' commitment to *making feasible* the combination of family life and career. As a next step, i will have a closer look of the ways the Hungarian socialist state helped women, in effect, reconcile the two tasks. When exploring the issue, i identified five possible points of intervention where a willing state could indeed assist. These are a) the socialization, or the mitigation in some other ways, of housework; b) the same approach to childcare; c) ensuring the relative financial security of women in the event of pregnancy and early motherhood, and the availability of returning mothers' employment; d) introducing flexible working conditions; i.e., part-time work; e) renegotiating the sexual division of labor in the private sphere. While the policies and programs adopted under state-socialism brought about some progress in respect of a)—c), little was achieved in relation to the latter two aspects.

I have already engaged with Éva Fodor's about how the "difference principle", embraced by the socialist state, lead to an adjusting work environment upon women entering the labor force. In

the same section (II.2.ii) i have also listed the kinds of pragmatic measures that were meant to facilitate combining full-time employment with household responsibilities.[96]

The flat-rate child care grant, or GYES prided itself as the most significant innovation of the 1960s (Szalai 1991:165) and a highly "enlightened" attempt (Volgyes & Volgyes 1977:153) to acknowledge, and financially reward, the public utility of mothers' reproductive labor. GYES enabled women to stay home after the five months of paid maternity leave until their cild was 30 months of age.[97] Upon its introduction, GYES was extremely popular with young mothers, but was also criticized early on (e.g., Márkus 1970, Szalai [1971], quoted in Adamik 2000:151, Scott 1974). The child care benefit elicited criticism because it was seen to become an effective measure to channel mothers back to the household, enabling—and in some cases pressuring (Adamik, ibid., Scott 1974:135)—them to take a longer paid child care leave. In assisting mothers, GYES effectively drove them out of the labor force, hence reintroduced a conservative division of labor within families (Tóth 1993:217).

The structuring of employment in state-socialism allowed little to no experimentation with flexible working conditions and reduced working hours. Work was compulsory and full-time. Researchers only documented some informal and minor formal concessions for taking time off to manage household chores or childcare duties (Pollert 2001 and Goven 1993b:50).

As i have already submitted, one severe consequence of the adherence of the ruling party to an un-updated Marxist doctrine (only engaging with class relations and economic factors) was the absence of a coherent vision of why emancipation should happen, and an understanding of how existing gender relations perpetuate a very traditional social system. Thus, while the socialization

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[96] I also have to note, however, that several authors documented complaints concerning the quality of childcare facilities and that the quantity of these 101only started to be enough from the 1970s on (Tóth 1993:215, Bicskei 2006).

[97] For a detailed description of both GYES and the later introduced GYED (*gyermekgondozási díj*) as well as the structure of childcare facilities, see e.g., Szalai 1991 and Nagy 2003. GYED was an earnings-related grant and came to offer another option beside the flat-rate GYES, especially to incite women with higher incomes to take a longer maternity leave.

of housework and childcare could get on the political agenda, the renegotiation of the sexual division of labor and the need to equalize responsibility within the home was ignored.

Social benefits and employment policy were profoundly re-structured in the transition to market economy. As a result, fewer employment opportunities were open to women (especially for young mothers or mother-to-bes and older women) (Belinszki 1997), and many of the family benefits were revoked or diminished. Social spending did not entirely disappear but it was gradually channeled to cover pensions, unemployment benefits and poverty assistance (Haney 1997). While the early state-socialist government was ready to take stock of, and lessen, the factors hindering women's full participation in the paid labor force, state assistance to women was already falling prey to other economic and social interests during the last decade of the previous regime, ushering in elements of market economy. Governments of the transition outdid capitalist non-welfare states in cutting down on welfare benefits in order to meet World Bank and IMF recommendations and adjust to a neo-liberal global economy. Although one of the most frequent criticism directed at state-socialist women-related policies has been that they were shaped by the dictates of the economy at any given turn, the analyses of Joanna Goven (2000:289–94) and Susan Zimmermann (2001:231–35) show how, in post-socialist Hungary, World Bank and IMF recommendations were just as persistent in dovetailing women-related social policy formation with factors shaping economic growth or budget deficits. A new form of family allowance, GYET (remunerating for full-time motherhood), introduced in 1993, was also devised to reduce the labor force surplus created by the restructuring of economy (Schadt 2001:55).

A common outcome of the revocation of many of the family allowances and the escalating neo-traditionalist political and public discourses is that childrearing today brings about a more frequent and more lasting absence from the labor market than in earlier decades (Frey 2001:14);

in other words, women's family position and number of children are increasingly affecting their labor market chances (Pollert 2001).[98]

Two Hungarian sociologists, who are also mother and daughter, undertook a research to add material evidence, gained from lived experience, to the abstract concept of "the social construction of gendered roles". They expanded their inquiry onto two groups of women representing two different, but consecutive, generations: those of the mother and the daugther (Neményi & Kende 1999). The researchers' samples are their onetime high-school classmates who became, for the most part, professionals after finishing their studies. Members of the mother's generation were born in 1945–46, reached adolescence in the early 1960s, and entered young adulthood towards the end of the same decade. The mother's cohort bridges two worlds: pre- and post-1945 Hungarian society (Neményi 1999:20). The younger generation, born in the early 1970s (and researched by Kende), also found itself on the crossroads of changing worlds upon reaching young adulthood around the system change. I will come back to their findings in the next section; here, i only want to feature their observations about the absence or presence, in the testimonies of their respondents, of what i referred to as "choicoisie" above. Mária Neményi summarizes her related observations as follows: women's out-of-the home roles is usually the area most affected by changing social conditions. With all the various kinds of problems of having to reconcile family and working life, members of the older generation did not report about the presence of a compelling either/or choice. What they interiorized as a social norm was a combination of free career choice and an own income for either sex: a vision of an egalitarian relation between the sexes in these matters, combined, however, with a traditional family formation. In the respondents' own evaluation, the indicator of a successful life was the accommodation of both the traditional and modern elements of this norm (Neményi & Kende

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[98] According to several accounts, women's double burden have not diminished; they now have to manage reduced household incomes, making all meals at home, and much of their time is not spent on the acquisition of products in a shortage economy but on hunting for affordable prices (Pollert 2001, Fodor 1998:153).

1999:139). Some twenty years later, influenced by the example of the mothers' struggles and the modified social expectations towards women, a younger generation of an educated middle-class stratum re-constructs a more traditional female identity amidst, however, transformed material and ideological conditions of female employment. This cohort does not appear to problematize the new dilemma it encounters: the antagonism of having to choose between domestic roles and career aspirations.[99] Instead, as if by default, individual women strive after two separate worlds: the home *or* publicly recognized career. At times admitting an indistinct urge to "prove something", the younger researcher even interprets the new opportunity to become a stay-home wife as having more options (ibid., 118), overlooking the detail that his option also *replaces* an earlier alternative to combine various roles.[100]

II.4 Receiving the message: Changing perceptions and constructions of gendered social roles and identities

Mental changes and their durability are notoriously difficult to trace and are seldom analyzed, as Jeanette Madarasz submits (2002). However, it is plausible to expect that the massive social interventions that strongly affected women's life trajectories and relationship structures during socialist rule also caused long-term changes in their attitudes and behavior patterns. In the view of Zsuzsa Hegedüs, these are factors that may be safely considered feminist achievements making up arrears in terms of women's social situation and gender awareness (*Nők a Kádárizmusban*, 2005). Noting a similar scarcity of analyses of the social psychological aspects of the post-1989 period, Mária Neményi and Olga Tóth direct attention to questions about how the generations

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[99] Other sources, too, report about a clearly felt pressure on women to choose between family or career, and boosting primarily domesticaton while leaving few true options in the current economic and employment context (Duffy 2000:227). It is a rare opportunity, Beáta Nagy relates, when women do not feel pressed into this choice but can think about these two functions of life as reconcilable (1993:152).
[100] Julia Szalai, in her detailed account of child care benefits, sees GYES as bringing forth a "deliberate expansion of choices" (Szalai 1991:165).

that were socialized during the years of state-socialism adopted to the new conditions; what sort of individual or group strategies they had recourse to; or who came out as "losers" and "winners", remarking that the interrogation of these aspects from a gendered perspective has been even more conspicuously lacking (Neményi & Tóth 1998:1–2). The indicated difficulties notwithstanding, some researchers attempted to trace these changes; in this section, i am going to draw on their works.

One of the social scientists who would not irredeemably bankrupt socialist systems that "actually existed", Jeanette Madarasz, develops an argument, using Zygmunt Baumann's description of "Sozialismus als Gegenkultur der Moderne", that posits the state-socialist way of emancipation as an alternative approach to modern emancipation (2002). Madarasz writes about the GDR but several other scholars, more specifically engaging with the Hungarian situation, also advanced the view of socialism as an alternative project of modernization. These scholars also depict "emancipation" as an inadvertent social effect of the extensive industrialization in the period. By claiming this, they do not negate the emancipatory effect itself but the truthfulness of the political will, and point out that the meaning and significance of female participation in wage work has shifted, compared to the original political intention (Adamik 2000:131–32). "Whatever the reason", Gabriele Griffin also contends, "women's employment gradually became an internalized objective, a conscious decision of women" (Griffin 2002:383, the research result presented in Neményi & Tóth 1998:15 also confirm this claim). And as such, inclusion in the public sphere of paid labor led to irreversible sequels as far as the identity formation of the affected generation of women is concerned, argues Adamik (ibid., 167). The philosopher Mária Joó expresses a similar view: "Women perceived themselves as men's equals", claims Joó, "and this perception structured their experience and self-perception" (2005:49).

According to several accounts, women took great pride in their role as workers and income earners. The workplace became important as a site where women existed as an entity in

themselves and found a (female) community other than their immediate family. As women were finding appreciation, self-recognition and peer support at the workplace, which they often lacked in their marriages or families, they came to re-evaluate not only their gendered roles but their gendered relations (Adamik 2000:132–145) and felt an intrinsic value and internalized objective in going to work for reasons other than the external coercion or financial necessity (Volgyes & Volgyes 1977:77; Neményi 1999:67).

Both Eszter Zsófia Tóth's oral history interviews with factory women in state-socialist Hungary (2005 and 2007) and Tamás Almási's documentary film *Kitüntetetten* (Being decorated, Almási 2001) make plausible the foundational experience that becoming a responsible member of a community meant for these women workers. When presenting her findings, Tóth argues that the identities of working-class women had been actively shaped by this experience. At the same time, issues of consent, accommodation, and opposition also played a significant role in their identity construction and led to a deeply ambiguous relationship to the identities ascribed to women workers by official discourse. Almási's documentary draws a picture of the one-time community of a Kossuth award-winning[101] work collective of a textile factory.[102] The reward of finding genuine solidarity (also in seeing through the duplicities and the hierarchies of the regime), and having access to social and cultural mobility have, according to the testimonies of several of the brigade members, overshadowed the difficulties of the "double burden" that working women routinely struggled with. This is not said to underestimate, however, these difficulties or the related conflicts issuing from the equally compelling presence of modern and traditional female

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[101] See footnote 44.

[102] The work collectives (or "socialist brigades" or "brigades of socialist labor") were the dominant forms of labor organisation in socialist Hungary after the 1956 revolution. Csaba Csóti (2003) and Tibor Valuch (2005:221) view the work brigades' movement as a continuation, or rather replacement in the Kádár-era, of the Stakhanovite movement of the 1950s. As opposed to the Stakhanovite movement that measured and awarded individual achievement, the work brigades' movement evaluated the performance of a work collective. Csóti sees the relevance of recent social historical research to explore the character and the *modus operandi* of the brigades of socialist labor, in that such research treats the 1945-1990 period as a constitutive part of national history. For such scholarly approach, the work brigades' movement as well as the brigade journals prove to be valuable sources to research that history as well as the *mentalities* prevalent in a society in a given period.

roles.[103] Difficulties and conflicts arising from contradictory role expectations *and* identifications were also not acknowledged and could not be openly addressed (Schadt 2005a:72, Goven 1993b:47–52).

Since many of the researchers whose works i have consulted (Adamik, Joó, Madarász, Neményi & Tóth, Schadt) made a strong connection between women's entry into paid labor force and their changing self-conceptions and identities, it is plausible to expect that the documented reverse processes during the economic transition—a dramatic increase in female unemployment and neo-conservative discourses and social ideals—have had an impact on women's life expectations and strategies. Or would it be equally plausible to expect that the previous progress in gender equality can be recouped within the framework of democracy, as Anna Pollert asks (2001)?

Drawing on the findings of several social scientists (e.g., Fábián 1996, Neményi & Kende 1999, Nagy 2003, Schadt 2001 and 2005b), this expectation now seems thwarted.

> Since the early 1990s, not only attitudes but also behaviors have changed back to traditional ways as large numbers of women withdrew from the labor market. Even the best-educated people share the traditional opinion on women's real task in life. […] The positive relation toward women's work has been declining in the late 1990s. (Nagy, 287)

The project of documentary filmmaker Bojána Papp merges the objectives, approaches and methods of two inquiries i introduced earlier on: the oral history interviews of Neményi & Kende (briefly summarized in II.3.ii) exploring gender role constructions across a mother-daughter generation shift, and Almási's documentary mentioned above, focusing on how a group of working women, once held in such prominence by the state, fare in the new democracy. Papp's documentary also zooms on an older generation of women—a "forgotten" or "latent" generation as the director puts it in her synopsis (available online from

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[103] In relation to the films of the period heralding the new female ideal, the working woman (and mother), Eszter Kulcsár (2005) notes that we hardly see the working woman doing any household or childrearing activites in these films; such activities are either invisible or taken care of by the protagonists' mothers or mothers-in-law.

http://www.szojavit.hu/page.php?id=37&print=1)—women in their 50s: the cohort of her own mother. In the director's characterization, these are women who may now come across as conservative to their daughters, although they must have looked overly "modern" to their own mothers, and had been repeatedly compelled to renew their life strategies and views. In voicing their experiences of post-socialist Hungary—the adjustment to new economic conditions, often combined with pre-pension job loss and the dissolution of their work-based communities, as well as having fallen out of society's, and the market's, field of vision in general –, one of the respondents tells about how sudden unemployment made her feel deeply ashamed and stigmatized after having lived all her life in a system that criminalized non-workers.[104]

In a 2002–03 research project, Mária Schadt (2005b) elicited the opinions of a non-representative sample of Hungarian university students to find out whether gender role perceptions have modified in the private sphere after opportunities and roles expanded in the public domain due to political, economic and social changes. Schadt focuses on changes occurring from the 1940s, and more importantly, the 1960s on and her perspective is shaped by the postulate that the parents of these respondents had been socialized in a social context committed to bring about gender equality, but one which was also rife with the kinds of problems detailed in this chapter. Schadt found that the majority of undergraduates of both sexes accept the stability of traditional gendered social and family roles, and only few of them would entertain ideas about equality.[105] In contemporary Hungary, the author concludes, young people's consciousness simultaneously accommodates the abstract ideal of the equal opportunities for the sexes (as a resultant of demonstrable changes in the public domain) and the social reality of unequal relations in the private sphere. This coexistence is "conflictual because nothing ensures the individual that she will indeed be able to take advantage of expanded opportunities in the social sphere" (165). In

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[104] See footnote 54.
[105] Schadt attributed the appearance of new male roles—limited to a heightened presence within family life and childcare—to fashionable trends rather than any substantial change indicating higher levels of actual equality (167).

pointing to women's relative disadvantages, Schadt divulges the same self-diminishing psychological attitudes of women that i also referred to in an earlier section (II.3.i): many women do not only tolerate but actually ask for male dominance (168).[106]

The existence of a conservative change is established by a large number of researchers, some of them also mentioning that a similar tendency has occurred in other newly emerging East-Central European democracies as well. What sets apart, for me, the works of Mária Neményi and Anna Kende (Neményi 1999, Neményi & Kende 1999) among these studies and makes their insights especially valuable for my present purposes is that the categories they created to identify subsets within their respondents can be meaningfully related to questions which shaped the groundwork for my own study. First of all, Neményi formulates her research question in terms of female role constructions and behavior patterns that were *available / possible / conceivable* ("lehetséges") in the given historical moment. She defines this moment as a medley of perhaps deceitful yet appealing promises and anticipations of adulthood in which a women's life no longer appeared as framed by constraints but by genuine choices and equalized chances (1999:147, 126).[107] Apart from her own experience, Neményi substantiates this statement with evidence gained from her interviews

> As a respondent who lived in Sweden in her later adult life related, although in Sweden female and male social roles were nearing and women's emancipation was an essential element of social discourse, the environment she encountered there could come nowhere near the kind of equality she has experienced in her childhood, school years, and working life in Hungary. (128)

In the article Neményi & Kende co-authored, both researchers identified a number of well-distinguishable subgroups based on the decisive elements of female role construction. Neményi isolated three groups (the egalitarians, the submissive, and the independents), Kende distinguished two groups (the conservative and the emancipated) with two subsets in each (those who perform the given role "harmoniously"/"with ease" or "with internal conflicts"). While the

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[106] See also my motto to this Chapter. (I thank József Böröcz for bringing that piece of writing to my attention.)

[107] I am ready to accept that the views of Neményi & Kende have to be understood in relation to the carefully circumscribed social groups they worked with: classmates in a high school.

researchers worked independently and did not intend to align their analyses more than what they felt necessary (118), and arrived to different structures to characterize their sample, many of the elements they built their respective categories on, do correspond. From their descriptions it is clear that some categories cover very similar attitudes despite the unidentical labels assigned to them (egalitarians/emancipated; submissive/conservative). The particular word choice, i think, highlights the difference in the researchers' perspectives: while word choice of the younger scholar (Kende) readily relies on fairly broad or emptied-out formulations ("conservative" vs. "emancipated"), the older one (Neményi) tries to convey a more specific picture of the portrayed mindset through the very label ("egalitarian" vs. "submissive").[108] Kende's keenness, however, to distinguish harmonious and conflicting gender role performance drives us back to issues already surfacing in the section about "choiceoise". Kende puts women in the conflicting-conservative or conflicting-emancipated groups who cannot easily make a choice between a family or work-oriented life-style for reasons i too identified earlier (the ambivalence of broadening opportunities, surviving traditionalist expectations, and inevitably changing life and career patterns).[109] On a closer look, however, not even this "emancipated" group would question or challenge essential gender role assignments, and are ready to fall back on broad stereotypes concerning these roles. In Neményi's interpretation of her cohort's gender role construction patterns, a number of women were sorted to a third group, that of the "independents" for having chosen an "independent" path and disregarding—either fully consciously or less so—socially assigned gender roles (Neményi 1999:136–38). When evaluating their lives, aspects of personality and self-fulfillment had priority over the capability to reconcile imposed roles. "The members of this group […] embarked on a difficult route, not lined by readily available norms but values set

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[108] Witness also how the framing of this latter juxtaposition echos my earlier concern over Hungarian women's voluntarily submissive psychological attitudes.

[109] Mária Schadt does not trivialize the existence of such conflicts: "The revaluation of traditional family roles", she says, "may cause, in the long run, serious mental disorders for women wanting to suit to conflicting role expectations, as [pitting roles against each other] contradicts to the decades-old local experience" (2001:55). While Kende's terminology implies blaming women themselves for their maladjustment, Schadt de-naturalizes the external pressure to adapt to contradictory role expectations.

by and for themselves. […] They lived their lives outside the frame of socially prescribed, but at the same time contradictory, role expectations" (137–40).[110]

No comparable group, however, was identified by Kende within her own cohort (Neményi & Kende, 140). In the light of my concern, spelled out in I.1, about the scarce manifestation of autonomous female subjectivities in contemporary Hungarian society, the kind of self-possession and the attempt at self-structuring one's identity as a woman that Neményi documents, indeed qualify as feminist achievements, no matter how unquantifiable and legally uncontrollable this achievement may be.[111] The condition that the two authors found no similar incidence of "independent path" within the yonger cohort leads me to assume that non-traditional or liberated identity-constructs were *better enabled* by the socialist society that issued "perhaps deceitful yet appealing promises" for women and, at the same time, implemented macro-social changes as well as practical measures to meet some of the anticipations it created. Based on the findings of Neményi & Kende, it can be argued that appealing promises and a host of fulfilled anticipations effectuated a *less hegemonic or totalizing gender order*—as experienced by a given strata of women— than post-socialist Hungarian society retracting certain roles and pressing for a hard choice between purportedly irreconcilable life expectations. I propose once again that it is because the state-socialist regime, despite its many and severe defects, opened up—"made thinkable"— certain gender role constructions. The post-socialist democracy appears to offer old roles as "new" ones (a family centered life-style for women), or a diametrically opposite one: a career-centered life-style.

Consenting to make a choice, however, may still lead to discordant role identifications and cognitive dissonance both at the "conservative" or the "emancipated" poles, as Kende showed.

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[110] In another article, the same author directs attention to how changes in the legal, economic, and social environment—including women's growing educational levels, active employment, geographical mobility— all contributed to the escalating number of divorces and to women's changing perception on traditional marriage (Neményi & Tóth 1998:8).

[111] This, however, presupposes that we accept that Neményi's sample may indeed represent a broader segments of the female population.

This sort of interpretation of the younger generation's identification patterns is supported by another study (Tóth 2006).[112] Olga Tóth's article suggests that today's labor market conditions push women toward "non-feminine" career patterns. Women's high educational levels improve their individual career opportunities but at the same time a relatively week economy fails to protect and/or support mothers, and young women in general, on the labor market. That is to say, the economic basis of individualization has now been created while no social safety net is secured. While in state-socialism a high percentage of early marriages were contracted out of economic considerations (much of the state benefits were designed for families with two wage earners, and some of them for families with children), processes of individualization today allow men *and women* to postpone, or reject, the traditional form of marriage and family (see also Neményi & Tóth 1998:6–7). The consequent appearance of single status among a significant proportion of twenty- and thirty-year-olds is new to Hungarian society, contend both articles. At the same time, attitude surveys continue to show that family life and child rearing are still highly valued by Hungarians. Here Tóth witnesses a clearly marked discrepancy—cognitive dissonance again—between actually validated behavior and the values attached to certain life styles (see also Neményi & Tóth 1998:17, Kapitány & S. Molnár 2002).

At this point, i would like to regard Tóth's observations against the backdrop of Éva Fodor's concept juxtaposing the principle of difference *versus* the principle of sameness as two different attitudes and mechanisms to include women in social production (2003:25-38, earlier discussed in II.2.ii.). In her overall evaluation of the two schemes, Fodor says that inclusion through difference may have done relatively little to eliminate the ongoing practice of male domination but it did transform the actual processes of its reproduction, and even reduced the degree of male social privileges (35). Fodor also establishes that as women were drawn into the labor force in

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[112] Olga Tóth's article accounts for a broader population (a sample of 1023 persons) than the groups of classmates in the inquiry of Neményi & Kende. The author draws on the 2001 Census and a study carried out by the Central Statistical Office. Although the author statistically projects the findings onto "society as a whole", the actual composition of the sample is not revealed in her article.

state-socialist Hungary, their presence could change the workplace exactly because their inclusion happened through the difference principle recognizing their specific needs and interests as working women. Professional life in post-socialist Hungary as presented by Schadt, Tóth seems to adopt, instead, the principle of similarity and tends to be modeled according to the male norm.[113] This echoes a recurrent entry in feminist criticism. Entering an allegedly gender-neutral public life requires that women participate "on socially male terms and abstract from their daily lives in the household and […] transcend the social construction of femaleness consequent to this dailiness" (Brown 1992:20). Recognition as subjects on the basis of sameness also requires that women "disavow [their] bodies and act as part of the brotherhood" (Pateman, quoted in Fodor, 34). Concerning the growing number of cases of (intentional or unintentional but immutably postponed) childlessness (for data, see Pongrácz 2002:18), the requirement to disavow one's female body and act as part of the brotherhood gains a very literal meaning.

II.5 Conclusion and identifying some feminist issues of the "here and now"

In this chapter i have overviewed, from a gendered perspective, some aspects of social organization in state- and post-socialist Hungary to find out what sort of gendered identity constructions became thinkable, realizable, or remonstrated and counteracted under these gender regimes. While trying to find possible answers to this question, i was also looking for factors that corrupted an otherwise commendable project: an alternative approach to modern emancipation[114] Apart from these factors, i also attempted to identify social ills that continued to adversely affect women in both periods as well as newer faces of inequality that surfaced, or crystallized, after the

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[113] The young respondents in Schadt's survey found that retaining equality requires "masculine" characteritics and the waiving of certain feminine features and behaviours (2005b:167).

[114] See my reference in II.4 to Jeanette Madarasz's paper dealing with the issue of modernity and the alternative model of emancipation that was implemented in state-socialist East-Central Europe.

collapse of socialism. A collection of these fundamental problems outlines a pool of issues that a locally relevant gendered social critique may, and does, draw on.

I approached my subject from the direction o fidentifying the state's messages because—as several of the authors whose writing i had consulted pointed out and some of my interviews subsequently confirmed—questions of women's equality seemed to have been "solved" in state-socialist Hungary.[115] But while the state's emancipation program answered to some demands that were also central for the Western women's movement, and thus improved the life of broad segments of female citizens in significant, meaningful ways, these processes were not backed up by a critique exposing inequalities inscribed in a patriarchal gender ideology. In addition, the state's intents—most notably concerning female employment and the authorization of the kind of public discourses that thematized "the women's question"—were also unstable inasmuch as they changed over time, gradually losing their women-favouring and potentially emancipatory impetus.

The state's declared agenda and its more diffusely conveyed messages induced what Martina Musilová termed as "contradictory consciousness": both men and women have a sense of equal rights but, at the same time, refuse to view instances of gender inequality as problems requiring solution (Musilová, quoted in Pollert 2001). Talking about factors that would condition the the emergence of "new" discourses—such as a "feminist" discourse—, Michel Foucault stresses "timelines": the importance of social and historical conditions that account for what one can or cannot say at a given period "in the mass of spoken things" (Foucault, quoted in Sunderland & Litosseliti 2002:10). As many of its critics accented, the second-wave of the women's movement in the West was a social, intellectual and cultural critique instigated by white middle-class women. One is most likely to find the correlate of this social layer in the purportedly "classless" Hungarian society of the time in the stratum of white-collar worker women or salaried

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[115] Here i borrowed Edit András's (2000) sarcastic wording.

professionals and intellectuals. For them it was difficult to side with the basic demands of Western feminism for the socialist state implemented many of the social changes this movement urged for. These Hungarian women were facing instead the contradictory effects of these changes on their lives, while they also witnessed the enormous and in many respects appealing differences between their own lives and that of their mothers' generation. My analysis in this chapter concluded that one definite asset of the "state-socialist way of women's emancipation" was that women's life expectations and trajectories have expanded and a wider range of gender role constructions became thinkable. Even if the sizeable social changes did overshadow—for individuals, but not necessarily for contemporary analysts—how persistent gendered inequalities both on the micro- and macrosocial level may have actually hindered the realizations of those broadened possibilities, state-socialist gender policies have had massive impact on the self-perception and behavior patterns of women, often increasing their self-confidence and sense of self. It is in this respect that discourses of feminism did not come in "timely", while an undelivered systemic critique of a male-dominated social system, as well as the general atomization of society, led individual women to seek individual coping strategies.

The instability and incoherence of women-related policies and discourses carried over in the new democracy. After the system transformation, the liberalizing state, also pressed by global economic forces, restructured its economic and welfare system creating precarious working conditions for all citizens, but—as researchers argue—for many women and especially for women with small children. "Liberalization" in the ideological sense also meant the sanctioned appearance of certain phenomena (sex industry, trafficking in women) and certain kinds of representations (in pornography and advertisement) that adversely affect women. Through a peculiar connotative transfer of anti-communism, "liberalization" also meant the re-traditionalization of political and public discourses concerning gendered social roles. When pressing for more recently thematized feminist issues, newly formed women's civil organizations have been facing a legislative environment and state administrative bodies unwilling to

substantively commit themselves to gender-related social problems. Contradictory consciousness also forms part of the "post-communist syndrome", while there are signs of a shrinking spectrum of gender role constructions. As Mária Joó characterized it, "post-socialist female consciousness" is reluctant to register ubiquitous and persistent structural inequalities and to replace an earlier self-image of the strong, equal and liberated woman with a critical one that would disclose one's second-rate position as a citizen and the net of social relations that keep her there (2005:53). In the "post-communist situation", Luce Irigaray's point about the vital importance that women take "a long detour via the analysis of the various systems that oppress her," appears especially germane (Irigaray, quoted in Jones 1985:92).

During the first years of the democratic transition, feminist identity building and grassroots organizing and activities did commence (Hochberg 1997, Pigniczky 1997, Tóth 2002, Bozzi & Czene 2006, Fábián 2006). The budding movement was essentially comprised of intellectual and academic women (Bozzi & Czene, 98–101; Matynia 1995:395), a circumstance that eventually thwarted an activist profile (Adamik, quoted in Bozzi & Czene, 144), and it was largely limited to programs conceived in the spirit of cultural feminism. Later on, smaller organizations and single issue-oriented coalitions came to being. Some writers (Nagy 2003:291; Matynia, ibid., 401) problematize the narrow focus of these organizational bodies and that their particularistic action plan have rendered them invisible to society. In contesting a view of women in East-Central Europe as politically passive, Diane M. Duffy (2000) welcomes and even explains the level of their political involvement with the better suitability of such commitment to women's mindset. I myself welcome and vindicate the level and the ways of women's political involvement for a different reason. Once the multiple base for subjectivity is recognized, contemporary activism no longer ought to take the shape of an overarching movement but rightly disintegrates into "a series of alignments and coalitions, based on practical and local issues at hand" (Bulbeck 1998:15). Secondly, sprouting women's NGOs and pressure groups have higher chances to

intervene on behalf of legislative and social policy formulations favorable to women. What may result in the "invisibility" of these organizations is that consciousness-raising[116] at large does not normally rank high on their agenda, even if there is wide agreement that consciousness-raising is a vital feminist activity, especially in cases where the issues and problematizations of feminist criticism are far from having become household terms of the general social discourse.

As political solidarity cannot be assumed on the basis of shared "womanhood" (Gal & Kligman 2000a:106), consciousness-raising is instrumental in recognizing social or judicial grievances that affect women as a group. Recognizing collective grievances can lead to the realization of the relevance and value of political solidarity. Solidarity can then replace competing individual coping strategies and may tone down distrust and competition among women which, reportedly, do characterize Hungarian women's interpersonal relations (e.g., Neményi 1999:116; interview, Maurer 2009:486–99). The conflict between the individual and social levels of psychology might also be addressed through consciousness-raising. I already briefly engaged with the question in II.3.i, inspired by the repeated comments in the related literature about the role socialization of Hungarian women which, according to the authors, predetermined the self-degrading and self-imprisoning attitudes women possess when reaching adult age. "They have to liberate themselves from their own self-limiting notions", the authors bid in a manner that sounds somewhat anachronistic to today's ears, "that enslave them in their traditional roles" and that are reified by reinforcing male attitudes (Volgyes & Volgyes 1977:50–51).

Gal & Kligman do not say consciousness-raising when they direct attention to the necessity of constituting woman as a politically relevant category in order to serve as a basis for women's political mobilization. The scholars stress the centrality of a strong civil society and public discussion, and indicate the mass media and intellectual life as potential sites for initiating such

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[116] I am using this term reminiscent of the early years of the Second Wave of the women's movement consciously here. By retaining the expresseion i want to acknowledge its primary significance (both in conceptual and chronological terms) in turning the social category of "woman" into a political one.

exchange (2000a:106–07).[117] In the understanding of Nancy Fraser, such public spheres are arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities (1993:529). Gal & Kligman too operate with the concept of the public sphere, indicating several possible uses and meanings of the term, one of which is civil society understood as a complex labyrinth of voluntary, professional, and cultural organizations separate from both state and market, that are "able to create social forms that could foster a politically critical public opinion" (2000a:92).

Taking heed of the warning of these authors and that of Rita Felski that in contemporary society modern mass communication creates a pseudo public-ness as it is no more than a terrain of political and marketing manipulations (1989:165–66), i suggest to look for potential sites for counter-publics also in other wakes of intellectual life. Continuing a post-1968 tendency in cultural production, and in the visual arts especially, some trends in contemporary art came to acknowledge the contextual nature of cultural production, and its practitioners willingly saw themselves as agents of social research and actual intervention, disregarding how institutionalized art has been faring.[118] Practitioners of these trends at times have explicitly identified their terrain of action as the counter-public sphere.[119] Accordingly, they define their practice against the homogenizing and universalizing logic of those pseudo publics: "In the post-cold-war condition, after the era of artistic overproduction, it is the subversive potential of art and culture that becomes important. Art, when viewed as a kind of *subversive attention* resisting manipulations, is the last sole refuge of the freedom of speech" (Sugár 2005).

Artist, author and curator Marion von Osten, in relating her work experience at a Zurich

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[117] In relation to the "actually existing" mass media after the regime change, the authors caution that its apparent plurality and openness obscure the fact that certain issues remain undiscussed, and especially some perspectives on gender relations continue to be suppressed (ibid., 6)

[118] A succint description of this tendency can be found in Várnagy 2004. For the ways feminism contributed to this tendency, see Lippard 1980.

[119] Maria Lind (2005), who have been the director of prominent art institutions in Germany and Sweden, defined the role of the progressive art institution as follows: it should offer itself as an alliance of curators and artists to sustain a counter-public sphere contesting dominant power relations. See also the articles in Sheikh 2005.

workshop implicitly weaves the category of the feminine (as i understand and introduced it in I.3.iii) into her understanding of a qualitatively new public sphere: "What was feminist about these not necessarily female-specific projects, however, was their method, their emphasis on informal networks, the formation of new public spheres and newly embodied knowledge" (2005:156). Surely, von Osten's experience has no direct factual connection to the immediate subject of my inquiry in the present chapter; i cited it here for two reasons. Like the other authors i referenced in the previous paragraph, von Osten's narration takes us back to the analytical aspects i elaborated on earlier: the creation of a feminist public sphere and the possibility of *feminine* versus *feminist* modes of expression). Also, her emphasis on the nature of a new method of collaboration and ways of relating subjectivities helps me bring in one more persistent obstacle that hinders the formation of more equal gender relations in contemporary Hungarian society.

Feminism as a social, cultural and theoretical critique is often seen as "part of a host of new social movements that ideologically start out from the aspiration to move beyond modern industrial civilization" (Bullain 1994:59). In their approaches, these critical trends are essentially anti-authoritarian and anti-autocratic as well as, with feminism's added gender analysis, anti-patriarchal. They prioritize respect over domination, cooperation over competition, and care over mastery, highlighting—but not naturalizing—that these are attitudes socially assigned to women. In their criticism, these discourses challenge hegemonic neo-liberal power and its nucleus, the liberal subject. Whereas—within and for the comparatively nonliberal domain of the family—relationships and needs, rather than self-interest and rights, comprise the basis for female identity formation, the liberal subject appears to be oriented toward autonomy, autarky, and individual power (Brown 1992:19). Therefore, "the ethos of the liberal state appears to be socially masculine: its discursive currencies are rights rather than needs, individuals rather than relations, autogenesis rather than interdependence, interests rather than shared circumstances" (ibid.).

This is the point where my commentary on feminine and/or feminist cultural practices and von Osten's narrative converge and intersect with actualities of the social and political context as well as theoretical, intellectual or more action-oriented aspirations to alter this context. While in the present chapter i devoted my attention to aspects and issues within the Hungarian context that pertain to feminist social criticism, in the following chapters i will engage with those pertaining to cultural criticism.

Ott állnak a férfiak, rozsdásvas-szagúak
Állnak a férfiak, állnak a férfiak
Nézik, kit lehet megdugni
Sohasem fogják megunni
Állnak férfiak, nézik a csajokat.

………

Esőbe, sárba, strandon vagy bálba
Állnak a férfiak.
Temetőben vagy közkórházban
Templomkertben, pártszékházban
Állnak a férfiak, nézik a csajokat.

Áruházban, kiskocsmában állnak férfiak
Kisegítő iskolában állnak a férfiak
A diszkó előtt, a diszkó után
Mindig ott ácsorognak
"Ezt jól megdugnám!"- mondják egymásnak a férfiak,
akik ott állnak.

……… Ez a klasszikus kép, innen indul minden ………

Ott állnak férfiak, sör- meg borszagúak
Állnak a férfiak, állnak a férfiak
Nézik, kit lehet megdugni, sohasem fogják megunni
"Azt nézd, milyen!" – mondják, és
oldalba basszák akkor egymást.

Men hang around, they smell like rusty iron
Men hang around, man hang around erect
Looking out for someone to screw
They'll never get tired of this
Men hang around and watch the chicks

………

In the rain, in the mud, on the beach, at the party
Men hang around
In cemeteries or public hospitals
In church yards and party headquarters
Men hang around and watch the chicks

In warehouses, in bistros men hang around
In special need schools men hang around
In front of the disco, after the disco
They'll be always hanging around
"Whoah, i wanna fuck her!"—they'll tell each other
The men who'd hang around there.

……… That's the classic image; that's how all things start ………

Men hang around, they smell of beer and wine
Men hang around, man hang around erect
Looking out for someone to screw
They'll never get tired of this
"Whoah, look at her!"—they'll say
and toss each other around.

Kiscsillag: *Állnak a férfiak* (Men Hang Around),
from the album *Greatest Hits vol.01.,* 2006

CHAPTER III   WOMEN AND/IN HUNGARIAN CINEMA (INDUSTRY) IN THE PAST SIXTY YEARS

III.1.i Theoretical and methodological considerations

The subtitle of the present chapter can be resolved in two ways. One way of reading it: "Women in Hungarian Cinema in the Past Sixty Years", promises to undertake an inquiry into women's representation in Hungarian film between 1945 and 2005. The other version: "Women and Hungarian Cinema Industry in the Past Sixty Years", implies an exploration of women's inclusion in the filmmaking profession during the same period. Introducing these two explorations in such an interwoven way is meant to suggest a strong interrelation between the two fields of inquiry. Also, both explorations equally closely relate to the proposition i am making in this chapter: both cases—i.e., women's representation and women's participation in Hungarian cinema production—have presented an overall more favorable picture in the years of state-socialism than during the period following the system change. To clarify what i mean by "favorable" in the case of women's representation in Hungarian film, i will put forward a number of aspects in III.4. When identifying these criteria i was drawing on feminist perspectives on the cinematic treatment of women while i was also taking stock of some specific features of local filmmaking in the given period. As far as women's participation in film production is concerned, a "favorable" situation means one in which a considerable number of women becomes involved in the conventionally male-dominated world of film-making, and they too appear in a great variety of behind-the-screen roles throughout the production process, including the key positions of director, (script)writer, cinematographer, editor and producer. A "favorable picture" also shows a sustained industry diversity, and thus indicates that their continuous access to film-making is secured, and that it is not only occasional token figures who repeatedly fulfill certain positions and thus polish over the statistics. Although it is far from my intention to suggest that there is a

direct automatic correspondence between the number of women involved in the cinema industry and a reformed quality of the images of women produced by that industry, it is worth tracking the two processes side by side in order to register possible points of convergence. In moments of convergence, however, it is still to be established whether there is a substantial correspondence between the two processes, or what other factors, beside women's creative involvement, might contribute to changes occurring in the cinematic representation of women.

The present multilayered analysis will also offer the opportunity to further elaborate on propositions presented in Chapter I and Chapter II of the dissertation. From Chapter I i will revisit the question of the applicability of Western feminist theories and the possible need to adjust the conceptual focus and the terms of their analyses when applied to an arguably different historical/social context. In the present chapter, i will interrogate to what extent, and with what sort of qualifications, feminist film theory proves to be a viable tool of analysis to account for developments within Hungarian film.

Exploring the processes of women's inclusion into the industry and the development of women's cinematic representation can contribute to the re-evaluation of the state-socialist emancipation project that comprised the focal point of the analysis in Chapter II. While there i have briefly reviewed how women's mass involvement in the labor force was reflected in various areas of paid labor, in this chapter i am focusing on the lesser researched area of creative professions. I will also query how the capitalist model of restructuring the film industry after 1989 impacted on this development.

Although women's visual representation is certainly not a transparent and immediate reflection of social reality (or the status of any patriarchal culture for that matter), a two-way connection has

been recognized between the power of images and the social reality women inhabit.[120] Thus, clearly discernible representational tendencies—here, the particular changes in women's representation in Hungarian film—might inform us about the "ways of seeing"[121] prevalent within a given society.

To monitor women's participation in Hungarian film industry, i have completed a quantitative survey of the 60-year period starting with 1945; and to account for the cinematic representation of women, i am undertaking a corpus analysis of the films produced in the stated period. To create a conceptual and methodological framework for this inquiry, the following issues need to be considered in advance: a) the salience of film as medium and representational system for feminist debates; b) various takes of feminist film theory on the filmic representation of women; c) the degree of feminist film theory's applicability in an analysis of Hungarian film production; d) the advances and drawbacks of the numeric survey method and the corpus analysis.

III.1.i Trends in existing feminist film theory and testing their applicability

Feminist theorists focusing on the mechanism of various representational systems, identified movies as one important vehicle—beside religion, traditions, language, tales and songs, etc.—that circulates the prevalent myths of a culture. If so, films are also bearers of ideology and as such,

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[120] As far back as in Mary Woolstonecraft's time of writing, such a connection was already implied (Woolstonecraft, cited in Bock 2002:74–75). In the mid-twentieth century Betty Friedan reinforced this posited connection between the compelling force of widely circulated images of women as mothers, sex objects, wives on the one hand, and women's consent to limiting themselves to these roles on the other (Friedan [1963] 1992:13–17). Later formulations came, among many other authors, from Teresa de Lauretis or Michelle Lagny. Drawing on Louis Althusser, Lauretis considers cinema as one of the ideological state appratuses that produce discourses, including representations of gender, which are then accepted and internalized by individuals (de Lauretis 1987:12–13). Lagny emphasizes that visual culture both reflects and constructs mental habits, cultural stereotypes and society's attitude toward certain topics (Lagny, quoted in Ousmanova 2006).
[121] John Berger's term. This is how Berger, in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), refers to representational systems that are produced by the specific power structures constituting a given society.

they capture and portray as "natural" a world that the dominant ideology, or dominant fiction,[122] in any given society constructs and conditions (Johnston [1975] 1999:36). According to these early positions, part of the dominant patriarchal ideology and the effect of conveying its logic as "natural" is the function of sex-role stereotyping. Thus, an early trend in feminist film criticism addressed the relationship between flesh-and-blood "real" women and the fictitious Woman-figure born out of male creators' fantasies and fears, taking shape in a number of *images of women* circulating in (visual) culture. These imaginary representations place Woman in the realm of timeless and abstract entities, and tend to portray female characters as passive, submissive and man-dependent, but otherwise practically featureless beings. In such portrayals women do not appear as historically and socially specific individuals, as versatile and complex beings defining themselves by their own actions; instead, they are typically, and stereotypically, defined in relation to men.

Reviewing some of the main precepts of the early pieces of feminist film criticism, Sue Thornham presents the connection Sharon Smith proposed between the power of filmic representations and the social reality that produces and receives them. Smith argues that films only offer a limited range of images of women, and these images tend to be false and oppressive at the same time. "The resultant stereotypes serve to reinforce and/or create the prejudices of their male audiences, and to damage the self-perceptions and limit the social aspirations of women" (Smith, quoted in Thornham 1999:10). To ward off this process, a sort of stereotype-correction is sought, which would advance *women-defined* characters and offer positive identification points and role models for female audiences. The underlying assumption is that redefined and differentiated images of women will be more likely to be produced if women

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[122] "Dominant fiction" is a term, coined by French philosopher Jacques Rancière, to describe "the stable core around which a nation's and a period's 'reality' coheres... [T]he dominant fiction brings individuals into line with a given Symbolic Order by encouraging normative desires and identifications" (Rancière, quoted in Chaudhuri 2006:107).

themselves have access to shape those images, if they participate in the actual making of visual representations (films, in the present case).

Early on, feminist film critics took classic Hollywood productions as the focus of their contestation, movies in which the representation of woman as spectacle—body to be looked at, site of sexuality, and object of desire—is the most pervasive (also because mainstream film is one of the most widely available forms of visual representation). A first cohort of feminist film critics took the so-called "sociological approach" to film texts (described in the above paragraph) and focused mainly on character and story, the stereotypes produced and the positive role models lacking. They also viewed classic narrative movies as "popular mythology, an unconsciously held collective patriarchal fantasy", in which woman, or rather her image, functions as a sign, and as such does not reflect any women's reality (Chaudhuri 2006:8). The "sociological approach" was predominantly practiced by US critics *and*, seeking to capture the interrelations between representation and social reality, was dedicated to expose those misrepresentations: the "images of Women". It did not interrogate, however, how film as a particular medium creates those images and constructs their meanings, or how ideology is being produced and perpetuated in motion pictures through textual codes. It was a theoretical interest in the functioning of signs and cultural texts and that of the "patriarchal unconscious" that led to the development of a diverging strand in feminist film criticism. This second trend, the "theoretical approach", drew on structuralism, semiotics and psychoanalysis, and it asserted the primacy of the analysis of the film text (see below) and critiqued the sociological perspective for failing to consider this aspect. Proponents of this strand (Claire Johnston and Laura Mulvey among the very first ones) argued that film representations are not just reflections of reality, no mere collections of images or stereotypes—but they are "texts" in a semiotic understanding: complex meaningful structures composed of a combination of linguistic and visual codes. Images, as they appear on the cinema screen, are transformed; in other words, they are coded through cinematic mechanisms that

include camera movement and the scale and type of shot, methods of editing and lightning as well dialogue and narrative techniques. These are factors that also establish the kind of address and spectator-text relations that a film proposes. The transformation of images also occurs through processes of disguise and displacement, creating subtexts to the immediately readable plotline—very much resembling the working of the unconscious. As psychoanalytic theory revealed, thoughts and actions which are censored by the ego and superego, are repressed and sink into the unconscious, while it is also the unconscious that greatly contributes to the internalization of the laws and beliefs of society. Decoding the hidden structures and latent meanings within the film text, Laura Mulvey ([1975] 1989) urged to uncover the unconscious of a cultural text. In doing so she revealed how the unconscious of patriarchal society is structuring film form, claiming that female stereotypes are not simply born form a conscious maneuvering of a male-dominated film world. For this "cine- psychoanalytic"[123] trend, identification does not turn on the positive or realistic quality of women's portrayal. Laura Mulvey, in her key essay cited a couple of lines above, investigated how sexual difference and sexual imbalance underpins the processes of identification. While identification with the hero—an always more beautiful, courageous and competent figure than the viewer him/herself—is a major source of pleasure to be drawn from movies, dominant cinema only offers such pleasure for an always implicitly male spectator. In these narratives it is typically the active male hero who advances the story, controls events, and possesses the eroticized gaze, while the woman stands in for erotic spectacle, obediently awaiting the hero at the end of his Oedipal journey. Thus, film structure grants a satisfying sense of omnipotence for the male spectator and requires the female viewer to take a "masculinized" position when looking at the woman on screen and when wishing to be swept up in the pleasures of the narrative.

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[123] The term comes from Christine Gledhill (Gledhill 1978).

As film text-based analysis became increasingly more theoretical and detached from film-making practice or the film production of the day, a gap was felt between the pessimism and over-determinism of theory and a possible space for political practice. In this gap, a re-evaluated and reworked version of the sociological perspective came to address the inadequacies of "cine-psychoanalysis". Anette Kuhn contended that the theoretical approach was incompetent to engage issues of the historical specificity of particular films, their institutional or social contexts or the experience of the historically situated, embodied spectator (Kuhn [1984] 1999:148–49).[124] Beside Kuhn, a number of other theorists, B. Ruby Rich, Christine Gledhill, Jackie Stacey, Valerie Walkerdine, and Jane Gaines among them, attempted to accommodate both voices of feminist criticism. Purportedly explaining the general assumptions about how the unconscious of patriarchal ideology structures film narrative, "cine-psychoanalysis" in fact only addressed a few types of motion pictures, all forming part of mainstream Hollywood narrative cinema. This film practice was also posited as an unconsciously held collective, i.e., universal "patriarchal fantasy" (Chaudhuri 2006:8), although—at the time—it has been far from being a universally applicable or relevant model, especially "behind the Iron Curtain" where it was not an overwhelming presence. In today's time of a globalized (cultural) production, new cultural dependencies are formed, and Hollywood cinema indeed has a force to overdominate local film practice worldwide.[125] Incorporating the developments within newly emerging media and television studies and the approaches of British cultural studies, feminist film theory in the 1980s sought to coalesce the textual analysis of movies with a focus on their social and historical contexts. Issues first addressed by the "Images of Women criticism" that the proponents of "cine-psychoanalysis"

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[124] Angela Dimitrakaki's questioning of the capacity of psychoanalysis as a dominant method of feminist analysis targets very similar issues of historical, social, and material specificity: "Is psychoanalysis […] equipped to read the interstices of feminine subjects, geography, technology and the moving image in a way that […] eschews generalisations that can be potentially be seen to reaffirm an abstract "feminine subject"? (Dimitrakaki 2005:272)

[125] Catherine Portuges offers a piece of data from the years immediately following the system change in Central Europe: "Universal Pictures planned to schedule the release of some 200 American films on Hungarian screens in 1990 alone, more than eight times the total number of films produced in an average year by Hungarian studios" (Portuges 2003:11). Krisztina Sztojanova, writing about East European cinema after the political change, portrays this tendency as a region-wide phenomenon (1997:25–26).

deemed simplistic or lacking theoretical depth, were now revisited. While objections were once raised to the mechanically conceived modes of identification in which "movies are thought to generate false consciousness, encouraging women to adopt and identify with the false images [Hollywood films] perpetuate and reinforce" (Christine Mohanna, quoted in Chaudhuri 2006:22), the very concept of identifying with representational forms was not dropped. Jackie Stacey (1999) explored how women as cinema spectators both produce and "reform" feminine identities, and, referencing British film theorist Christine Gledhill's work, Susan Thornham also maintains that even if "movies do not present a single position from which [they] must be understood … it is still the case that as viewers we use the identifications [they] offer us in order to construct and confirm our own sense of identity" (Thornham, 162). I also think that the initial conceptual disagreement between the "reflectionist" approach concentrating on the effects of destructive stereotypes on the one hand, and the preoccupation of "cine-psychoanalysis" with more subconscious procedures governing cinematic representations on the other, can be reconciled. Motion pictures undoubtedly contain intentional elements, even authorial messages, while they, as complex systems of signs, also run hidden signifying mechanisms and breed connotative meanings. The criticism aimed at the essentialism in demanding "real" images of, and positive roles for, women can be similarly refuted. Obviously, one can press for moving away from flat and stereotypical female representations without wanting to prescribe the exact nature of those more "realistic" images. The realism of any images of women does not reside in their conforming to some normative ideal but in the fact that the women imaged are shown as individualized people defining themselves by their own actions, and that meanings carried by male and female figures are not asymmetrical.

Feminist film theorists' practice of picking only a limited number of films for analysis and making a case for time- and spaceless theory turns out to be an unfit conceptual tool for a researcher tackling the historical specificities of an entire film corpus—as my aspiration in the present

chapter is. This aspiration includes tracking the various thematic nodes, stylistic developments, and authorial agendas in six decades of Hungarian film production, as well as exploring very real material production structures, and less material but equally real social-political conditions of cultural production for the same corpus of films. Shohini Chaudhuri warns that the extension of feminist film theories fostered in the West (and in relation to Western film-texts) to "world cinema" "may both ratify those theories and call for further interrogation and refinement through encounters with different cultural contexts" (2006:124). Taking heed of Chaudhuri's caveat, i will indicate a number of instances where the "universal applicability" of the Western-fostered theory is suspect. Combining the insights gained from the two once-competing major approaches within feminist film criticism, and adding the necessary extensions that the Hungarian context prompts, i will assemble a set of guiding criteria to be employed during my exploration of the Hungarian film corpus between 1945 and 2005.

Much of feminist film theory's near-exclusive focus on mainstream Hollywood movies immediately creates an unfit framework for my own inquiry. The fact that films came to being in starkly different production environments within the Hollywood studio and distribution system and their state-funded equivalents in socialist Hungary, has both material types of consequences and film text-related ones. While Hollywood has always been a large factory in the entertainment industry and driven, by definition, by the profit motive, Hungary's nationalized film industry was centralized, and financing—as well as the 35mm celluloid film-material!—came exclusively from the state. Distribution was also national monopoly but it also meant that films had got a guaranteed exposure in the state-owned cinemas.[126] Authors of recently published English-language monographs on Hungarian and/or East-Central European film-making propose to move away from invariably pointing out the wrongs of state-socialism, and urge instead "to

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[126] And of state-owned cinemas there were many: after having nationalized the movie industry and distribution networks, new cinema houses opened everywhere in the country, even in tiny villages. In 1948, 20% of Hungarian towns and villages had a movie theater, in 1962 this number reached 90% (Varga 2001). The movie theater was referred to as "the second home of the workers", and movies were surely a major mass-scale medium of propaganda (Rainer & Kresalek 1990; see also Kulcsár 2005).

engage in a project that would be less ideologically loaded and simply try to explain the specific logic of the state socialist system of cultural production as a system that had its own justifications, advantages and disadvantages" (Iordanova 2003:16). Viewed from such a perspective, the picture one gets is that Hungary had "an extremely well-structured and well-functioning" motion picture industry (Nowicki, quoted in Portuges 1993:142) which, due to a secured government subsidy, was relatively immune to some kinds of drawbacks such as commercial competition or economic fluctuations (Cunningham 2004:117), and where "box office revenues did matter but were never of crucial importance" (Iordanova 2003:27). Cunningham's and Iordanova's remarks are important because they allude to the fact that strictly profit-oriented principles, like those of the Hollywood industry, inevitably have an impact on subject-matter and stylistic issues. Having to please broad audiences does not normally allow for non-entertaining, if not displeasing, subject matters or narrative techniques that require spectatorial efforts to decipher their complex texts, and may lead to unresolved closures. Hungarian film production from the state-socialist period, however, was characterized by a deeply inscribed concern for politics, history and contemporary society.[127]

Another difference between mainstream Hollywood film production and the corpus i am examining is also indicated by a set of mutually missing *genres*. Certain Hollywood genres have earned the attention of feminist film theorists but have never been any considerable presence within the Hungarian scene. Such genres are the often-referenced classic Hollywood "women's film" and melodrama from the 1930-40s, or the horror or slasher films.[128] These genres have

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[127] This latter thematic preoccuation did not only charaterise Hungarian feature films but the cinema of other European, Western or Eastern, countries as well, as French and Italian neo-realist cinema and its followers testify.

[128] Feminist critics have engaged with the classic women's film to show that there might be a position for the female spectator other than the compulsory "masculinization" proposed by Mulvey because, in these films, at least the narrative is centred around a female protagonist—who, nevertheless, gradually loses agency and will be caught up in despair and passivity. Barbara Creed examined how, in horror films, women do not only feature as frail victims but, taking the form of an abjected female monster (*femme castatrice* or the monstrous-feminine), also stir up male anxieties (Creed 1993). In slasher films, as it was suggested by a number of other theorists, spectators are invited to oscillate between male and female

been virtually non-existent in the history of Hungarian film, therefore the related problematizations and propositions can hardly comment on the body of films i am examining. On the other hand, a cinema of moral concern, i.e., motion pictures with a keen interest in social topics and political implications, often interrogating the relation between the individual and history, could be regarded as the "mainstream" of Hungarian cinema throughout the decades of state-socialism. Dina Iordanova points to a consequent development in film style: the specific absence of glamour in Central European motion pictures and notices their sobriety instead (2003:17). This mode of filming brings about another crucial discrepancy between movies produced in this context and those in Hollywood. As i have already noted, Hollywood productions have earned the attention of feminist criticism partly because the representation of women as erotic spectacle has been most pervasive in these classical narrative films; such portrayals, however, were almost entirely missing for the most part of the socialist period. Highlighting these particular differences is one of the main goals of the corpus analysis that follows.

Having considered all these factors (an industry with a stable state subsidy; practices of realism; audiences actively addressed through exposure to films produced in a more existential idiom), i should add that the actual spectators of these feature films have also been differently situated historically, socially and culturally than the spectators, actual or "textual", of mainstream Hollywood offerings.[129]

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viewing positions, which then secures spectatorial pleasure for both audience groups (Thornham 1999:230–33).

[129] Film theory's "textual spectator" is distinguished from the more complexly positioned social audience.

III.1.ii A critique of Cold War thinking and the easy dismissals of the cultural production of the state-socialist-period

When, in the opening chapter to her book *Cinema of the Other Europe: The Industry and Artistry of East Central European Film,* Dina Iordanova argues for a less ideologically loaded approach to cultural production during the state socialist system, she also elaborates on the imbalance that remained after the Iron Curtain was "lifted" (Iordanova 2003:16–17). Authors writing about the period normally only mention the limited amount of cultural products that crossed the "curtain" Eastwards, whereas the culture of the Eastern Block was in fact even lesser known in the West and, as Iordanova points out, "after the West won the propaganda battle over the hearts and minds of people of the Eastern Bloc, the culture of the East remains as little known in the West as before" (16). An ideologically loaded approach is a lasting effect of such asymmetric ignorance. An important feature of this incomplete picture has been that most of what was known at all from socialist countries' output, "had been highlighted selectively for ideological considerations" (ibid.),[130] and that even today the conceptual framework of the Cold War is often uncritically and heedlessly employed. Such a bias tends to ward off devoting serious scholarly efforts to analyzing any slice of the cultural production of the period. Also, perpetuating Cold War-era clichés is usually coupled with a tendency to view the 45 years of state-socialism as an unchanging and undifferentiated monolith. Within this framework, an account for the cultural production of the pre-1989 period is customarily depicted as a well-designed manipulation by the communist propaganda and ideology—which was not the case as i hope i will be able to demonstrate. This perspective also results in an undue attention paid to the matter of censorship. Therefore, before setting out to perform the corpus analysis, i must consciously remedy this kind of view of the cultural production of the era by exploring all the related phenomena contextually. For this task i can summon most authors recently engaging with the subject, be they domestic experts (Báthory

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[130] Works that were severely criticised or banned by cultural politicians in their home countries, gained an automatic and often disproportionate appraisal in the West.

1990 and 2000, Rainer and Kresalek 1990, Gelencsér 1998, Csala 1999, Fazekas 2000, Varga 2001 and 2005) or foreign analysts (Portuges 1993, Iordanova 2003, Cunningham 2004) who all have contributed a great number of arguments to successfully counter the inherited biases.

Already the first decade following World War II and the introduction of socialist rule in 1948, turns out to be a heavily heterogeneous one, refusing an easy totalization of the period. Socialist Realism for which the official cultural policy of the socialist countries became notorious (and the so-called production films where this style was expounded in its purest; see definition and discussion below) has in fact characterized a mere five years, between 1949 and 1953 (Báthory 1990, Rainer and Kresalek 1990, Cunningham 2004, Varga 2005). The immediate "thaw" and slow democratization following Stalin's death had an impact on cultural policy and film-making practice: films centering on social issues were made, and some of them hit an overt critical tone; Balázs Varga defines these years as the "birth of the *art of cinema* in Hungary" (Varga 2001; emphasis added).[131] The first international success of the nationalized film industry, *Merry-Go-Round* was made in 1955. Márta Mészáros, the first Hungarian woman director to make major feature films and a junior film student at the time, disputes facile characterizations of the 1950s as a time of stagnation in light of creative atmosphere (Mészáros, quoted in Portuges 1993:3).

When investigated contextually, the fact that movies were considered as principal propaganda tools turns out to be a condition that cannot be exclusively connected to one single political system; rather it turns out to be a feature pertaining to film as a medium of mass appeal.[132] (In fact, feminist theory has been interested in the capacity of films to form discourses and inscribe ideology for very similar reasons.) In the so-called coalition period (1945–48) immediately

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[131] The "art of cinema" is to be understood as opposed to the entertaining romance-comedies and melodramas produced during the inter-war and war years.

[132] On this see also Ellul 1965, especially pp.102–05.

following the war years and preceding the introduction of the one-party system in Hungary, all parties attempted to use film to serve their own political ends (Cunningham 2004:64).[133]

The Kádár-era brought a general thaw and an invigorated cultural life from the 1960s on, and this is the decade that saw a number of Hungarian films receive noisy success at international festivals so much so that this decade is frequently referred to as the "golden age" of Hungarian motion picture. The Béla Balázs Studio came to life in 1959; this was a studio unique of its kind in the region since young Film Academy graduates could have had a quick start there making short feature films or documentaries as the control and the authorization process of shooting was unusually loose and fast (Varga 2001). As John Cunnigham characterizes this decade, "only a prejudiced mind could suggest that this was a simply one-track, bureaucratic, ideologically led system, stifling artistic freedom and endeavor" (Cunnigham 2004:96). The industry enjoyed an increasing degree of autonomy and the pluralism of style and subject-matter continued into the 1970s. Films reflecting a director's personal creative vision through innovative visual language were made (Fazekas 2000). The studios were re-organized in 1971, and by the second half of the 1970s, the structure of the industry resembled more and more the Western model, except that studios were still state funded (ibid, 117). Continuing a tradition embroiling history and politics, feature films, but especially documentaries, took to unveiling the dismal events of the 1950s as early as at the end of this decade (Gelencsér 1998, Báthory 2000, Varga 2001).

The elaborate censorship mechanism was built on a delicate interplay between censorship and self-censorship. The notorious "three T-s" system of official cultural policy, ranking cultural producers as "supported", "tolerated" or "prohibited",[134] left, after all, enormous room for

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[133] A strongly politicized treatment of film production (and producers) characterized the postwar years in the West, and notably in the United States as well. See e.g., Buhle, Buhle and Georgakas 1992 on the anti-communist sentiment and anti-Soviet propaganda in Hollywood incited by The House Un-American Activities Committee, as well as the investigations into alleged Communist influence, the hearings and backlisting of several hundred actors, writers and directors from almost all major studios (326–29).
[134] From the late 1960s on, cultural policy categorized cultural producers and products as "supported", "tolerated" or "prohibited". For a detailed discussion of the politics of the three T-s, see Sasvári 2003.

manipulation, maneuver, and compromise for both government and artists (Cunningham, 95, Beke 1999:212). The mechanism was maintained through a tacit agreement between cultural workers and politicians, and relative privileges and a preferential treatment were granted to artists if conforming to a kind of "directed culture" (Haraszti 1988:129–42). The terms of the agreement, however, were dominated by a constantly changeable multi-layered system of tactical considerations (Lóránd Hegyi, quoted in Iordanova 2001:39). Differences occurred among the various wakes of culture, but film production was one such department where outright repression was rare. Film personnel did not suffer persecution to the same extent as writers did (Cunnigham 2004:90; see also Standeisky 2005); individual films were censored but not individual film-makers or oeuvres.[135] All factors combined, the over-all film production boasted films of superb artistry and aesthetic quality, innovation and expression. After the tight control of the 1950s, banned films came across as rare exceptions in the 1960s,[136] and by 1980, "opposition and criticism had become so commonplace in the Hungarian press that the projection of a controversial film was no longer [an] audacious political act" (Portuges 1993:87).

Another way that Iordanova so perceptively suggests to contextualize censorship and divest it from the excessive attention it has received is to view it in the framework of the political economy of ownership:

> Whoever consider themselves to be the owner of a product [the state or a corporation], also exercises control over the marketing of the product. […] In each case, there is a measure of control, be it commercial or political. While in the West market considerations were predominant but rarely acknowledged or identified as freedom infringements, in East Central Europe political considerations were the guiding force. (Iordanova 2003:33) [137]

The liberation, through state subsidy, from being exposed to market demands was acknowledged by cultural producers and interpreted as an opportunity to realize creative utopias

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[135] I.e., directors were not immediately discredited or cut from further opportunities once a particular film of theirs was banned.

[136] The mechanism of these few occasions is closely studied in Varga 2005.

[137] As Iordanova too recognizes, this analogy has already been suggested in Miklós Haraszti's *The Velvet Prison* (1988) where the author compares the limitations of the artists working under state socialism with those faced by corporate employees (or, for that matter, film personnel working in Hollywood studios).

(Standeisky 2005:8).[138] This acknowledgement was a reason, Standeisky posits, that many members of the intellectual elite were willing to enter a tacit agreement with state power without necessarily having to be coerced into it; in return they were accorded relative existential safety and shield as creators.

Besides that the censorship mechanism of state-socialist Hungary was neither particularly consistent, nor truly efficient, it allowed for operations simply inconceivable within the logic of capitalist production: the state would commit production funds, and then shelve the film, only to show most of them a couple of years later anyway. Discussing censorship from this angle, Iordanova admits that in the West many of these films would not have been censored but, she amends, they simply *would not have been made*, given the profit-oriented logic of entertainment industry and the different attunement of broad Western audiences to feature films (2003:33).

Finally, looking at changing cultural dependencies and distribution structures is another area where facile Cold War-era assumptions should be countered. As to cultural dependency, or the relative lack thereof, Polish actor Jan Nowicki characterized Hungarian film industry as one that "has never tried to follow international trends and fads; it created its own terms and tendencies"(Nowicki, quoted in Portuges 1993:143). Considering distribution structures, Iordanova points to differences in the kind of audience exposure East European films used to get and what they recently can get. While today many of the films made in Central Europe are not even released in their home countries, in state-socialist times they were distributed in the so-called friendly countries, also beyond Europe (Iordanova 2003:28, Csala 1999). This was a truly international sort of exposure, and it would take a degree of imperial bias to prioritize, over this scope of reach, today's distribution channels usually limited to Western Europe and North America. John Cunnigham also notices the ironic fact that, due to lacking funds for distribution

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[138] Standeisky also quotes the Decree of the 1966 congress of the MSzMP (the Hungarian Workers' Socialist Party): "For us, culture is not an issue of commerce but one of ideology" (ibid, 271).

and marketing, more films are now "shelved" in Hungary than was ever the case before (Cunnigham 2004:155).

III.1.iii The numerical survey method and corpus analysis—methodological questions

The 1972 first issue of the American journal *Women and Film* announced that "the struggle" (to cease the oppressive ideology and stereotyping foisted on women by visual culture) has to be taken up "on all fronts": from women's image in film to women's creative participation within film industry (Editorial, quoted in Thornham 1999:9). Although there have been extensive debates within feminist theory about whether or how a transformation in the area of representation is linked with a greater numbers of women cultural producers, it is generally agreed upon that any such change does turn on the interposition of women film-makers and that it is indeed hard to imagine such transformation without an increased number of women participating in production processes. While women's exclusion from them does not have to be a conscious strategy of a male-dominated film industry, the fact of exclusion may nevertheless have very real and pragmatic reasons as well as very material consequences.

A predominantly male environment also affects the reception of the few female colleagues in any profession, and this was even more so a couple of decades ago anywhere where female labor started to make inroads to previously men-dominated areas. Márta Elbert, the first woman production manager to work at the national film studios in Hungary, recollected the attitude of her environment as follows: "You had to adopt a tough, self-confident, in fact masculine posture if you did not want the men around to feel up your butt or molest you" (Elbert 2003).[139] Lili Surányi, who had worked in a number of positions in the film studios and later in the national

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[139] Niki Caro's 2005 film, *North Country* addresses a similar situation in a different production environment: *North Country* is a semi-fictionalized account of the first major successful sexual harassment case in the United States. A group of women who came to work at the Eveleth Mines in Minnesota as the first women miners filed a lawsuit after having endured continuous insults and unwanted touching.

television, related how she suddenly "disappeared from the picture" for a while: "What happened was that i was not willing to become the mistress of the highly influential general director. […] He had me sacked. […] His revenge has swayed my life a great deal" (Surányi 2004).

Leaving the sexual molestation aspect of a male-dominated environment aside, and attending to more material kinds of consequences of women's under-representation, the social aspect of raising money stands out. Fund-raising can be more complicated for women, contends Sharon Krum (2006), as much of the business is conducted through networking, which often puts women on the outside. Marian Evans' study also point to the fact that film making is "a business based on personal relationships and social contacts. […] This requires a social integration within the professional community" (D. Hunt, quoted in Evans 2008).

The Guerilla Girls are an American group of activist feminist artists rallying to promote women and people of color in the arts, who also insist on the basic need to numerically increase these groups' presence in the industry. They provide one of the few sources recording women's underrepresentation within the arts, including filmmaking.[140] Such records are rare and difficult to find in general—either in the post-socialist or other contexts.[141] The Guerilla Girls' billboard campaign in which they refer to the top 200 films of 2005 draws on Martha Lauzen's surveys, "The Celluloid Ceiling" (Lauzen 2002 and 2006). Beside Lauzen's inquiries, i was only able to locate internationally a few research pieces on women's participation in film production: an examination of Danish Film and Television (Knudsen & Rowley 2004) and a research report on

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[140] Obviously, the Guerilla Girls' records are far from detailed and explicated studies, and are presented with their guerilla art stance. They would post billboards along Hollywood streets screaming with the crudely presented data: "[The Oscar for] [B]est director has never been awarded to a woman"; "Women directed only 7% of the top 200 films of 2005"; "Female filmdirectors [in Hollywood]: 4 %"—and theyjuxtapose this data with the apparently "more progressive" US Senate where the proportion of female senators is 14%. See http://www.guerrillagirls.com [accessed August 31, 2007].

[141] Possible reasons for this omission may be that creative work is not classified as productive labor, or that it is more difficult to measure with the usually employed indicators. In state-socialist Hungary, however, film personnel were salaried employees (better paid than the average Hungarian; see Iordanova 2003:21 and Cunningham 2004:82), which makes both the personnel and their contribution to the domestic production measurable and researchable.

an in-progress PhD project measuring New Zealand women's recent participation in feature film-making (Evans 2008).[142] The enterprises of Lauzen and Knudsen & Rowley map the employment of women in a number of key positions; the best paid, most influential jobs of director, producer, screenwriter, cinematographer, editor, and—in the case of Lauzen's research—executive producer. As to their methodology to collect material, it is just as simple as mine: the authors started counting women in film credits. The time span of the overview is considerably shorter in both cases than in my inquiry. Lauzen began her surveys in 2002 and provides updated data from consecutive years. With these yearly updates, Lauzen and her team present the hard and hardly changing facts and figures in the face of press coverages suggesting that women had finally achieved parity with men in the entertainment business, both on-screen and behind-the-screen.[143] Evans (2008) is interested in "women's contemporary public participation in story-telling", and hence focuses on writers and directors; her time frame is 2003–07. In the very first year of her ongoing research project, Lauzen's research team also undertook the on-screen content analysis of the 100 top grossing films of that year. Not being impeded by the discontents with the "images of women" orientation within early feminist film criticism discussed above, Lauzen insists that "if you change women's representation in the media, you change the world" (Lauzen 2002). The methodology remained quantitative also when it came to on-screen content analysis: the team distinguished female characters who had goals *versus* characters who had no goals over the course of a film, and counted whether characters were effective or not in achieving their goals (be those goal getting involved in a romance or getting a job, etc.). They also looked at whether women featured in leadership positions. Knudsen and Rowley's study of the Danish situation

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[142] In an interview taken after having posted the first, 2002 executive summary of her research, Lauzen points out that "there have been a few other studies that have addressed bits and pieces of [women's behind-the-scenes participation and on-screen content analysis] in their research", but she was unaware of any other enterprise that would have tried to put together these dimensions, and thus provide a full statistical picture (Lauzen 2002). Evans (2008) comments that feminist film scholars have not focused on conditions of filmmaking for women within the industry or outside, by the latter Evans means factors like motherhood and such "internal obstacles" as lacking confidence and a sense of entitlement.

[143] The contradiction is underlined by Lauzen's emphatically stating not only the degree of women's participation but of their non-participation in various production processes, as well as the very low (0.5%) percentage of films made without any male contribution.

examines the period between 1992-2002. (In relation with certain data, they work with an expanded, though unexplained, time span.) The Danish authors sought "to find out who makes the funding decisions and who gets the chance to communicate their visions in the Danish film and TV industry".[144]

My analysis does not only focus on a number of key positions as i am also interested in the diversity of the behind-the-screen jobs women get and in the processes of gender segregation within the industry in general. My statistics overviews, in 5-year blocks, the 60-year period of Hungarian film production between 1945 and 2005. I divided the large periods into 5 year-blocks for reasons of easier handling. Five years seem to be short enough units not to hide significant changes, but long enough to indicate, compared with other five-year blocks, shaping tendencies. The content analysis will follow, with minor modifications, periods defined by decades. Here the division is determined by perceptible changes occurring between the respective decades. For the statistics i have consulted the data in the following sources: *Hungarian Feature Films 1931–1998* (Varga 1999); the series *Filmévkönyv* (the annual Film Almanac; publisher: Magyar Filmintézet) and the catalogues of the yearly Hungarian Film Week (Magyar Filmszemle).[145]

My survey does not cover short films, documentaries and TV productions. These are sections, however, where women are generally less underrepresented. At the same time, these are sectors that are situated on a lower rank of hierarchy in terms of revenues and professional esteem.[146]

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[144] While i will not be able to incorporate the following factors in the scope of my present inquiry, it is interesting, from a methodological perspective, to note the other elements Knudsen and Rowley bring under scrutiny. Acknowledging that the National Film School of Denmark is a central gatekeeper in the industry, they examined the gender consitution of those who decide who gets in, those who do get in and those who teach at the school. Another central gatekeeper that the survey also covers is the top management and executive boards, as well the Film Consultants of the Danish Film Institute who are employed to use their subjective taste to determine which projects receive production funding.

[145] I am also grateful to film critic and researcher Balázs Varga, costume designer Lilla Khoór and film student Anna Kis for imparting their related observations.

[146] As i indicated above, i will not consider television or documentary production within the scope of the present inquiry, yet, another detail from the interview with Lili Surányi (2004) provides some insight into the relation between the gender configuration of cultural producers and what kind of stories, or "whose

After exploring women's involvement in the cinema industry in a statistical survey, i will set out to examine the cinematic images of women produced by this industry. For this exploration, i will undertake a *corpus analysis* of Hungarian film production after 1945. In the framework of this analysis, i will combine aspects of both the sociological approach to the study of cinematic representations and film text analysis for the closer focus on the hidden structures of film as a medium. Regarding feature films as complex documents of social history, it is not my primary intention to determine the aesthetic worth of individual films or the artistic achievement of individual filmmakers. Nevertheless, some of the aspects i am working with in the content analysis (e.g., character-formation and the coherence or looseness of dramaturgy) will necessitate that i consider their artistry along these aspects. Monitoring character-formation includes evaluating women's representation in the given pieces, in other words the assessment of how the sign "woman" operates within these specific film texts. Although a content-focused corpus analysis is better able to follow the sociological strand in feminist film criticism, a conscious effort to also register how film text operates on various levels will even out this potential lopsidedness. This latter concern will be brought in the forefront in the case of a few selected films.

As a potential drawback of a corpus analysis, films might be reduced to their basic attributes or one-dimensional, narrow, almost instrumental readings. This effect is increased since the present dissertation is not written in the vernacular and means to address readers from an international context—a situation in which i can hardly hope that allusions to individual films will ring a bell with readers. Therefore, whenever a film is mentioned, i will succinctly state why i am referring to

stories" get told. Among her own favourite works Surányi lists a film essay and a short documentary. In the former she created a montage of sculptural depictions of motherhood, poetry and music, in the latter she interviewed women about their jobs; both films were executed with novel montage techiques too.

it in the particular context. Also, i will devote a more profound attention to some films that can serve to illustrate the point i am making in the respective section of my discussion.[147]

Another problematic factor is that certain films might fall out of the scope of the present account. These are films that cannot be captured by the set of criteria i am using here, but could be relevant for the goals of the present inquiry due to the sort of representations therein.[148] One aspect i also had to largely neglect this time is locating films that may work towards the reconfiguration of masculinity. Film theorist Kaja Silverman, herself exploring male subjectivity represented in films, pointed to the importance of also addressing the "technologies" of masculinity. Any crisis that might occur in masculinity, Silverman proposes, has enormous political implications as masculinity and its dominant representations are key sites within which to renegotiate our relationship with ideology (Silverman 1992:16). Nevertheless, this time i will not be able to trail the cinematic construction of male subjectivity and will have to limit myself to looking at the cinematic treatment of women.

Proceeding by decades with the corpus analysis is not only a matter of convenience. As Dina Iordanova in her monograph *Cinema of the Other Europe* also probed, the "decades approach", with minor modifications, turns out to be a workable method for the given subject from both the perspectives of a socio-political and a style-oriented analysis (Iordanova 2003:8–9). The suggested modifications affect the beginning and the closing of the 60-year period. The immediate postwar years only yielded a low number of films, and basically continued the comedy-dominated film-making praxis of the pre-war years without bringing much novelty. The years between 1949–53 are characterized by the rigid implementation of Socialist Realism; after 1953 a gradually liberalizing "thaw" period followed, leading up to the revolution of 1956. The fallen revolution

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[147] To avoid cumbersome data-referencing, when providing more detailed data does not seem crucial, i will mention films by their translated title only, and refer readers to *Appendix 2* for information about original film title, director, and production year.

[148] Here i am referring to movies centering on male/female private relations, or detective stories, comedies, and other films and genres where woman-related subject matters will not get in the focus, but female characters might get sympathetic and nuanced characterization.

means another rift within the decade when directors refrained from approaches of social critique that had surfaced in the years of the "thaw". Yet, a renewed censoring of proposed film projects did not bring about total regression (Cunningham 2004:91, Fazekas 2000). The decades of the 1960s, 70s and 80s can be well characterized from aspects of industrial, socio-political and stylistic developments via the 'decades' approach. The 1990s is a period of profound re-arrangement in every level of the film industry and one bringing about changes in style and film text. Since my overview stops at 2005, the 2000s do not figure as a whole decade; thus, the post-1989 era in the present case includes the early years of the 2000s.

III.2 Women as represented in the profession: A quantitative survey of women's inclusion in Hungarian film industry, 1945–2005

Filmmaking is a kind of creative process that, unlike literature or the fine arts where individual input is the core of creation, rests on the collaboration of a group of people with varying functions and hierarchical positions. My statistical survey of women's involvement in the various behind-the-scene functions[149] seeks to answer the following questions: how many and which sort of functions have been typically fulfilled by women, and which ones have remained unaffected by women's growing presence in education and the professions in general? Who were the "first swallows"? How did gender segregated posts within film industry develop and what might explain the development of gender segregated duties? Have the moderate trend toward the appearance of women in key positions brought about an increased number of women in the film crew, or any change in women's cinematic representation?

In *Appendix 1* i assembled brief definitions of the main behind-the-screen positions. Apart from providing very rudimentary information (what type of tasks and responsibilities these roles

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[149] Behind-the-scene functions are to be understood as opposed to the on-screen job of performers. Thus, my statistical survey does not extend to women's participation as actresses.

involve and how they rank within the film production team), these short entries also set the stage for roughly comparing production environments in Hungary and in mainstream Hollywood studios.

It might turn out to be an easy guess which task became the quickest and most profoundly feminized behind-the-scenes task. As early as in the period of 1945–49, women's proportion among *costume designers* was 31.5%, which meant that six out of the 19 films made in this period employed a woman costume designer. Or better to say, they employed *the* woman costume designer as she was the same person in almost each case (Lili Surányi). The same applies to the job of the production manager: 4 out of the 19 films worked with the one and only woman production manager (Mrs. Miklós Vitéz),[150] and thus produced a seemingly high figure of 21%. In the following decade this person vanished, and only the period after 1981 saw a woman production manager again. In this starting interval i only noted two women editors, although this is the post that would shortly accommodate an equally high number of women as costume design did—with the difference, however, that the roster of costume designers becomes variegated already in the next five-year term (1950–55), whereas the first woman editor remains one and the same person for the next 10 years (Ferencné Szécsényi). The variety of the list of names is important because it might shed light on whether these "first swallows" were token persons somehow making their way into the profession, or a tendency of women's involvement became discernible indeed. The former scenario is indicated when one single or a few initial names keep repeating for years and when, having learned to read between the lines of the rosters, the web of connections and relations behind the names gradually reveals itself. This skill leads to the discovery that many of these first women were the wives or daughters of a man also involved in the cinema industry. This fact does not in itself hold information about who came first to the

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[150] Note the peculiar (and peculiarly patriarchal) construction of Hungarian married women's name in wide circulation up to just a couple of decades ago: adding "Mrs." to the husband's name (in Hungarian "-né" is fitted after the man's full name) comes to refer to the wife, subsuming and effacing both her first and second names. Thus, all we know about Mrs. Miklós Vitéz is that she was married to a certain Mr. Miklós Vitéz, but her own names remain unknown.

business. But the fact that men's name tend to be variegated while women's do not, drafts a clear tendency: it required a considerable amount of time until a larger number of women got in the profession *in their own right*, even in such gradually feminized positions as costume design or editing.

In twenty years' time, women came to participate, to varying degrees, in a steady set of 13–14 different functions. It is the period 1981–85 that saw women in the highest diversity of positions, in 17 different sorts; in virtually all possible behind-the-scene positions. This number was approximately maintained and never again dropped below 13 throughout the decades monitored. Starting with the period 1961–65, the post of the story editor also came to accommodate high numbers of women.[151] After the system change, however, we experience such a definite drop in all three formerly leading positions that begs for an explanation. The drop in the number of female story editors is certainly linked with the gradual disappearance of the post of the story editor itself, which followed the decomposition of film studios and the kind of group work that characterized their operation. The post of the story editor was one of the first ones to be discarded when budgets started to shrink. The quantitative data will only permit to form hypotheses about the decreasing number of women costume designers and editors—and the growing proportion of men in the same positions. This process can be partly explained by the intensifying jockeying for positions under the transformed conditions of film financing after the political changes, or the spreading of a (partially or entirely) self-funded type of film shooting after the demise of the studio system, often realized with the financial help from cast and crew. In this setting the "social handicap" of women that Sharon Krum referred in a quote above— that it is harder for women to integrate in networking: a crucial factor in securing funding for film projects—becomes more consequential. As far as costume design is concerned, another factor might come into play: the emerging monopoly of a single designer who has acquired the stocks

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[151] The occasional shifts that occur within this leading three can be explained by the fact that the sources do not always indicate the costume designer, which makes the related data somewhat precarious.

of the earlier state-owned costume depots.[152] As to editing, a development of the most recent years can be accountable for bringing more men to the job: the accelerating digitalization of the work, a shift from the previously largely manual process, certainly made editing more attractive to a higher number of men, some of whom have prior related technical experience.

I have already stated in relation with the post of the production manager that Márta Elbert, the first woman to come to this position remained the only one for a long while. As Elbert relates in a 2003 interview: "For a long while i was the only woman in the studios to be appointed production manager. This is a heavy duty masculine type of job; one has to push the team hard and be in total control" (Elbert 2003). In the eighties, more women started to be hired in this position (alone or sharing the post with a colleague), and when the function of the producer appeared within the industry in Hungary (at the end of the same decade), these two became posts relatively often fulfilled by women.[153]

The figure indicating female scriptwriters or writers of original works does not continuously converge on zero but it does stay very low throughout the six decades. (The number gets higher if one also considers co-writers.) This post is important as it is closely related with Knudsen and Rowley's query i quoted above: "Whose stories get told?" The highest proportion female writers or scriptwriters has achieved was 7.2% for writers (1976–80) and 12.9% for script writers (1991–

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[152] Hypothesis based on the verbal communication of costume designer Lilla Khoór and film student Anna Kis.

[153] Although these positions do not completely overlap in the Hungarian and American industry, it is interesting to point out a relative similarity concerning the position of the producer/production manager. Drawing on the figures in Martha Lauzen's study that show a moderate rise in women producers only, Sharon Krum poses the question: "How to explain the number of women executives in Hollywood, where six studios now have female heads of production?" (Krum 2006). Krum, however, does not attempt to answer the question, only implies that the business area within the industry may prove to be more penetrable to women than the top creative positions. This is what Lauzen alludes to with the title of her research paper, "The Celluloid Ceiling".

95).[154] These highlights were followed with rapid decreases in both cases, which reached a negative peak in the period 2001–05: 1.6% for authors and 4.2% for script writers.

The function in which women hardly ever appeared is probably another easy guess—it is the post of the cinematographer (a.k.a. camera*man*). Part of the reason for women's most conspicuous underrepresentation here might be that this job is physically demanding. This "reason", however, might be one of those entrenched perceptions that Martha Lauzen names as the key stumbling blocks for women to get in certain positions (Lauzen, quoted in Krum 2006). While this might have been a creditable reason in the era of traditional 35 mm cameras, today's frequently used digital cameras require considerably less physical strength. Situations when women at all appear behind the camera are the (half-)independent productions of recent years, shot with the help of friends and volunteers, in which settings it is also not uncommon that more than one person do the shooting.

My quantitative survey (*Table 1* and *2*) of women's participation in Hungarin film production demonstrated that the tasks that absorbed the highest number of women were costume designer, editor, storyline editor and, after the reorganization of the studio system following the political and economic system change in Hungary, the producer (*Table 1*). Except for the editor (which is categorized as one of the key positions in film making in the Danish and US surveys i have consulted), all these positions are external to the creative process where questions of whose stories get told and how characters will be represented are decided upon.[155] The percentage of women involved in the three most feminized posts either showed a steady increase during the state-socialist period, amounting to figures above 90% (editor) and 35–40% (storyline editor), or started out at a relatively high rate (30%) and increased that level to 70–80% (costume designer)

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[154] The percentages i am providing here indicate the proportion of films in which individual women worked as writers of original literary works or as script writers. The proportion is higher when women working in the same position in mixed-gender teams is also considered. For the latter calculation, see *Table 1*; for the differences between the two modes of calculation, see *Table 2*.

[155] In this respect the job of the editor is also external to such representational decisions, while it is surely intrinsic to the artistry of the particular movie.

(*Table 2*). After the system change, a rapid decrease was observed in all three positions. The post of the producer appeared in the period of 1986–90, and since then showed an increase of female presence up to 20%; in most cases, however, women producers do not fill the position independently but they are part of a mixed-gender team of two or more producers.[156]

Positions where representational options are decided upon are that of the writer/script writer and director. The percentage of women script writers increased, from a mere 0 in 1945–49 to a peak of 12.5% (or 18.1% as co-writers) in socialist times, and fell back to 4.2% (or 14.2% as co-writers) in the last period examined.[157] After the appearance of the first women directors in 1966 and 1968, their percentage moved between 6 and 15%. In the five-year period following the system change the figure was still relatively high (14.1%, or 17.6% as co-directors) but it dropped to an initial low of 6.7% in 2001–05. When compared to the available Danish and US surveys that cover the periods between 1992–2002 or 1998–2005, respectively, and only focus on five key positions,[158] the Hungarian figures do not show a considerable difference. They do show, however, a serious drop in many positions except for the "household manager" position (production manager) and the newly appearing post of the producer.

To summarize, female labor has started to appear in reasonably high and steady numbers and relatively versatile functions around the period starting from 1966 (i.e., when socialism had already been being built for some twenty years). The "top three" functions—costume designer, editor, storyline editor—were of a subsidiary nature from the perspective of "whose stories get

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[156] The average percentage of individually working female producers is 5% in the 1991–2005 period, as opposed to 18% when being co-producers. The closest equivalent to the producer during state socialist times, the production manager, showed an average figure of 3%.

[157] The tendency is similar in the case of writers of original literary works to be adapted to cinema, only that the figures are always lower: a starting 5.2% (accounting for one single case within the low number of films produced in the immediate postwar years), a peak in 1976–80 (9%), and 1.6% in 2001–05.

[158] Lauzen (2006) found no difference between the data from 1998 and 2005 as far as women's overall employment in the five key positions is concerned; as to the individual positions, it is only the role of producer where women made a progress. The Danish statistics reveal a marked imbalance in all Top 5 positions. The number of women in positions of influence in the world of Danish feature films decreased between 1992 and 2002, and men outnumber women even as editors (Knudsen & Rowley 2004). Evans (2008) also registered a decrease of women directors' participation in her respective time-frame 2003–07.

told?", or who is giving the creative input. I have not yet discussed, however, the major person in film-making in the *auteur system*:[159] the director. The next section is devoted to the emergence of women directors in Hungary and the overview of their artistic output.

III.3 Women directors representing women

The first woman to direct full-length films, Éva Zsurzs started her career in the early 1960s.[160] For the most part Zsurzs produced TV-adaptations based on the novels of classical Hungarian writers; these films were subsequently shown in cinemas as well. Since she never worked on an *auteur film,* an autonomous project of her own, and since she originally produced television films, Zsurzs's oeuvre has little relevance from the perspective of female feature filmmakers' artistic output. The first Hungarian female director of major feature films is Márta Mészáros, and most probably, her oeuvre is also the most significant from my perspective. Mészáros made her first film in 1968 and earned international recognition since.[161]

Another two women directors, Lívia Gyarmati and Judit Elek, made their debut as feature film directors in 1969, and after this date at least one new woman director turned up in each 5-year period, but most of the time two or three new names showed up (and, in one single case, four new names). This gradual growth may sound promising in itself—but this single factor is to be supplemented with some others. When expressed in percentages, the number is still very low

[159] See *Appendix 1.*

[160] Before Zsurzs, Lia Simonyi made documentary and short films between 1939–53, after which date Simonyi immigrated to, and continued to work in, Switzerland (Cunningham 2004:113).

[161] As i have already noted, much of the business within filmmaking is conducted through networking; but from the testimony of Lili Surányi it seems that in the early days even solid social capital were too little to make it feasible for a woman to become a director, or even make it thinkable that she would become one. "When, in 1957 a townsman of mine was appointed director of the national film studios, i was there the following day. He indeed asked me what kind of job i would want to take. 'I wanna direct!' Back then it sounded like a foolish idea. A female director? … Even female assistant directors were hard to find back then" (Surányi 2004). In the second part of Márta Mészáros' biographical tetralogy (*Diary for my Lovers*, 1987) where she recounts how she was patronized at the entrance exam at the Budapest Film School and how she finally got in the Moscow Film Academy, Mészáros too evidences how entrenched perceptions, rather than insitutional obstacles were blocking her way.

even in the two periods that saw the highest numbers of women directors: women comprised ca. 11% of all feature film directors in the period 1976–80 (i.e., 12 films out of the total 110 were directed by a woman), and 14–17% between 1991–95 (12 films out of a total of 85 with individual women directors, 15 films with individual and co-directors). The most recent period block (2001–05) certainly does not show an upward tendency: 8 out of the 119 movies had women directors (~6.7%).[162]

What needs to be added to the emergence of new names is that most of them disappear after having made one or two films, and none of them have become household names or have created an extensive oeuvre comparable in quantity to that of Márta Mészáros. Existing but small-size female oeuvres have been a frequent occurrence both historically and today. Mészáros has been probably the most productive woman filmmaker not only in Hungary but in the Central-European region: she is rare among women directors in being able to claim a forty-year directorial achievement. After Mészáros with her 21 feature films up to 2005, comes Lívia Gyarmathy (8 films), Éva Zsurzs (6), Judit Elek (5) and Györgyi Szalai (5).[163] There is, however, another way in which women directors do influence women's participation in filmmaking: they tend to bring further women into various positions. As my count revealed, many of these directors are more likely to work with female (script)writers, story editors, editors, advisors, etc., than their male colleagues.[164]

Relying only on empirical observations instead of any statistical date or systematic content-oriented survey, Dina Iordanova states that

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[162] For the sake of comparison: these figures seem to surpass the Hollywood account where the historical high of 11% was registered in 2000, and the records for 2004 and 2005 are 5% and 7%, but it is below the Danish average of 20% between 1992–2002.

[163] The female film directors that Iordanova mentions in her chapter overviewing "Women's Cinema, Women's Concerns" in East Central Europe (Iordanova 2003:119–42), or Hollywood's relevant women directors named in Sharon Krum's article (Krum 2006) all have relatively short filmographies.

[164] Martha Lauzen's survey also clearly showed that having women working behind-the-scenes on a film (as producers, directors, screenwriters, etc.) will bring more female characters on screen. Lauzen found it a statistically significant and consistent finding over the years (Lauzen 2002).

> State socialism maintained elaborate policies designed to secure gender equality. This, however, did not significantly change the situation of women in filmmaking, who were traditionally marginalized and had fewer chances to become directors. Still, women were actively involved in filmmaking in various other capacities. Despite their limited number, female directors managed to make films addressing all the major women's concerns. (Iordanova 2003:119)

The phrase "all the major women's concerns" sounds somewhat dislocated and uncontextualized, and thus universalist and ahistoric. Therefore, a conscious effort to avoid "appropriating 'second world' realities by 'first world' formulations" (c.f. Portuges 2003:9) necessitates specifying what those major concerns might be and what women's cinema might mean. Feminist film theorists' opinions vary whether all three following criteria has to be fulfilled for a film to be so qualified: women's cinema refers to films made by women, dealing with women, and made for women. Whereas the fact if a film is "made by a woman" or "deals with women" is easy to tell, whether it is "made for women" will turn on the structure of address proffered in the film.[165] According to some, the structure of address might prove to be more important than the "positive" or "negative" portrayal that the "dealing with women" criterion emphasizes: when a film is "made for women" it will address the viewer as female, irrespective of the viewer's actual gender, and will address this spectator as *a* woman, and not as Woman (de Lauretis, quoted in Chaudhuri 68). Furthermore, women's cinema shows women as social subjects, and it does so by recognizing differences among women. In doing so, the narratives acted out on the screen will be more likely to be recognized from the perspective of women's "real life"—where "real life" is not understood as any normative term but as a spectrum of socially located lived experiences, as opposed to fantasmatic idealizations male creators often evoke. Subject-matters related to this "reality"—e.g., girls growing up in a sexist environment, mother-daughter relationship, women's performance in the public world, female friendship or partnership, the issues faced by aging women—may contribute to address and engage women as social subjects. "Women's cinema" consciously does not photograph the female body as a site of erotic spectacle.

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[165] I introduced the importance of various modes of address in mediating the reception of cultural texts in I.3.iii.

Earlier on i have already indicated that Márta Mészáros is perhaps the most significant figure from the Hungarian motion picture scene from my present perspective. After her debut as a documentary film-maker, Mészáros took to directing feature films in 1968. Borrowing the words of Barbara Quart commenting on women directors' preference for female characters, Márta Mészáros too, with her distinctly women-centered films, has cleared up a space for women (Quart 1988:6). Both for the thematic concerns and stylistic qualities of her films, she soon earned the attention and recognition of feminist film critics outside Hungary—much less so, however, in her home country.[166] The protagonists of her early films are always classed subjects, often with a working-class background. The women have their own history and situation, and their own case to tackle. Fundamentally, they seek to define their own identity for themselves, gain recognition and a degree of privacy, and embark on a life track that they too set for themselves against the compelling social conditions they live in. Their "cases" often pertain to issues of reproduction such as adoption (both from the perspective of adoptive children and prospective parents), childlessness, surrogate motherhood, the act of childbirth. Mészáros's other concerns include such lesser discussed aspects of women's lives as middle-age womanhood, escape from prescribed but grievously limiting life patterns, and surmounting distressing or destructive partnerships. As the potentially abusive nature of such relationships is revealed, Mészáros's films also direct attention to the quality of male-female relationships. Her female characters are often described as stubborn and strong-willed, and the personalities of these figures interest the viewer because they act "as if women's equality existed, not only in theory but in practice" (E. Magori, quoted in Portuges 1993:55). The absence of the controlling male gaze in her movies is partly an issue of film style and film text but it is manifested in the plot as well. The female body might be imaged but is not fetishized, and men are generally displaced inasmuch as

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[166] Laura Hollósi (2001) analyzed the critical reception, up to 1987, of Mészáros's award-winning films, highlighting Hungarian critics' incomprehension as well as occasional misogyny or sexism.

they never become central characters.[167] Only women can occupy the central role in these narratives, as Jan Nowicki, Mészáros's husband and standard male actor, too, had to recognize (Nowicki, quoted in Portuges 141). Mészáros's women are presented as truly not dependent on men's advances: they are repeatedly shown as they struggle with, and refuse, such unwanted attention (*The Girl,* 1968; *Binding Sentiments,* 1968; *Nine Months*, 1976*)*. The displacement of men is counterpoised with an exploration of female solidarity and scenarios of intense relationship between women. In Dina Iordanova's account, in films like *Adoption* (1975), Mészáros "raises the relationship of the two women above any heterosexual interests. […] The male gaze is pushed back by an invisible wall of self-sufficiency and solidarity. The women's union is impenetrable since it is legitimized from within" (139–40).

Just as the display of the two women's bonding is not extroverted, lyric imagery or visual effects bringing in sentimentality are generally avoided, and the low-key plotlines decline dramaturgic climaxes. Accordingly, the stories often have an open ending as the director withholds the spectator's wish for a harmonious closure that would reward the heroine's perseverance. What is offered are non-spectacular minor victories mostly involving some kind of an uncompromising decision or move on the part of the protagonist who then proves unwilling to acquiesce in the prevalent gender regime (*Riddance*, 1973), or finally refuses a psychologically abusive love relationship (*Adoption, Nine Months*). Laura Hollósi attempted to clarify the nature of Mészáros's "different kind of sensitivity"[168] as it informs her approach to her protagonists and their stories (2000:78–86). To do this, Hollósi compared Mészáros' *The Girl* and *The Princess* (1982), another feature film made by a Hungarian male director, Pál Erdőss. Both films deal with the same subject-matter (the identity search of a parentless young woman); both are the first full-length pieces of their directors, and both incorporate documentary techniques Hollósi demonstrates

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[167] This generally holds true for Mészáros's oeuvre, except for *Just Like at Home* (1978, where the male protagonist makes a genuine friendship with a little girl) and the more recent *The Unburied Dead* (2004), a film about Imre Nagy, a major figure of recent Hungarian history.
[168] This is a trope Mészáros often employs to describe her own practice when demarcating it from feminist filmmaking as a politically driven practice (see Portuges 1993:9, Hollósi 2001:38).

how the male director, Erdős, has a strong tendency to fall back on much-repeated images of women and an objectifying way of filming his protagonist, even if he took up a specifically woman-related, and relatively daring, subject.

In Catherine Portuges's view, some features of Mészáros's motion pictures render them an East European variant of the contentious category of "women's cinema". One is the director's joint discussion of gender issues and class relations (whereby she also challenges the official mythology of the "classless society"; Cunningham 2004:125). Mészáros herself admits her lesser interest in the problems intellectual women may have had at the time when she made her debut as a director. Intellectuals usually have better financial and social standing and, consequently, wider choices, whereas the life of many other women in 1970s Hungary seemed to her to have been more constrained by the particular social circumstances (Mihancsik 1999:16). Another such feature is a re-reading, in her *Diary*-tetralogy (four films made between 1982–1999), of official versions of history through the lens of autobiographical experience (Portuges 2003:60, 127). A further distinct touch in Mészáros's movies is women's attitude toward heterosexual love characterized by an unstated tolerance for human imperfections (i.e., the insufficiencies, immaturity, or even brutality of one's male companions) and the concomitant consent to keep going with difficult situations (Portuges, 50).[169] Hungarian social scientist Mária Adamik problematized similar dynamics within male-female relations and women's frequent resignation to an unmerited bad treatment, revealing how this all-forgiving female position is that of the mother and not that of the equal companion and sexual partner (Adamik 1994:151).

Critically observing various deficiencies of a patriarchal order, Mészáros is apt and very sharp in registering the above context-specific features shaping the relationships between the sexes. When confronted with the allegedly negative portrayal of her male protagonists, Mészáros explains: "I

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[169] In II.3.i, i have already referred to the similar observations of Ivan and Nancy Volgyes concerning male-female relations in Hungary in the 1970s: from the act of going to the marriage registrar "the young women as *wives* [are] expected to serve and love their husbands, in spite of all the man's failings" (1977:125).

never depicted any of my male characters negatively, i merely showed how they think or react due to their hundred year-old habits". Or, when asked about the "latent lesbianism" in her pieces, she elucidates why women's interaction as depicted by herself comes across as lesbianish: it is because, for a long time, films have been only made by men to whom these gestures are unknown and therefore invisible (Mészáros, quoted in Hollósi 34, 36). At various occasions, she expressed her skepticism towards feminism and said how she sees no contradiction between her ambivalence about feminism and the ostensible women-focus in her praxis and her undeniably activist stance. Mészáros expresses her stance in statements like the following: "[o]bviously, we must fight to change all this" (i.e., women's problems related to work, family, school, and children), or "what I want to work for is to help women become conscious of their being […] to make them aware of their own female personalities" (Mészáros, quoted in Portuges 131–33). A similar point she spells out in greater detail in connection with her film *The Girl*:

> What intrigued me is that this girl is a full-fledged individual who will never impose herself on anyone, because she is autonomous, mature and, most of all, sincere to herself […] Her story leads up to the point when she performs the first determined act of her life and starts recognizing her own self. And I think today a woman can only be someone if she has her own self. She might attain it in being a great mother or housewife, being a great secretary or being good at any other job—what's important is that she first have an idea about her own self, and only then go out to choose a partner and try to find ways to live with another person. (Mészáros, quoted in Hollósi 2000:85)

This comment can serve as a useful reminder of practically the same issue that Eszter Babarczy's argument (2000) was capturing, and which i already addressed in I.1. There i introduced Babarczy's inquiry about the lack of any self-structured female identity in contemporary Hungarian society as a motive prompting my own investigation. As Babarczy sees, for many women, even in intellectual circles, to be a woman simply means the adoption of the reproductive role, without any female identity or interior discourse attached (Babarczy, 117).

These are all concerns that certainly qualify as feminist issues of the "her and now", and the authors writing more extensively about Mészáros do note that her films "exemplify the best qualities of international women's cinema" (Portuges 2003:8), despite the director's refusal to be

characterized as a feminist film-maker. Mészáros's reason for this refusal is that this label have been applied to, and by, Western products and producers, and therefore may have little explanatory value in describing different social and cultural arrangements (Portuges, 151). It is no accident then that Western reviewers sometimes note that Mészáros handles some of her issues with a different attitude than what is usually rehearsed within "international women's cinema". Laura Hollósi quotes Dutch feminist critics' reproof about the purportedly exaggerated attention Mészáros allots for male characters (Hollósi 2001:37). But it remains a question whether some other instances where Mészáros's treatment of some other subject-matters (to be discussed below) appears to be questionable from a feminist perspective are further idiosyncrasies of the director or the specific locale she depicts, or the signs of a change in her artistic approach, or consequences of her disregard for, and unfamiliarity with, feminism as a *structural critique.*

While feminist film critics duly welcomed Mészáros directorial debut, there is little substantial international discussion going on about her more recent output. Some reviewers, however, noted that, after an initial interest in portraying a fictionalized version of reality in a documentary manner, in some of her later films, Mészáros's presentation of her material became "as far removed from documentary as one can get" (Horton 1999a), and that these films "are barely distinguishable from the lamentable sexism of their male colleagues" (Horton 1999b). Horton's example is *Daughters of Luck* from 1998 where Mészáros offers an idyllic sexual fantasy in portraying prostitution as an empowering and even liberating profession. As to pictorial execution, "the camera hovers lecherously over [the protagonist's] naked body and savors her sensuality" (ibid.). The reviewer remarks how much Meszaros' style has changed over the years. In Gábor Gelencsér's view, Mészáros's quasi-realist psychological dramas were followed, from the late-1970s on, by psychologizing melodramas where a dramatic structure has subdued the documentary style (Gelencsér 2001). As a change of filmstyle, over-emotional scenes or dream sequences appeared, accompanied with expressive music. Having given up the documentary tone,

162

the unpolished dialogues came across plainly awkward in these psychological dramas of (*The Heiresses*, *Fetus*).

In my view, this stylistic shift is reflected in the way Mészáros filmed reproduction-related subject matters over time. In early films like *Adoption,* childlessness, childbearing, or other types of familial relations for that matter, are not viewed from the perspective of a heteronormative social order—on the contrary, they come across as contingencies that the individual might want to change. As a consequence, issues of motherhood, pregnancy, or childlessness as well as partnership are portrayed in a rigorously unsentimental tone (Waller 1994:1253), and are often resolved in atypical ways as far as the expectations of heteronormativity are concerned. In films from a later period (*The Heiresses,* 1980; *Fetus,* 1993; and *Diary for my Children*, 1982) childless or child-seeking women, and non-natural mothers are pictured with a certain aversion. Although Mészáros tackles multi-layered problems in these three films;[170] this character comes across as a sign-like negative image in them, recalling the sexist stereotypes of the same heteronormative order that Mészáros so boldly challenged earlier. Other than given a pathologizing and demonizing portrayal (in *Fetus*),[171] the childless woman is also a representative of ill-used "worldly" power in all three films (political power, higher social standing, or wealth, inherited or acquired through marriage), while the natural mother is "always-already" morally superior. The overall comportment of the non-natural mother or the woman seeking a surrogate mother is pitted against the self-contained femininity of the natural mother.[172] When Mészáros depicts the

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[170] In *Fetus* the class difference between the protagonists sets the terms of the power relations; in *The Heiresses*, a film set in the pre-war and war periods, power relations are further complicated with the natural mother's Jewish origin; and *Diary for my Children* offers a thorough analysis of the Stalinist years in Hungary where the relation between the orphaned child and the adopting relative is only a subtext.

[171] In this portrayal i saw no attempt to explore and expose why and how the pressures of a hegemonic, family-centered patriarchal order might lead to psychological disorders in childless women.

[172] Marguerite Waller, while acknowledging the imbalance in portraying the two protagonists, gives a more positive reading of the film inasmuch it reveals the several limitations people take on through the habit of relating to each other only via identification and objectification. The author also values the radical story offered: "the creation of new life—of two women giving birth to each other out of a messy mixture of bad motives, weaknesses, and cultural and economic differences" (Waller 1994:1254).

relation between them, any budding female solidarity or genuine bonding is violently crushed as the moments of closeness are repeatedly withdrawn and betrayed.

Turning now to the thematic preoccupations of other women directors who can boast with at least a several-item long oeuvre, it is easy to conclude that operating with the female perspective and drawing on female experience is neither as self-evident, nor as frequent a subject choice with other Hungarian women directors as it is with Mészáros.[173] Judit Elek exhibits an interest in women-related subject-matters as three out of her five films focus on carefully captured female characters: an old woman (*The Lady from Constantinople*, 1969), an adolescent girl (*Awakening*, 1994), and the literary-historically famous Júlia Szendrey (*Maria's Day*, 1983).[174] Ibolya Fekete is certainly interested in gender-related analysis but because she does understand women, as she says, she is more interested to interrogate the motives behind men's actions, as those are less known to her (Fekete, quoted in Iordanova 2003:124). Iordanova interprets Fekete's position "as another variation of the reserved stance on feminism that East Central European female film-makers have taken"; one can, however, also relate it to Kaja Silvermann's (1992) perspective on male subjectivity as represented in films: the renegotiation of masculinity on the cinema screen would also signal the changes in how a society experiences and structures gender relations.

Although the narrator is a young woman in Lívia Gyarmathy's first film, the satirical comedy *Do you Know "Sunday-Monday"?* (1969), the narrator's gender does not have a visible impact on the plot itself. Her later films lack even such an indirect focus until, in *The Rapture of Deceit* (1992), we meet female heroines again. As Gyarmathy shows them, these women do not get ruined by their job- and partner-related problems but grew stronger as they find their way out of their respective crises.

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[173] This is not to say, however, that some women directors do not have their own special interests. In Ildikó Szabó's and Edit Kőszegi's case it is the plight of the Roma people in Hungary; for Orsolya Székely it is spirituality in the 20th century, and for Diana Groó it is Jewish identity.

[174] Júlia Szendrey (1828–68) was the wife (and later the ignominious widow) of the short-lived revolutionary-romantic poet Sándor Petőfi (1823-49), sometimes referred to as a Hungarian George Sand for her independent spirits and at times masculine dressing style (Schöpflin 1930).

Judit Ember's interest drives her to social issues in general. In *Mistletoes* (1978), a documentary-based fiction film, Ember follows up the overall recovery of the protagonist of one of her earlier documentaries, a suicidal young woman. I do not consider further pieces of her oeuvre because they are documentaries or films produced for television. The same applies in Mária Sós's case: most of her films are TV-productions or documentaries. From among her few features, *The Unhappy Hat* (1980) focuses on three divorcees around thirty, their friendship, their solitude, their attempts at finding a partner, and the ever more drastic rejections they are to face. Ildikó Szabó's *Bitches* (1995) focuses on how three different relationships or marriages break up, and passes a shattering judgment over the institution of marriage and domineering men. Krisztina Deák presents a mother's search for her abandoned daughter in her first feature film, *The Book of Esther* (1990); while in *Jadviga's Pillow* (2000), a film based on a recent Hungarian bestseller, the diverging routes of sexuality and affection are explored. There is a woman protagonist in both features Zsuzsa Böszörményi has made so far, and in the latter one (*Guarded Secrets*, 2004) the director revisits the topic of abandoned children's quest for their real parents and that of surrogate *versus* natural motherhood.

My overview of women director's subject choices and their treatment of the chosen subjects shows that the emergence of women directors—with the exception of Márta Mészáros—only had a moderate impact on women's representation in Hungarian cinema. Women directors typically have a short oeuvre as far as their feature film production is concerned. From the perspective of an analysis indebted to the concerns of feminist film theory, the cinematic treatment of their material seems uneven at best.

If so, the tendency that i see of an overall more approvable nature of women's cinematic representation in the state-socialist period than both in contemporaneous mainstream Anglo-Saxon movie (as rated in feminist film criticism) and in most recent Hungarian film production is not grounded exclusively in a moderately growing number of women in key positions within the

film-making process. The hypothesis itself, however, is backed by statements of Dina Iordanova and Andrew Horton. Iordanova remarks that in a great number of Hungarian films from the state-socialist period, women figures were neither exclusively sexualized objects nor uniform sketchy depictions, and that this sort of portrayal has been on the decrease since 1989 (Iordanova, 141). Horton reminds of the overall analytical and psychologizing trend in Central European film from which one would expect subtle reflections on the female condition as well. On the contrary, recent films from the region develop a number of gender motifs and themes in an astonishingly unpalatable manner while the thin characterization reduces women figures to infantilized or purely physical beings (Horton 1999b). Iordanova also asserts that "some of the finest portrayals of women in East Central European cinema have come from male directors who, in most cases, are not explicitly concerned with feminist ideology" (Iordanova, 125). The rest of my corpus analysis, following the "decades approach", will shed light on such instances and their status or relevance within the corpus.

III.4 Woman represented in Hungarian film production: an overview of film content and film text

III.4.i Producing new role models: the "production movies" of the 1950s

As i have already noted above, the short term between 1949 and 1953 undoubtedly exemplified Socialist Realist cultural production with its leading genre the "production movie". A definitive expectation of cultural politics, formulated around 1949–51, brought forth the term "production film" (and novel). It ordained that novels and films, if their narrative took place in the present, had to set their story in the environment of socialist production.[175]

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[175] During this time span 17 out of a total 29 films could be characterized as "production movies" (Báthory 1990:55).

I have already referred to how films are viewed as bearers of ideology for their capacity to present a set of ideas and beliefs as unquestionably held by individuals or groups; hence film's relevance for officers of cultural policy—as well as critics of representation. The baldly ideological nature of production movies can be comprehended from this angle: the capacity of film to legitimate the ideas and beliefs of a dominant social group made film a potent tool of ingraining the novel ideology. In an attempt to replace a long-standing bourgeois ideology and culture, these cultural products had to advocate, and present as the naturalized *status quo*, a new social order. Iván Forgács formulates a similar point: "Films had to depict what life ought to become like. [They] reflect a peculiar development pattern and world view. […] And the manipulative function simply resides in the fact that those in power "help" recognize what is new" (Forgács 1999:52).[176]

Such instrumentalization of movies was likely to introduce "new ways of" the instrumentalization of woman as sign too. As Joanna Goven described, within the framework of the social transformation, women were already symbolically linked to the state as its agents through the women-favoring benefits the state guaranteed when recruiting female work force (Goven 1993:21, 66). Bearing this in mind, it comes as no surprise that the outstanding examples of political re-education in the production movies are often women who have just gained recognition as social subjects. As a result, the "production movies" of the 1950s feature a number of female protagonists who enter the plot **in their own right**, i.e., not on the side of a man (husband, father or fiancé, etc.).[177] *A Woman Finds Her Way*, released in 1949, centers on how the middle-class heroine finds her way to the new system, while in the suggestively titled first production movie, *Mrs. Taylor* (1949), the titular character solves a near-insurmountable production-related problem and salvages a multiply dysfunctional factory workshop by creating the basic conditions for operation in a pre-industrial setting. This approach to the representation

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[176] For more on the relation of propaganda and the inauguration of a new set of values, see Ellul 1965, and also Schadt 2005a:70 for the functioning of the Hungarian party state.

[177] Even so, in a study on the treatment of female characters in production movies, Eszter Kulcsár (2005) demonstrates that women were still generally under-represented both among workers and in professional or political leadership positions.

of women does not in itself move away from the practice that turns versatile and complex beings (wom*en*) into a signifier denoting a set of fixed meanings (here, the herald of a coming era, the heroine of the new social order, etc.). The image, however, is markedly different from the ones in circulation in the melodramas and romance-comedies of the pre-war era. The official representation of women, conveyed by these offerings, was not a passive one and was "certainly distinct from some of the conventional stereotypes found in the West" (Molyneux 1981:189). Production movies thus operate with "images of women" too, but they do not reduce women's mental and other capabilities.[178] On the contrary, these creatures appear to be in control of their own life, which in itself is an empowering act.[179] Nevertheless, this is also a moment where another tool of feminist film criticism, the strategy of "reading against the grain", leads to a more differentiated reading.   This text-based approach to films helps to reveal ideological contradictions—absences and omissions that are an indication of what the dominant ideology seeks to repress, contain or marginalize (Kotsopoulos 2001)—, and to bring to the surface conflicts between multiple discourses. In relation to the "reformed" image of woman in the production movies of the 1950s, such reading strategy unmasks how female protagonists may have entered the film narrative independent of an obligatory male partner but how, at the same time, their more abstract guiding figure or beneficactor became the party and the state instead. In the majority of these films, it is the party state who assisted in bringing women to the relatively authoritative positions where they find themselves. In addition, because the real concern is not with how these social subjects come into age(ncy) and emerge from subordination, but with the implementation of the new myth, the women figures lose their individuality, and feature as agents

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[178] This difference is important because it is exactly the systematical perpetuation of an image of female inferiority that Molly Haskell identified as one facet of the propaganda nature of the American movie business (Haskell [1975] 1987:1–2).

[179] Iván Forgács makes a similar remark concerning the representation of working class people in these films as another set of characters that had earned little significant cinematic attention earlier on: the "new mythos" (as Forgács refers to society's new ideological "reality") was very keen on the principles of equality and community. "In this respect these films do not stand for antidemocratic values. […] The heroes of these stories are the working people who were held in very little social esteem beforehand" (Forgács 1999).

of society's project only. Also, these female protagonists act in a strongly hierarchized and patriarchal society (Kulcsár 2005).[180] Given the principle of collectivity, people were not to be granted ample attention as individuals anyhow, only as members of the collective or role models. When it comes to moments of private life—in *Catherine's Marriage* (1950)*, Mrs. Taylor, Honour and Glory* (1951), for instance—most of the problems that occur in a marital setting are related to the unequal levels the partners reached in their work performance or in their different attitudes to the party directives (Rainer & Kresalek 1990). Within these conflicts, traditional gender hierarchy is sometimes toppled over; one can witness a complete gender-role reversal in *Walking to Heaven* (1959). In this narrative it is the man who is to find a way to combine work and love, he is the one who eventually lowers his ambitions for the sake of the equally ambitious female partner—and so for the romance to succeed. Beside the newly invented sign, the herald of a coming era, we can find a reincarnation of old-fashioned female traits fused into a new cast. One such figure is the "immaculately pure factory girl" in *The Iron Flower* (1958)*,* compelled to choose between a penniless loser to whom she is genuinely attracted, or the advances of her elderly boss who might also help start up her career. The protagonist Vera is trapped in a typical diegetic role of women characters: through her figure, the competing male characters express *their* relationship to each other.

Independent female characters may enter the plot in their own right in these films, but the romantic sub-plot still remains an indispensable ingredient providing the adequate happy ending for a long time. As feminist critics pointed out, such closure, when the narrative ends with **reinstating patriarchal order** through fulfilled love, is a common vehicle of ideology in other narrative genres as well. In such denouement, a woman character who broke free from her mere sign-function and gained some agency is **returned to her place,** so that order is restored to the world: she gets married, or returns to her abandoned husband, or is in some other way

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[180] The patriarchal nature of the society comes through attitudinal factors: stereotypical—although often corrected—views about women's incapability; the habitude of ordering around women, disregarding their right or ability to self-government; and an unquestioned division of household labor (Kulcsár, ibid.).

recuperated into the male/female bond, eventually accepting the normative female role centering on heterosexual courtship (Kuhn 1994:34).[181] In the light-hearted Hungarian comedy *2x2 Are Sometimes 5* (1954) the viewer witnesses one such instance of reinstating the male/female bond as follows: the maths-teaching scholarly maiden was in venomous professional competition with a colleague until they consolidated their relationship and finally became lovers. In *A Glas of Beer* (1955) the love-affair is framed by the clash of two worldviews and life-styles: one is represented by the "politically immature", fun-seeking neighborhood youth[182] (Juli, the heroine, among them), the other is embodied by their earnest and socially well-adjusted peers (including Marci, the amorous lad). Marci is the emblem of officially desirable responsible conduct—he is a stakhanovite finding pleasure in modest leisure-time activities like going for a row and having brunch with his colleagues. Because of his patriarchal masculinity and rigid political stance, Marci has rigorous expectations toward the otherwise devoted Juli. The oppressive nature of these expectations is highlighted even by his friends warning him about his sternness. In fact, the young man hardly knows Juli, he has been mainly fantasizing about their budding love during his one-year long military service, during which Juli started to work as a factory girl to gain independence from her suffocating home surroundings. When Marci is permitted to come home for a week-end, and is faced with Juli's carefree manners, he exclaims with disbelief and disappointment: "So that's what you are like!" Juli is only promised to be pardoned if she discontinues her prior enjoyments (nightly dancing and drinking a glass of beer in the local beer garden) and gives up the dubious company she had been associating with. The closure, however, is not unambiguously resolved. Marci does break up with Juli, but when, nevertheless, she comes to say good-bye to the train taking Marci back to the barracks, he gives her his new contact address in the very last moment before the train pulls out from the station.

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[181] This sort of recuperative act was ideologically necessitated in the "women's films" produced in Hollywood in the 1930-40s for the mass entertainment of female audiences to bridge the "irreconcilable gap between the patriarchal ideology at work in these films and female desires expressed in them" (Chaudhuri 2006:40).

[182] Inquiries into such settings came with the international film style of neorealism.

As opposed to such recuperative acts, **undecided closures** or other sorts of **narrative ruptures** may challenge the self-evidence and omnipotence of patriarchal order. Open endings, even if they only offer a mere escape from the delusions and grievances of domestic life without a guarantee that the heroine will find a satisfactory solution, contain a great degree of courage, and project that she might have her way even outside the frame of **compulsory heterosexual coupling**. In the entire decade, films with such an undecided, open closure—when the heroine "leaves the house with a suitcase in her hand and wants to live her own life from this time on" (Varga 1999:368, on *Tale on the 12 Points,* 1956)—do occur but are not very frequent.

As feminist film analysis demonstrated, the restoration of the status quo can also be achieved through **punishing** the woman for her social transgression: the feisty, independent female will eventually commit suicide or be murdered, end up mad, outlawed or isolated, and thus will come across, within usually male-focused film narratives, as a "traumatic presence which must be negated" (Chaudhuri 2006:28). Or, in the slightest, she is just not winning her case, and squarely loses. I have found no example of such punishing mechanism in Hungarian films made in the 1950s. These pieces render women relatively independent and strong (still with the qualification, however, that individualism and a genuine interest in the individual was not welcome at the time), and they do so without punishing them for it. In *Merry-Go-Round* the agentic female protagonist even **wins** her case: she manages to leave her paralyzingly traditional family and enters in a love relationship she chooses herself.

Erring women can be recuperated **at the level of the image** as well: female figures whose actions may pose a threat are frequently photographed in a way that will satisfy the male gaze and turn their body into a fetish (Kuhn 1994:89).[183] I have already discussed in II.3.i how the

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[183] The concept of fetishism in relation with the operation of the film text was introduced by Laura Mulvey. In *Fetishism and Curiosity.*drawing on Freud, Mulvey defines fetishism as a mechanism that "ascribes excessive value to objects considered to be valuelesss by common consensus", and identifies the same mechanism on the cinema screen where woman as erotic spectacle becomes the perfect fetish: her body is eroticized and the camera fetishistically isolates its fragments (Mulvey 1996:2).

propriety of "socialist moral" subdued, especially in the 1950s, any emphasis on feminine allure displayed as self-decoration (Joó 2005:50), and emphasized modesty, functionality, and cleanliness instead, demonizing those who behaved and presented themselves otherwise (Goven 1993b:71–72), not failing to also condemn the "luxury woman", the central figure in pre-war films (38). In her study on female images in the production movies, Eszter Kulcsár (2005) registers that female protagonists generally look pretty in these films, but calls these figures asexual and undesirable. I would rather say that while these characters are not imaged as (over-)sexualized figures, within their narrative world they apparently do not lack sex-appeal. Kulcsár herself dwells on the example of *Mrs. Taylor* and the many romantic subplots in her brigade, including *Mrs. Taylor's* own courtship with the fiancé of a co-worker (for the sake of whom she does decorate herself.) Not disputing the overall prudishness of production movies, i suspect that Kulcsár equates the idea of a sexual being with the practice of imaging a person with attributes of conventional, and perhaps over-accentuated, sex-appeal.[184]

Nevertheless, the degree of prudishness and the devaluation of sexuality which characterized official "communist ethics"[185] might explain why actresses were not photographed in a sexually objectifying way in the period in question. The only related example Varga & Kresalek mention in their study concentrating on the decade is the bar singer in *Tale on the 12 Points* whom they identify as the single female protagonist who moves around and sings in a "truly lecherous and frivolous" manner (Varga & Kresalek 1995:369).

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[184] Throughout her text—admittedly written from a feminist perspective—Kulcsár makes statements about a femininity that died out in the films of the 1950s, without, however, defining what she means by "femininity". I suspect again that, at these points of her discussion, the author unreflectedly reclaims "femininity" (glamour and well-displayed sexual allure) as conveyed in mainstream visual culture.

[185] This ethics is expressed in a 1967 issue of the weekly *Ország-Világ* as "'our women' have nothing to do with sex, they do not participate in filthy erotic games, they do not try to snare men" (February 15). Indeed, in an interview with the Czechoslovakian beauty queen, she turns down the question inquiring about her love life with a laconic "nincs" (approx. 'I haven't got any' / 'no such thing'). Sexuality seems to only surface in reports about foreign (i.e., Western) people on the pages of this magazine. (Data is retrieved from a research-based term paper of mine submitted for the course "Gender, the State, and the Politics of Reproduction", Central European University, Budapest, 2001.)

III.4.ii The 1960s: Historical parables and models for the present

Hungarian films of the **1960s** explored the conflictual relationship between those on power and the individual insistent on his moral autonomy (Kovács 1988:7, Fazekas 2000), often highlighting the historical dimensions of such conflict situations, which makes this trend in filmmaking an indispensable chapter in Hungary's cultural history (Csala 1999). The typical genre of these deliberations was moral drama or historical parable, and the typical protagonist was the alert intellectual keen to change his circumstances (Varga 2001). The private sphere, if it was addressed at all, was not supposed to be presented for its own sake, it had to function as the counterpoint of public actions or political oppression, or reflect the political ambience as the director felt it (Kovács 1990:5). As my usage of the generic "he" a couple of lines above suggests, female characters, not quite grown out yet of a sign-like and sketchy cinematic existence, had little chance to get in the centre of the thorough analyses of pressing moral decisions or historical exigencies. Against this backdrop, the debut of Márta Mészáros in 1968 with films centering on working class heroines preoccupied with their private matters and identity search, as well as some male directors who gave substantial attention to female figures or typically female experiences, stand out.

I have already recorded Mészáros's resistance to any feminist identification despite her clearly feminist perspectives on a number of issues. With her oeuvre, and especially the early pieces, Mészáros worked on the redefinition of female identities outside framed images of woman. When talking about women's representation in Hungarian filmmaking, she noted that, except for Zoltán Fábri and Félix Máriássy, no male directors have created really good female characters (Mihancsik 1999:17). _Mrs. Taylor,_ featuring the problem-solving adept factory woman, and the open ending _A Glass of Beer_ which i have briefly discussed above were both directed by Máriássy. Film historians and critics also noted how Máriássy broke away from the drivels of pre-war commercial cinema and, instead, preferred dwelling on non-dramatic moments, and created

lifelike figures, for instance the "cool", pert, man-seeking Juli in *A Glass of Beer*, the opening

pictures of which feature the roaring cheerfulness of Juli and her girlfriend (Bíró 1962:33).[186]

Zoltán Fábri directed films interrogating social and historical situations. In some of his films (e.g.,

Hungarians (1978) or *Bálint Fábián Meets God* (1980), he also comments on the status of women in

traditional Hungarian society through "astonishingly powerful but bleak portrayals of Hungarian

rural life, replete with examples of [...] the marginalized position of women" (Cunningham

2004:130). He is the director of *Merry-Go-Round*, a film exemplifying a young woman's modest

victory over her binding social environment, and of *Anna* (1958), a film adaptation of a 1926

novel about the defiled and abused maidservant who, as a revenge and, metaphorically, an outcry

against early-20th century social and political conditions, murders her master and mistress.

From among the films of further male directors, Tamás Fejér's *Cosy Cottage* from 1962 could be

regarded as a pre-figuration, with a milder ending, of Dušan Makavejev's 1981 *Montenegro*.[187] Both

films capture a housewife and her dreary life beside a professional husband and the moment

when she realizes, after an unexpected romance, how unbearably empty her life is. The wife in

Tamás Fejér's film is a unique character inasmuch as "the neurotic housewife is not the type of

female character encountered in East Central European cinema [...] the protagonists of these

films are always working women—be it in professional or lay occupations. It is almost impossible

to find films about the loneliness of the woman confined to the home" (Iordanova 136). As in *A*

Cosy Cottage, the boldest possibility to "win" for female protagonists leaving their unhappy and

disabling relationships to find their own way is the kind of re-occurring open closure i have

already introduced. Apart from resorting to the means of open closure, *Men Are Different* (1966)

and *Woman at the Helm* (1962) also problematize the moral double standard, and the latter defies

limiting female role models. The main character here, a divorcee, is an otherwise exemplary

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[186] By contrast, some other characters of Máriássy's fell prey to the fulfillment of compulsory party directives exerting influence on dramaturgy and message (Veress 2005).

[187] *Montenegro* is a black comedy the Yugoslav/Serbien Makavejev directed in Sweden.

comrade but has an affair with a family man, while a younger coworker also courts her. At one point she bursts out confronting the expectations towards her: "I'm not a saint!", whereby she also confronts a supposedly asexual social order. This approach and portrayal is unique since a habitual image-pair of women—one with "saintly", the other with loose morals—is a frequent and automatically employed device in other films of the period portraying sisters or female friends of clashing mores (as in *Bunny,* 1963; or *Signal*, 1967).

Some of the flatly misogynist or sexist woman-images that are familiar from later films, such as the agent that thrusts or ties men into something unwanted, be that "normal" family existence or crime (*The Cangaroo,* 1975, and *Gangster Film,* 1998, respectively) do not typically appear in the 1950s and 60s. In *Four Girls in a Courtyard* (1964) sexism is captured at a different level: the four protagonists (female teachers sharing a house somewhere in rural Hungary) are represented as creatures doomed to joyless vegetation for they are lacking men. Their life, lived in quarrelsome and frustrated monotony, mirrors how unthinkable an existence outside heteronormativity seems to be. A number of female characters also get "punished" for their unfit existence in the films of this period. Emília Odor in *Love Emília!* (1969) disrupts the order in a turn-of-the-century girls' boarding school (an institution to inscribe the Symbolic Order one could say), and is punished with death (she commits suicide in the scarcely motivated ending of the film). Two feisty young women seize the power positions in their group in *The Confrontation* (1968; dealing with the freshly organized communist youth movement), but they soon prove to be overly sectarian. Beside earning the spectators' dislike, they also get expelled from the youth movement.

Comedy as a genre may, in theory, offer space for non-normative figures to show up. Yet, most Hungarian comedies in the entire period examined have chosen to feature usual types and, neglecting the potential to transgress, an unrestrained (re)production of ideology takes place in film comedies, although transgression and breaking taboos does occur in other genres. In the comedy promisingly entitled *A Study about Women* (1967)*,* one encounters three wives about to

divorce who, in the end, all return to their respective husbands after the husbands all fell in love with the she-lawyer the wives had hired to start divorce proceedings, who also finds, at the end of the film, her own demurely unmarried mate.

III.4.iii The 1970s and 80s: The poetry of the every-day

Historical analysis and committed political film-making was gradually replaced by the examination of micro-social processes in the films of the **1970s** (Kovács 1990). Films switched their focus to the private sphere of everyday people and took to expressly ordinary settings (Fazekas 2000). Although intellectuals were still frequent protagonists in these narratives, they were no longer the same type of watchful heroes representing the concerns of an entire society, but individuals lost in their own private and workaday conflicts; no longer carrying out a sensible struggle but groping around forlornly (Kovács 1988, Varga 2001). A sarcastic tone prevails in these films and the subject of deviance is often addressed. Favored genres are film grotesque and satire as well as "popular art cinema" and the sort of documentary feature film that employs the approaches of social research.[188]

There is not such a marked difference, especially from the perspective of the present inquiry, between Hungarian cinema of the 1970s as compared to the 1980s as was between the 1950s and 1960s. Throughout the 80s, tendencies that were already discernible in the 1970s seem to become more firmly entrenched: the world they depict is not only indifferent to the potential values of social action, political activity or historical clarification; it rather informs about a general loss of values and orientation (Kovács 1990:7). Protagonists come across as "whiny" and profoundly disoriented (Kovács 1988), and they often end in self-destruction while the general ambiance the films convey is one of despair and depression (Iordanova 2003:151).

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[188] Foreign film critics came to refer to this latter trend as "the Budapest School".

A stylistic-visual development accompanying the turn to the life events of everyday people was that "[t]he camera showed human faces ravaged by the decline of the 70s, the conflicts at home and in the workplace, showing what became of the potential and actual heroes of the 60s" (Fazekas 2000), and this is when glamour fades off the faces of actresses too. Here the parallel developments in Anglo-Saxon cinema is worth a brief mention: it was the mid-1970s when the "New Woman's Film" emerged within dominant cinema. In these movies male directors often opted for non-gorgeous or non-conventionally attractive central characters who were given a more nuanced and sympathetic portrayal too. The impact of this trend is undoubtedly present in Péter Gothár's *A Priceless Day* (1979), a story about a woman facing the manifold difficulties of getting an apartment of her own in 1970s Budapest. At the closing of the film, the protagonist and her lover's wife end up having a long and hearty night together, drinking, and trading confidences. An individual's struggle for independence as well as the non-flattering or non-voyeuristic photographing of the leading actress (Cecília Esztergályos, otherwise the domestic sex symbol of the time) evokes an American man-directed woman's film, *Alice Does Not Live Here Any More*.[189] To make the link clearer, in one scene Gothár's protagonists enter a movie theater that plays *Alice Does Not Live Here Any More*. Another genuinely sentient treatment is given to the young female heroine in residential care in János Rózsa's *Sunday Daughters* (1979). Recalling the conceptions concerning the identification processes and the pleasure of the **female spectator** surveyed at the beginning of this chapter, some relevant aspects of these new woman's films can be considered. They offer points of identification for a range of female viewers as they do portray their characters as socially specific individuals, each having their specific cases. Through positive identification these films may offer female spectators with comparable situations a degree of affirmation as far as non-conventional behavior patterns or under-represented life situations are concerned. One of the possible women-related issues relatively often given attention to in the

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[189] Directed by Martin Scorsese; production year 1975.

1970–80s is the lives and concerns of middle-aged or elderly women.[190] *Mrs. Déry, Where Are You?* (1975) is a delicate piece about the crisis of the titular character, a celebrated Hungarian actress in the 19th century Mrs. Róza Déry still feels in full possession of her talents and force but newer theatrical trends as well as others' perceptions of her age make her feel gradually marginalized. As if only waiting for this moment, her long-abandoned but still devoted husband shows up, eager to take Róza finally with him to the rural estate he had created for her throughout the years.[191] Róza agrees to go with him but the vista of a quiet and suffocatingly idle old age soon drives her back to the world of theater. (The situation finds a merely poetic solution in the film: Mrs. Déry, after having been highly praised by an older colleague, suddenly comes to feel unexpectedly happy—and deserts the story by disappearing in the fog...) *Sarah, My Dear* (1971) tells the story of an old woman and her nephew who visits her with the hope of pumping some money out of her. Auntie Sarah, however, turns out to be fairly intrepid as well as firm in her views and values, and responsible for her property. Eventually, the light-headed young man grows to like her a lot.

Another noteworthy development is that women's concerns, traditionally relegated to the "private" sphere, repeatedly come to the focus of films made throughout the 1970-80s, and that women do appear in situations of historical importance in roles other than a male protagonists' mother, wife or lover. In *Vera Angi* (1978) the titular character follows a dislikable, albeit carefully depicted route as she grows from an unwitting assistant nurse to a staunch protégée of the Communist Party. My emphasis is not on whether or not she is a lovable and "positive" character, but on the fact that she is placed in a realistic historical situation in which she faces ethical dilemmas, a role denied to female protagonists earlier on. Like *Vera Angi* and Márta

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[190] This frequency presents an especially high contrast when compared with recent Hungarian movie production within which turning to such topics seems largely improbable, if not unthinkable.

[191] It is interesting to note that this film and Márta Mészáros's *Nine Months* use a similar metaphor to image how patriarchy or patriarchal partners would encircle women in some pre-fabricated frame of life. The same intention is enhanced in *Mrs. Déry, Where Are You* in the scene where Mr. Déry takes his time to detail Róza's future life at the estate: he is affectionate but totally neglectful of her gaze full of doubt and reservations. Throughout *Nine Months*, as Laura Hollósi registered (2001:42), the man is busy with building a house for the two of them where the heroine, as we learn from the denouement, will never move in.

Note: "CEU eTD Collection" appears in left margin.

Mészáros autobiographical *Diary*-series, *Oh, Bloody Life* (1983) revisits the 1950s, the latter centering one a case of forced relocation. Although reviews tend to regard *Oh, Bloody Life* a thin comedy showing how a pretty operettist gets her way even under such dreary circumstances, i find the story a historically grounded depiction of situations when women, out of a lack of access to real power, resort to the illicit way of using sensuality and sexuality in order to gain some power. The operettist, however, acquires this power in order to advance her temporary community of relocated people. *The Red Countess* (1984) and *Narcissus and Psyche* (1980) take the viewer to a bit more distant history; *The Red Countess* tells the development of a real life young aristocrat, Countess Katinka Andrássy from being a devotee of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to being engaged in early-twentieth century political movements and the 1919 Bolshevik Council of Republics, to embracing anti-fascist and communist views and concerns in interwar Hungary. In *Narcissus and Psyche*, director Gábor Bódy did not only base his screenplay on Sándor Weöres' extraordinary novel with many feminist overtones[192] but expanded on the scene (only passingly indicated in the original book) when the heroine, Psyché becomes involved with the pre-1848 Hungarian reform movement. Through comments attributed to Psyché, the film gives an implicit feminist critique of man-made history and politics.

Dina Iordanova has also noted how one representative feature of East Central European cinema in the 1970s and 80s was a preoccupation with women and history or society, "most often used to deliver serious social criticism of certain adverse periods" (2006:126). Iordanova, however, has a more poignant take on this development. Indicating that women protagonists bring very little specifically woman-related concerns into the narratives that place them in the centre of a historical situation or a contemporary social drama, Iordanova asks: why women then? The answer she proposes is as follows:

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[192] For a detailed discussion of the novel's feminist overtones, see my article, "A history of things that did not happen: the life and work of two fictitious women authors" (Hock 2008).

It seems this has something to do both with the unstated sanctions of film under Communism and the unspoken general gender conventions. On the one hand, depicting the plight of women would somehow fall among the permitted themes of state socialism. If the story was about men it could be seen as a direct indictment of the social system; as long as it was about women, it would not come across as direct social criticism or a revolt. To tell stories of female [life situations] meant to practice social criticism and still avoid an open confrontation with the regime. The fact of the relative safety associated with the treatment of female themes, however, only confirms that state socialism had not gone far enough in abandoning widespread gender conventions (2003:133).[193]

Another genre Western feminist criticism picked out was the *buddy movie* where the central characters are male friends who prioritize spending time with each other over associating with the opposite sex. The phrase was coined by critic Molly Haskell, and the related commentary became a widely accepted view. In her book *From Reverence to Rape,* Haskell followed how the images and roles of female figures in Hollywood films have changed over time. Haskell found that, replacing the vamp of the 1920s and the "ordinary" *versus* "extraordinary" types of women of the mid-century "woman's films", the "buddy movie" gained ground in the 1970s. These are films that features the friendship of two males as the major relationship and relegate male-female relationships to a subsidiary position (Konigsberg 1997:41). Haskell and others account for this gradual change and a direction towards portraying women as victims of male violence by proposing that these are representational techniques of patriarchal order to retaliate women, on the screen at least, for the growth and influence of the women's movement (Haskell 1975:363–66). "To punish women for their desire for equality", Philippa Gates writes, "the buddy film [...] replaces the traditional central romantic relationship between a man and a woman with a buddy relationship between two men. [...] Women as potential love interests are thus eliminated from the narrative space" (2004:25).

In the same period, the 1960–70s, however, one rarely finds such examples in Hungarian cinema. Some sporadic cases appear in the 80s in movies like *Cha-cha-cha* (1981; or, paradoxically, in

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[193] Remember also Ana Magó-Maghiar's analysis (introduced in I.3.ii.) of the case of *Ludas Matyi* and the trade-off between male citizens and cultural politicians to keep in place and unequal sexual contract.

woman-centered man-made films like *The Princess*[194] and *Devil's Ferry* (1969). Violence directed at women, however, will become the general course in films shot after the political change (*A Full Day,* 1988; *After the Day Before,* 2004; etc.). Anna Varga, in an essay brazenly suggesting a general decline in recent Hungarian cinema, traces a trajectory similar to the one proposed by Haskell, from veneration to abuse, between the 1934 version of a highly successful Hungarian romance comedy and its re-make in 2000, both entitled *Car of Dreams* (2000). As far as the role of women is concerned. In the remake they are no longer given cars as gift but are treated with merciless and obscene sexual abuse (Varga 2007:112).[195] The nature of the violence perpetrated against women is always sexualized too, and most often is excessively brutal (in *Devil's Ferry* the woman is not only raped but also tortured in front of her family, and in *After the Day Before* the camera dwells on the cruel execution of the mysterious and beastly promiscuous young woman). Rape is treated like a fact of life by (male) reviewers or as a self-evident means to punish women if the hero is at odds with them or with the world. A taxi-driver in *A Full Day* cannot pay his debt to his creditor who then exacts the payment "in kind" having sex with the protagonist's wife, whereupon the frustrated husband stabs—the woman. The narrative of *Cha-cha-cha* winds up in a scene in which the teenage protagonist participates in the group rape of a school-mate he had been idolizing. However, the spectator is invited to sympathize with *him* (and not with her) for his dreams and illusions about the virtue of the adored girl have collapsed. It is fair to add, however, that violence escalates in general in films made after the system change.

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[194] The nature of this paradox is explicated in the comparative essay by Laura Hollósi (2000) already referred to in III.3.

[195] Retaliation, however, does not only run high on the cinema screen. In social science literature an increased rate in marital conflicts and domestic violence in Hungary has been partly explained by men's reactions to the changes "emancipation" brought, as men had considerably less reason to welcome those changes (Goven 1993b:89). Several contributors in a 1994 edited volume, *Women in Russia: A New Era in Russian Feminism,* identify a number of newly emerging phenomena— from the abominable media discussion of women's issues in general, to the slurring of the female body through pornography, to the dramatic increase in cases of domestic violence and rape—as symptoms of a vindictive misogyny elicited by "too much emancipation" (Posadskaya et al. 1994).

III.4.iv The 1990s and after: structural reconfiguration and the dissipation of meaning

In the period starting with 1990 the collapse of state-socialism brought a mighty change that effected every level of the industry. Although state-subsidy was not immediately discontinued, it decreased abruptly, and motion pictures now had to be produced and sold in a profit-oriented market environment. This change involved, among other consequences, that filmmakers now had to learn about fund-raising, marketing, advertising, sponsorship, and promotion (Cunningham 2004:142–44). As film production became divorced from exhibition and distribution (for the national distribution system was no longer operational, and centrally run state-owned cinemas were replaced by private ones or foreign-owned multiplexes), Hungarian movie was losing its domestic as well as international audience (Iordanova 2003:145).[196] Starting out from a marginalized position, these films now had to compete on an international image market, while the topics they frequently addressed and which made them an asset to cultural history, proved unsuitable for mass appeal. The environment of the production itself shifted from the studio system to producer-driven or self-funded undertakings shot in quasi-friendly circles, a condition that seems to re-create a homosocial environment in film-making, when both the shooting and production processes took place in a male-only setting. Gábor Gelencsér (1998) asks whether "anything of importance has happened at all to Hungarian film which could be considered related to the changes going on on the social scene? [sic] Can we observe a change in the attitude of Hungarian film? Can we talk about a new beginning?" Gelencsér's answer is no. Talking about the new funding system, Gelencsér reminds that "Hungary is not a country where film-making could be exposed to the full impact of the market", which means that considerable support will have to continue to come from the government and other third sources. And if so, this is a situation in which political expectations or forces will also continue to exist, be they subtle or explicit. In Erzsébet Báthory's view, since the collapse of the East European socialist regimes,

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[196] The international distribution of East Central European films reached a record low in the 1990s. See also the data, provided in footnote 125, about the sudden dominance of overseas productions in Hungarian cinemas.

only a few films were made which took to criticizing or properly examining the previous regime, and a similarly low number of pieces offered a thorough analysis of the new societal conflicts ushered in by market economy and wild capitalism. Dina Iordanova notes a continuation of thematic areas as well as newly surfacing contemporary concerns, but expresses her disappointment over that these films rarely offer an original cinematic approach and repeatedly exhibit weaknesses in dramaturgy (2003:150–52). Where she does see discontinuity is the destruction of the old film culture by a "ruthlessly triumphant commercialism", a drastic enough change in basic operational premises that marks, more than any specifics of the artistic output, the time of post-Communism as a new and separate period (ibid., 9). Anna Varga, the author of a sweeping and poignant study entitled *Films: One Hundred Years of Solitude. The Hostile Policy of Hungarian Capitalism against Arts, and the Conflict in Film Culture* (2007), seems to agree with Iordanova about the conceptual and stylistic weaknesses of recent cinematic offerings as well as the detrimental effect of the shift to market economy. Varga registers a general decline in film culture, an outgrowth of a message- and ethos-phobic, cynical commodity culture. Recent film practice presents people as mean and dopey, meanwhile the creators stay clear of challenging the prevailing system; what they offer instead is a bunch of underdeveloped wayward ideas. Varga finds comedies equally half-hearted, remarking that "Hungarian popular films are cautious, lukewarm and hesitant at a time when the cult films of the era (such as *Matrix*[197] or *Sin City*[198]) may turn out to be even braver than art cinema in pointing to the deficiencies of their societies" (114).

Turning to content-related and stylistic features and examining also individual productions made in the latest decade and half, a passion for violence has been noted by a number of critics. As Iordanova notes, cultural imports from the West were not as limited during socialist times as it has been widely believed; the only thing off-limit, however, was mainstream Western mass

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[197] Directed by Larry and Andy Wachowski, released in 1999.
[198] Directed by Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller, released in 2005.

culture boosting uninhibited violence or pornography (2003:21)—two components which came to run high in post-1989 offerings. This motive partly proceeds from films that tackle the newly born phenomenon of Hungarian "gangsterism" (Csala 1999). Violence also often takes the form of disastrous or unreasonably tragic film closures: protagonists die as a rule; if nothing else, a fortuitous car accident, scheduled for the last frames, takes their lives. Film narrative also disintegrates; films with no particular issues to explore, and plots unanchored in reality, proliferate. Such stories are tilting on the brink of fairy tale and anecdote and are populated by a variety of improbable characters, demonstrating an overall shift towards mysticism and the fantastic (Cunningham 2004:146). In Anna Varga's trenchant rendering, meaning withers in recent motion pictures due to some sort of an aversion to sufficiently defined subject matters (2007:104).

In this gloomy cinematic milieu, female figures cannot possibly hope to come across as exemplary or triumphant or to reach a fine resolution. Thus it comes as little surprise that a point where heroines clearly win their cases is never reached. Rather, the strategy of leaving closures open, or merely showing up the way out, prevails. In *Reflections* (1976)*,* for example, we find the central female figure in a mental institution, broken down under a host of specifically female traumas. In the institution, with the help of a female psychologist, she realizes that she may be able to overcome the multi-layered crisis. Films by women directors, too, (*Daughters of Luck* by Mészáros*, The Rapture of Deceit* by Lívia Gyarmathy*,* or *Awakening* by Judit Elek) are more likely to offer happy end-substitutes in the form of a sober assessment of the state of things and a fresh start to (re)direct one's own life, or finding the way out of a dilemma or a destructive relationship. Barefaced loss, however, is a far more standard concomitant of the female focus in films in these years (be they directed by men or women). Anna in *Red Colibri* (1995), in spite of all her efforts and self-sacrifice, will lose her beloved man, an Ukrainian émigré dancer whose bohemian whims and shady dealings the homely Anna would never come even close to comprehend. The destitute

young woman in *Pleasant Days* (2003) will be further humiliated by her male companion who had appeared to be her ally. And the vast majority of the rest all die: in *Fast and Loose* (1989), one of the female friends is stabbed by her lover; in *Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe* (1991) one of the title heroines escapes into suicide; in *Je t'aime* (1991) one of the female friends thrusts the other out of the window; in *Kisses and Scratches* (1994) one (girl)friend shoots the other.

After 1995 not only the option for moderately promising open closures dwarfs, but the number of male directors addressing women-related subjects dramatically decreases. One such exception, however, is *Stop Mom Theresa!* (2004), the "Hungarian version" of *Bridget Jones's Diary*.[199] The screenplay of the "Hungarian version" is also based on a novel (Rácz 2002), and both the novel and the screenplay differs from the British bestseller in at least two significant points. Firstly, in the Hungarian novel, the story does not close with the heroine's entering a romantic affair but with the recognition, pensive and cathartic at the same time, that she should deserve feeling good, better, happy—pending His arrival on the white horse—because of other sorts of joyful moments in her life: helping her dear brother stay away from drugs, enjoying the company of an intimate and loving circle of friends, and eventually witnessing professional advancement. Secondly, the protagonist, Kata, does not only have to struggle through women's traditional role in society and the related expectations, but with the rules of the game within the "new Hungarian trend society" as well. These two differences are welcome nuances but at some other major points the film severely fails. The chosen actress is way too young and pretty to veritably convey the set of dilemmas offered by the book that relates the lengthy job- and men-hunting of a thirty-something single woman. And in the last film reel heteronormative order spectacularly defeats Kata, overwriting the ending of the book. The book's ending held out the promise of a wiser and more autonomous Kata whereas the film finale simply holds out the promise of a new boyfriend.

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[199] *Bridget Jones's Diary* is a novel by Helen Fielding, published in 1996, and turned into a movie of the same name in 2001 (directed by Sharon Maguire). The novel chronicles the life of Bridget Jones, a thirty-something single woman, and her teetering between two men, while the comments of her streetwise friends spice the narrative.

The most pitiable development of the last 5–10 years is the proliferation and almost exclusive presence of compulsorily sexed-up sign-functioning images of woman, who do not nearly resemble the life situations of actual women. Talking about a similar change in the broader East Central European context, Dina Iordanova observes the great emphasis on women's sexuality.

> The representation of women in cinema has undergone substantial changes. [...] Less attention [is] paid to the social problems faced by women. [...] In post-Communist cinema, women are rarely given more complex social roles than being preoccupied with extra-marital affairs and a variety of other sexual adventures. […] Yesterday's overworked factory dorm girls become today's sex-kitten playmates, regularly cast as constantly horny creatures mostly interested in [...] entering new sexual relationships at any time of day or night. (2003:140–42)

An overwhelming fascination with sexuality and promiscuity is also present across most mainstream media, including television shows, tabloid press and advertising.[200] This is often not only limited to the abuse of women but that of children or individuals of a very tender age too. The sexual appeal of these subjects is, as Andrew Horton points out, that they give men total control—whereas "women who are not in some way reduced are to be avoided" (Horton 1999b).

Looking at certain Hungarian movies from the post-1989 period that feature eroticized spectacle, Catherine Portuges makes a similar proposition to that of a number of social scientist (Goven, Acsády, Burrows, Joó) cited in II.3.i. These authors suggest that liberalization after the years of state socialism was interpreted in many areas as a now easy access to soft-core pornography (Portuges lists films like *Fast and Loose*, *The Documentator,* 1988; *Sexploitation*, 1989), and thus came across as some compensatory "catching up" after a period when open discussion of sex-related matters was by and large absent from the public sphere (Portuges 1993:13 and Burrows

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[200] These kinds of media may also corroborate my claim—that practices in visual culture in the state socialist period objectified the female body a lot less frequently and in much less explicit ways than they do today, and than practices in contemporaneous Western culture did. A thorough overview of the latter period was given by art historian Erzsébet Tatai (2003) examined how advertisement images violate the human (and especially female) body, and how they enforce normative expectations of bodily appearance, and reproduce stereotypes concerning gender roles, sexual behaviour, and sexism. For her overview she surveyed the image(s) mediated through 6,500 billboards and advertisement posters as well as journal covers on public view in the preceding eleven years in Hungary.

1997:116).[201] An approach that would discuss the subject of sexuality either from women's or men's, or from any number of other perspectives, would be welcome. Instead, the various possible aspects of sexuality is rarely explored but is taken for granted.[202] In Anna Varga's view, the idealization of conventional femininity and derision over "more modern" women is an outcome of such attitude (Varga 2007:115–19). To substantiate her argument, Varga refers to *One Skirt, One Pant* (2005), another remake of a 1940s romance which starts out as a transvestite comedy ready to re-distribute gendered identities, but ends up as an overly old-fashioned script, bringing back the era when the film was originally made. In Varga's other example, *Dad Goes Nuts* (2003), the two teenage lassies are pitted against each other in an artificially dichotomous manner: one of them is all sensual instinct, the other one is the intellectual *raisonneur*. As Varga remarks, other constituents of the feminine soul, as it were, are all set in the same kind of mutually exclusive relation in this film, where the purportedly contradictory desires of the two girls relentlessly appear as either/or choices: liking carefreeness *or* security, wanting to act *or* comprehend, wanting pleasure *or* happiness (115–16). I would add to Varga's list *Just Sex and Nothing Else* (2005) where the freshly deceived, single-mother-to-be protagonist indeed comes across as a "traumatic presence" (Chaudhuri 2000:28) who is also incapacitated to verbally retort the mean and sexist mockery of some of his male colleagues. Varga also observes that the failing characters in these narratives carry the attributes of "more modern" women, while the idealized female figures lack individualized features and thus remain so many sketches (Varga, 119).

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[201] Undoubtedly, the erotics of spectatorship and visual pleasure have been an issue in other post-socialist societies as well. Apart from the chapter in Iordanova's book, "Sexing-Up the Post-communist Woman" overviewing several countries in the region, Beret Norman thematizes sex industry's encroachment into Eastern Germany. Norman writes about an East German women performance group (Exterra XX) whose performers, "shortly after the unification, playfully disrupt the visual currency of the female body cultivated by a colonizing Western advertising. [Their] performance subverts the portrayal of women's bodies as marketing tools in Western advertising" (Norman 2000:255). Almira Ousmanova registers both women's eroticised representation and the marginalization of their concerns in recent Russian film practice (Ousmanova 2006).

[202] A notable exception is Krisztina Deák's *Jadviga's Pillow*, already refered to above.

The blank polarization and the extremely thin characterization of the women featured in *Kontroll* (2005), a quasi-cult movie from 2003, for instance, indeed suggest that the director just could not think of any actual woman, not relegated to one of the two extremes of the angel/whore scale. *Kontroll* is a clip-like narrative taking place in the Budapest underground system. The only speaking female figure in this piece is clad in a *teddy bear costume* in the subway scene in which she first appears; later, in the fancy dress party scene, she is directly dressed as an angel.[203] Beside her, the rest of the female characters—occasional young and old prostitutes—do not speak or perform, just create a backdrop for the underground station setting. Apart from unwitting little *femme fatale*s, one encounters a host of fantastic images. A "medicine-girl", or a girl shaman, in *Natasha* (1998) coming from the family of titular women characters who only structure but do not control the narrative; a naked apparition sitting in a feather cloud and dissolving problems with her sheer beautiful presence (*Never-never Gloria,* 2000); or as many as seven sketchy iconic women figures in one single film (*The Pizza Boy*, 2001). Reducing women to such sketches, as Shohini Chaudhuri argues, "is an attempt to contain women within ideas of femininity, enigma, proper womanhood" (Chaudhuri 2006:64). Effacing women so vigorously may reflect a situation in which masculine identity is represented, and perhaps experienced, as victimized by an increased degree of feminine autonomy (Portuges 1993:57).[204]

Parallel to the decreasing number of films featuring complex and psychologically plausible female characters, one notes an increasing number of buddy movies of a wide variety of genres. They can be dramas set in historic times (*Fateless,* 2005; a film based on a novel of the Nobel-prize winner Hungarian author, Imre Kertész, relating the Holocaust from the perspective of an almost impassionate teenage boy), or heritage blockbuster-to-bes (*The Bridgeman*, 2002; that i will come

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[203] One cannot help thinking of the time in theatre history, recalled by Sue Ellen Case, when only male actors were allowed to perform and female characters were substituted by masks conceived by a patriarchal tradition (Case 1988).

[204] This situation and this sort of representation is not unique to Hungarian society again. Talking about post-Soviet cinema, Almira Ousmanova states that film production "has been obsessed with the questions of retrieving masculinity to such an extent that female characters have been presented in these narratives only as decoration or as a site for male fantasies related to power and sexual control" (Ousmanova 2006).

back to later), or parodies of heritage epics (*Hungarian Vagabond*, 2003; about the seven chieftains in search of their Hungarian nation), or feature films with contemporary settings (*Kontroll*, see above), or light-hearted comedies (*A Kind of America*, 2002; about a young director hoping that an unexpected American producer will sponsor his film). In all of these offerings, male actors and characters overdominate the screen. When juxtaposed with the number and variety of male figures, it becomes indeed stunning that the creators of these films only seem to conceive of women as flesh to be consumed or frail angelic creatures to be adored or impressed. Through such limiting representations, they leave little ground for female spectators for non-travestial spectatorial pleasure and identification. Andrew Horton also speaks about a tendency in recent Central European productions "to concentrate on the experiences and perspectives of male characters and [a] habit of putting less thought into the development of female roles", taken to a point when it becomes "a habit of prioritizing male-male relationships over male-female ones", which "indicates a lack of interest in communication between the sexes" (Horton 1999b). This representational imbalance translates into very material consequences: feature films whose credits roll without hardly any female names, also leave little money for professional actresses to earn in these productions. The fact that the award for the Best Actress' Performance at the national film week in 2004 went to the almost underage amateur performer in Böszörményi's *Guarded Secrets* is not so much indicative of her individual talent, but rather of the paucity and irrelevance of female roles in recent Hungarian movies.[205]

I am giving a somewhat lengthier treatment to the historical feature film *The Bridgeman* for i see it as a glaring example of all-male productions brimming with deeds and actions set in a homosocial environment.[206] *The Bridgeman* is a gigantic enterprise in terms of length, lavish

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[205] The film that won the award for best director the same year (*Dealer*, 2004) also featured an almost teen-age amateur in the main female role.
[206] "Homosocial" here is meant to describe the order of relations foregrounded in the buddy movies and, more concretely, the male-dominated environment in which both the shooting and production processes take place.

production and a uniquely enormous budget.[207] The film's title refers to the protagonist, count István Széchenyi who had earned the epithet "the greatest Hungarian" for his contribution to Hungary's development and his participation in the country's independence struggle in the mid-19th century. Sporadic attempts to deconstruct the solemn historical figure of Széchenyi, and provide, instead, a flesh-and-blood and somewhat moot personality can be tracked down in the plot. As many as "three" (in fact, 2 + 2x ½) speaking female figures made their humble way into the two-and-a-half hour long piece. Historical cinematic tableaux of the sort usually dismiss female characters in roles other than lovers, wives or mothers to the hero. The above ludicrous number of three (or four) illustrates feminist historians' repeated observation about how historical records as we know them always only include prominent men who, in the great common struggles, advance and accomplish momentous actions. In *The Bridgeman*, however, the tentative intention to de-mythologize the figure of Széchenyi drove the film's creators to imply that the main drive of his patriotic actions was to achieve the admiration of a beloved woman, Crescence. On the basis of the count's diary entries, the film suggests that his formidable acts were both devoted to the motherland and meant to impress Crescence. But she was not the only woman in the hero's life. We learn that he had had an affair with his own brother's wife. This was a sinful relation, so *the woman* had to be depicted as a fury with a suggestedly unleashed sexuality, always dressed in *black*, and soon she was to die an ugly death too. This is another instance of punishing desirable but unruly female characters; as feminist criticism revealed, "the narrative destiny of female characters in 18-19th century was either marriage and social integration or death or disaster and social alienation (Nancy Miller, quoted in Evans 1997:78). The count's "proper", "socially integrated" woman, always clad in light-colored garments, is a full beautiful fragile china doll of few words. She is often reduced to tears, sighs a lot, faints

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[207] As John Cunningham recorded, "many Hungarians were angered by the amount of money the film had received at a time when filmmakers were struggling for funds". The budget, two billion Forints, vastly exceeded the annual state subsidy for the entire Hungarian feature film industry (2004:157). The offering was not without some attempt at political propaganda, aspiring to liken the figure of the titular hero to the Hungarian Prime Minister at the time of the fim's release.

twice and looks seducing once. The character of Crescence could serve as a literal illustration for Kaja Silverman's analysis of women's voices used in the cinema. Going beyond the level of the image, Silverman examines the soundtrack and finds that the voices and sounds attributed to women in mainstream practice are usually "thick with body". This sound quality possesses an incessant reference to the female body and thus lessens the discursive authority of the owner of that voice (Silverman 1990:309).[208] While the film featured a thick cream of the domestic male actors' community (and rewarded them with earlier unconceivable wages), a new female face had to be displayed to decorate the screen beside count Széchenyi. No Hungarian actress was thought to be able to cope with such a demanding actor's performance and the director had to be searching for long months before he found Her in Russia. The portrayal of the count's two love(r)s dismally evokes the antiquated virgin/whore dichotomy and the stereotype employed since the first folk tales when "strong females [were] almost always represented by negative characters" (Mamonova, cited in Einhorn 1993:224).[209] The foreign actress' presence for decorative purposes also illustrates another tenet of feminist film criticism: "traditionally the woman displayed [in cinema] has functioned on two levels: as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium" (Mulvey [1975] 1989:20).

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[208] Silverman also remarks that there are hardly any instances when women possess a masterly voice in films in the form of an authoritative voiceover.

[209] One of the "half" speaking female characters in *The Bridgeman* has an interesting presence which, i presume, is linked to the unaccomplished deconstruction of Széchenyi's figure. A not particularly beautiful woman appears briefly on the side of the count's political counterpart, the "middle-class" Lajos Kossuth (who exhibited far more radical political views than the aristocratic Széchenyi). The woman who accompanies Kossuth may be his partner or sister; if the latter one, Zsuzsanna Kossuth was indeed a politically active woman. Her only green dress is dimly discernible among the homogenous black male attire in the scenes unfolding in the halls of the Parliament, which leads us to assume that she personifies Zsuzsanna indeed. Her presence in the Parliament sequence cannot possibly be an accident or the cameraman's fault, but because it is so unemphatic, it most likely goes unnoticed for less keen viewers, and gains no place in the context of the entire film.

III.5 Conclusion

The work of feminist semiotic theorists combined discussions of representation with an analysis of ideology, arguing that "[i]mages were not simply mirrors of real life but ideological signifiers" (Maggie Humm, quoted in Stafford 2001:233). Through a survey of sixty years of Hungarian film production i looked at the reciprocally constitutive relation between reality, representation and ideology. My survey is the first critical overview from a feminist perspective of this film corpus and serves a combination of purposes. Apart from the usual objectives of similar inquiries—critically examining the representation of women in cinema and bringing to light women's contribution to film art—, my study had its added foci. I wanted to evaluate my survey results against the backdrop of the ideological and material conditions of cultural production in my chosen locale and period, and i also wanted to test two hypotheses. One is whether women's growing participation in all levels of formal education and their involvement in the labour force affected their inroads in artistic professions. These lesser-researched professions seemed to deserve probing because of the kinds of discontents with women's labour force participation that sociologist Judit H. Sas directed attention to:

> Women's mass employment should only be the first step in realizing gender equality. This first step, however, has not brought about major changes in sex-based discrimination or historically produced gender relations. Women's mass entry in the labour force did little to women's and men's differing access to positions of authority, decision-making […] or those requiring intellectual investment. (1984:104)

My second question was whether being placed in positions of public and cultural visibility to formerly unprecedented degrees has impacted women's representation on the cinema screen.

My quantitative survey revealed a certain kind of configuration of gender segregation within Hungarian film industry. This shows the presence of a "celluloid ceiling"; celluloid ceiling is a term that Martha Lauzen introduced to name the "glass ceiling" phenomenon within the filmmaking profession: the existence of a limit to women's inroads to positions ranking high within the hierarchy of the profession. Taking into account, however, that some of the positions

women had access to can be considered to be important positions (that of the producer and, in the Hungarian case, editor), i would rather talk about a "glass wall" between positions that women has proved to be able to take and those they have never entered in any considerable number. This latter territory was the one where decisions are made about the range of subject-matters to be addressed in feature films as well about the particular ways those subject-matters are treated and the characters represented.

My findings show that although some behind-the-screen positions absorbed considerable number of women in relatively short time, it took more than twenty years for the relatively young Hungarian filmmaking profession to let women also enter key positions of feature film production. Except for Márta Mészáros, however, Hungarian female directors have not built extensive oeuvres (which is an internationally known phenomenon with women filmmakers). Mészáros's early films interrogate female identities within a given social environment, often intersected with the consideration of other identity factors. Mészáros's film language in this period lacked glamorous imaging, dramatic climaxes, or neatly tied-up endings, clearly impacted by her previous documentary practice and marking a break away from representation practices within mainstream film-making. Later on, however, she lost touch as much as the conceptual and pictorial treatment of her subjects are concerned. Thus Mészáros's initial genuine interest in "speak[ing] of women's lives with a gritty truthfulness" (Quart 1993:58) remained an almost instinctual exploration into gendered identities and relations, which later withered, or even sidetracked.

I submitted, however, that the work of some male directors, especially from the 1970s and 80s, is worth consideration here. Women and women's concerns were far from obliterated within these cinematic representations. A good proportion of male directors' films placed women characters and their related problems in the focus of the narratives while also featured complex and psychologically plausible female characters. This sort of on-screen female presence may be

attributed to various factors. I would argue that the intense thematization of "the women's question" in state-socialist government policies and equality rhetoric as well as the augmented public visibility of women contributed to a more diversified cultural representation that also dispensed, to some degree, with oppressive and objectifying "images of women".

More important, however, than the frequent occurence of sympathetically depicted complex women characters was the kind of film style and film language that prevailed in the 1960-80s.[210] This form of expression was no result of any explicit feminist cultural intervention, yet it yielded modes of production and consumption that, in many respects, transformed the codes of classical mainstream cinema (also in circulation in Hungary in the pre-war and immediate post-war years) in similar ways as those suggested by feminist "counter-cinema". Yet another factor was, i submit, the political economy of cultural production in state-socialist Hungary: films were not produced according to the profit-oriented logic of entertainment industry. This was a circumstance conducive to realist and analytically oriented tendencies in film practice. Exploring the ties between politics, economics and cultural production in both periods helped to draft a picture in which the constraining-controlling forces of politics and economics turned out to be equally decisive.

When contrasted with the film practice of the 1990s and 2000s, the frequency of films offering the above kind of representations seems to decrease. As i concluded in my content analysis, the number of male directors engaging with women-centered subjects has conspicuously diminished in these years. This is reflected both in the very number of female characters films muster as well as in their characterization. As to the recent work of some prominent Central European female filmmakers, including Hungarian ones, Andrew Horton (1999b) noted that they "seem to have been influenced by male ideas of cinema, rather than the other way around" inasmuch as their

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[210] Many works in all art forms at the time were delivered out of moral concern; as art historian Lajos Németh explained, art making then was "an existential, ethical and aesthetic issue. [...] This is what created its 'national' character rather than formal attributes" (Németh, quoted in Kovalovszky 1999:193).

treatments of gender-related subject matters often falls prey to a "self-imposed sexism". Some researchers believe that the renewed erasure of women from film narrative is part of a symbolic struggle to retrieve masculinity in the new "post-emancipation" democracies.

A number of authors have expressed concern over recent processes in films from Eastern Europe in general, recognizing that "values, concepts, visions, and even technical details have been affected by this acute crisis" (Sztojanova 1997:24), which, i add, necessarily flattens out the treatment of women's issues and women characters in these films. I propose, however, that beyond the internal changes in film art, the overall status of women within film industry (including the dimensions of production) reflects many of the changes that took place in society at large in the transition period, explored in Chapter II: the re-masculinization of the public sphere, the wholesale contestation of the aspirations and attainments of state-socialism, and the re-affirmation of gendered hierarchies in both the public and private realms.

Sötét az éj Bajkonúrban
Az űrhajó már készen áll
Örül holnap a béketábor
Ha az elsõ nõ az égbe száll

Száll, száll, száll, száll
Száll az űrhajó
Száll, száll, száll, száll
Űrutazni jó

Forog a radar, és dübörög a gép
Itt van az óra, és közel az ég
Gagarin felizgul Bajkonúrban
A férfiak álla a földig ér

Száll, száll, száll, száll ...

Jobbra egy műhold, és balra egy szputnyik
A Lajka kutya integet
Az égbõl is rátok gondolok
Ti dolgozó, munkás emberek

Száll, száll, száll, száll ...

Nem kell a vodka, és nem kell a szesz
A súlytalanságtól lebegsz
Bizalmat kaptam most a párttól
Ha lezuhanok, majd Hruscsov ápol

Száll, száll, száll, száll...

The night is dark in Baikonur
The spaceship is ready
The peace camp will rejoice tomorrow
When the first woman launches into orbit

Flies, flies, flies
The spaceship flies
Flies, flies, flies
Space travel is cool

The radar spins, the engine clunks
The time is ripe and the sky is near
Gagarin gets horny in Baikonur
Mens jaws drop all the way down the ground

Flies, flies, flies…

A satellite on my right, a Sputnik on my left,
Laika dog is waving
I think of you even from the space
Laboring workers

I need no vodka, i need no booze
Weigthlessness makes me stoned
The party has put confidence in me
If i crash, Khrushchev will nurse me

Flies, flies, flies…

Tereskova: *Száll az űrhajó* (The spaceship flies)
2000

CHAPTER IV   ARTISTS, ARTWORKS, AND SUBJECT POSITIONS: THE ACTIVITY OF HUNGARIAN WOMEN VISUAL ARTISTS FROM 1945 TILL TODAY

IV.1 Theoretical and methodological questions

IV.1.i Issues and strategies in feminist art criticism and art practice, and an emerging feminist discourse in contemporary Hungarian visual arts

In Chapter III i argued that although Hungarian women film directors—except for the early pieces of Márta Mészáros and despite some other directors' less conscious and persistent pursuit of women-focused subject-matters—have not exhibited any sustained commitment to feminist film-making, some tendencies in the film production of the period overviewed are indeed appreciable in the context of an analysis from a feminist perspective. These tendencies, however, have conspicuously dwindled after the system change of 1989–91 amidst a changing environment of production structures and film financing as well as a women-disfavoring social transformation and an increasingly conservative discursive climate. Looking at another art form in this chapter, contemporary visual arts, i identify a somewhat similarly swinging development of women- or gender-related practices and discourses, with, however, different temporal sequences: after a sporadic presence of female visual artists in either the official art scene or the strongly male-dominated semi-official counter-culture of the 1960-80s, the mid-1990s saw a growing number of actively producing women artists. At the same time, a feminism-informed critical discourse was forming around their work, and a feminist critique-inspired art historical research started out to re-discover women artists from earlier periods. Institutional resistance towards women entering the art scene has significantly lowered. After a decade or so, this never really radical art practice and discursal boom now seems to be fading. Throughout this chapter, i will be exploring how changing creative environments have impacted the subject and speaking positions of women artists within the semi-official vanguard art and of those who started their career during the

moderate "boom" of the 1990s. In my discussion of their activity, my aim is to assume a different approach than what is found in the existing critical literature. Most pieces of that body of writing automatically employ the concepts and perspectives of Western feminist art history and criticism. In order to indeed proceed differently, in my investigation i will combine the interpretive aspects and tools of (Western) feminist art theory and the insights i have gained so far from my examination of the broader social and discursive context of state- and post-socialist Hungary. This also means consulting local art professionals' writings on the subject; this is a rather obvious methodological move, yet one that is relatively rarely practiced.[211]

Leaving aside for a moment concerns over hegemonic narratives and their potential suppression of local histories or readings, the hesitation remains whether there is a sense in looking for feminist politics in an art scene where most actors repudiate political—feminist or otherwise—readings of their work (Dimitrakaki 2005:275). If they do so, reception itself may turn out to be a viable point of cultural intervention,[212] and it becomes the task of feminist art criticism to explore the historical dimensions of such repudiation, given that the artworks created do lend themselves to readings that involve the politicization of the image. It might even be the case, Dimitrakaki adds, that in doing so critics will have to re-define the received notion of the political—just as Western feminist art historians did in the 1970s. I myself find that the idea of contributing to a feminist public sphere and articulating expressions in the feminine, as introduced in I.3.iii, might be useful tools in recasting the meaning of the political for the given context. Beside, however, apolitical artists and committed critics, the role of a third party also arises: can Hungary (or any other country, for that matter) have feminist art without feminist audiences, Dimitrakaki asks

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[211] The recently published exhibition catalogue (Bencsik 2007) for the solo show of Kriszta Nagy (one of the artists to be discussed later in this Chapter) is a case in point. The purpose of the (Hungarian-language) catalogue seems to be to comfortably lodge Kriszta Nagy within a genealogy of international women's art. This in itself could be a viable task, but the contributing art historians make little effort to also locate the artist's output in the local scene or consult literature produced by their Hungarian colleagues.

[212] "Interventionist criticism", the use of criticism as positive means for cultural resistance, social critique and change have been brought up, and practised, by various other authors; see e.g., Wallis 1984, de Lauretis 1984:7.

(ibid., 282). Whatever Western feminist art was, she continues, it certainly did not exist in a void: artworks and oeuvres were part of a collective politics that reached far beyond the art world.

In I.2.iii, i gave a concise account of the critical tendencies in art history, theory and practice that gained ground from the 1970s on in the international, primarily the Western, scene. These new tendencies opened up the study of art and cultural production towards inquiries implementing the thoughts developed in semiotics, cultural theory and the social sciences. This comprehensive approach did not only encompass the techniques and purposes of feminist analysis but feminist problematizations and the related insights were some of its major building blocks. In a frankly cursory manner, in this section i am taking stock of the artistic practices and the analytical apparatus that the Feminist Art Movement as well as feminist art theory and criticism contributed to this changing paradigm. Some of these issues connect to a broader shift in the conception of art that occurred in the 1960s–70s, while some other critical premises were conceived from an expressly gendered perspective.

As my above reference to Angela Dimitrakaki points out, the context of the activity of a first generation of Western feminist artists was a collective politics that extended into extra-artistic domains. This collective politics linked the aspirations voiced by the second wave of the women's movement and forms and strategies of artistic expression. Some of these forms, strategies and issues have remained a lasting concern with many women artists, some have faded, while the inventory of subjects and artistic positions have also been expanding and focal points shifting, partly as a reflection of the diversity of theoretical positions within contemporary feminism.[213] Although feminist artworks and feminist projects have a continuous presence in the international art world today, these no longer bear the characteristics of a conglomerated platform.

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[213] Since the 1990s contemporary visual arts in general have become overdetermined by, and generated through, theoretical discourses.

An early line in feminist inquiry interrogated whether sexual difference is detectable in art making, and if so, what are the ways it surfaces. Various artists and theorists thought to have located it in formal characteristics, specific subject matters, or in the social/material/institutional conditions of art making itself. The investment in archaic matriarchal symbols or elements and shapes that can be supposedly derived from the forms of the female body, as well as the assumed organic connection with nature, soil, and fertility ran high in the early period of the Feminist Art Movement, but are generally seen, from today's perspective, as rather essentialist enterprises. The strategy of consciously turning any object or issue that corresponds to a woman's experience of social and private life—"from vagina to the lipstick"—into an artistic subject matter has been a more lasting bid which also gained currency for artistic expressions delivered in a personal voice. Such "trivial" subject matters, the particularity of private accounts or personal implications in the art works (as opposed to purely formal considerations or the "universal" concerns of a male-defined tradition) were strongly opposed in the modernist or avant-garde paradigm. Making women's sexuality and bodily experiences a subject for artistic representation, often treated in non-aestheticizing ways, had a prominence among newly introduced issues.

More materially-oriented critical voices—joining the inquiries of critical art theory and the simultaneously developing Institutional Critique[214]—saw sexual difference being located at the heart of the institution of art and its assumed normalities: canons, hierarchies, and purportedly objectifiable universal quality claims. In the wake of such explorations, feminist art historians set out to discover female precursors in art making and join in an existing but suppressed tradition. These renewed historical narratives[215] took into account the circumstances of most women's lives

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[214] "Institutional Critique" has been a strand in art practice and criticism. Its "first wave"—in the late 1960s and early 1970s—exposed the myth that culture is neutral, and that the museums and their representations of historical memory are disinterested and objective. This critical trend re-emerged in the early 1980s with a continued critique of art's material, social, and discursive contexts. For a theoretical manifestation, see Buchloh 1990.

[215] Some of the most famous and influential authors and pieces are: Nochlin [1971] 1989, Greer [1979] 2001, Parker & Pollock 1981, the essays in Broude & Garrard 1982 and 1992, Chadwick 1990, Broude 1991.

as mothers, household workers, and caregivers; the inaccessibility for them of a great many of public spaces and events that the grand genres of a masculinist tradition depicted; women's exclusion, in earlier historical periods, from formal training as artists, as well as the long-standing misconceptions about their genetic inferiority and purported incapacity to produce truly great work, which prevented, for a long time, both institutions and individual actors to exhibit, buy-and-sell, or collect their works.

Another strand of critical investigation worked on exploring the function of cultural myths in representation and eroding the authority of certain dominant representations. The contention was about confronting women's traditional artistic representation with "flesh and blood" reality and liberating the female body from the conquering male gaze, in ways ranging from depicting the abject body to pursuing an "unsensational re-evaluation of the everyday" (Reckitt 2001:156). Partly in defiance of art's institutional structures and established hierarchies, many women artists deserted the gallery space and disregarded traditional "high" genres (such as easel painting and sculpting) as loci of a male-dominated tradition. Women artists set up their own alternative artists' networks and organizations where they worked cooperatively on an equal status. In rejection of the genre hierarchy of grand art, they re-valorized, and came to consider as art, traditional women's crafts, or turned to emerging lens-based mediums and ephemeral materials, or non-aestheticizing, language-based forms of expression. Through advocating the above-listed subject-matters or interpreting public demonstrations, agitations and protests as live art events,[216] they expanded the notion of art practice.

In the first volume of *Women's Art Journal,* Lauren Rabinovitz put forward a set of aspects that she considered the touchstones of a feminist aesthetics; one of these was the postulate that the

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[216] This latter strategy has been common with other activist art groups endorsing highly political agendas (c.f., the Guerilla Girls, mentioned in III.1.iii), or activist groups drawing on tactics first used by (anti-)art groupings. At the same time, from the 1960s on, art in general was coming to be defined by acts performed by artists (and thus becoming increasingly about "being an artist") rather than by the making and selling of finished art objects.

artwork encourage active participation by its recipient in the creation of meaning (1980/81:39). This emphasis on the interpreter was to counteract a cultural myth that glorified the artist as a lone "genius" and thought of art as pure private expression. From this a feminist version of authorship developed that sees the artist as a socially constructed individual rather than imagining an individual consciousness expressing his singular visions (Craig 2007:237). In relation to this new approach to the creative individual, and contrary to formalist theories of art claiming art's autonomy within society, feminist art criticism also emphasized art's complex interaction with society and culture, and annulled a major tenet of Western aesthetics: that artworks are unified structures, enduring objects, and expressions of the creative subject (Linker 1984:67).

Throughout the 1990s many women artists returned to the traditional media of painting and sculpture as part of a general "return to objects, rather than words" that occurred in the broader scene (Reckitt 2001:156). Towards the end of the decade, artists were pushing the limits and definitions of gender or, conversely, re-appropriated stereotypical imagery to address social and historical issues (176). The genre of painting itself was now seen to possess a feminist potential. In feminist artists' handling, however, painting was no longer about the pure unmediated expression of the artist, rather, it operated as a critique of this very notion through conscious strategies to mobilize theories of communication, the analysis of the signifying field, and the critique of the politics of representation (Deepwell 1996a). It was also for its popularity and propriety that painting appeared to be able to unsettle conventional thought from within: "by resorting to […] an unsuspecting vehicle as camouflage, the radical artist can manipulate the viewer's faith to dislodge his or her certainty", as Thomas Lawson suggested (1984:162).

Some of these recent developments are noteworthy because the (late-)1990s was the period when a gender discourse emerged within the Hungarian art scene and when artworks produced came to be viewed through the lens of feminist criticism. However, this incipient critical discourse was not always aware of, or careful about, the fact that throughout its short history, the agenda of

feminist or women's art has undergone changes and has been pluralized compared to the largely counter-institutionalist and relatively unified program of the first decade (the 1970s). Thus the conclusions about the lack of feminist art in the local scene were drawn on the basis of an ahistoric, distorted and simplified comparison.

IV.1.ii Methodological questions concerning the quantitative survey and the interviews

As i asserted in the Introduction to this dissertation, one of cinema's distinctive and powerful feature is its capacity to carry and reproduce certain myths in (a patriarchal) culture that condition people, and emphatically women, to see themselves through the representations offered therein (Thornham 1999:10), hence the feminist preoccupation with cinematic representations. While the ways women have been represented throughout cultural history was a major concern with the earlier feminist critique of art history too, contemporary art criticism is less concerned with this case.[217] Also, as far as the changing handling of the female image in Western art practice is concerned, a great majority of artists (men and women alike) have been consciously refusing, since the 1970s, to use images of women in their work in order to altogether evade an imaging practice that treats the woman figure as object and spectacle (Chadwick 1990:354).[218] Instead of critiquing oppressive or denigrating forms of representation, self-representation became the slogan of the day (at times attenuated as it were)[219] with women artists conveying self-produced images of themselves in an act of self-possession and empowerment. This different approach to

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[217] This retraction is also partly due to the fact that, after the realistic tradition of earlier centuries, 20th-century modernist and avant-garde art, in rejection of depicting the material world, adopted an anti-mimetic, anti-narrative and anti-representational visual language, and was concerned instead with color and form as the "essential" elements of art.

[218] The underlying conviction is that since the semiotics of female images have been so deeply established and entrenched, their sign may well be read as meaning the same whether produced by a feminist or a mysoginist (Stiles 1997:87).

[219] For this, see the debate in the 1996–97 issues of *Siksi: The Nordic Art Review* between American and European feminist art critics; Deepwell 1996b and 1997b, Stiles 1977, Ørum 1997, and Cottingham 1997.

the question of representation/self-representation creates a degree of asymmetry in the focus of my analysis of the two cultural forms: cinema and the visual arts.

The weight of cinematic representation of women, coupled with my own initial observation about the changing nature of such representations in Hungarian films, invited a *corpus analysis*, i.e., the analysis of the entire feature film production of the period along a number of pre-defined criteria, with an emphasis on only a few relevant oeuvres and pieces. The appearance of a gender-related art practice in the case of a number of women visual artists and a subsequent lapse, however, solicited an inquiry that is more focused on individual oeuvres, strategies, and motives. These i explore, *inter alia*, via interviews that i myself conducted with the selected artists between 2001 and 2008 (in the case of women film directors, i relied on available interviews made by other researchers and authors). In most cases, the first interview session was devoted to getting an overview of the oeuvre and artistic position of the particular artist. Wherever a second session followed, i returned to the artists with a set of more specific questions that arose while progressing with my dissertation project and with the aim to follow up their more recent output. Apart from formal interview sessions, such follow-up also occurred on the occasion of less formal meetings; i will refer to the information gathered at such settings as "personal communication" (with the exact date added).

In order to see the possible interconnections between the number, gender and creative interests of cultural producers on the one hand, and the ideological and material conditions of art- or filmmaking on the other, i undertook a survey of women creators' presence in the two fields. In the case of Hungarian cinema, the survey took the form of a quantitative analysis of women involved in the various behind-the-screen phases of film production. An identical survey was neither feasible nor reasonable in the case of visual arts for several reasons. Visual art has a much longer history than the art of cinema. Filmmaking started in 1931 in Hungary; this means that the art of cinema was merely fourteen years old in 1945, the starting date of my survey. By 1945, the

fine arts profession had its long established institutions, including educational institutions where women have found their occasional inroads,[220] whereas the Theatre Academy only became Theatre and Film Academy in 1948, providing an institutionalized education for film personnel as well. In addition, the products of what is referred to as contemporary visual art are a lot less quantifiable than motion pictures. A screened full-length feature film is a plausible and quantifiable unit (with its registered collaborators) of which a yearly average of 18 were made in Hungary in the period surveyed.[221] Also, such a unit is easily detachable, without imposing any quality claims, from the rest of a filmmaker's oeuvre (short films, productions for television, documentaries, etc.). The creation and the existence of an artwork is not such a "hard fact".[222] Without setting up quality claims or other, to some degree necessarily arbitrary criteria, even the number of active artists in the given period is virtually impossible to count. Gouma-Peterson & Mathews mention similar statistics-based surveys conducted in the early years of the Feminist Art Movement and published in marginal publications (1987:329). These used indicators such as the gender composition of artists exhibiting in prominent national museums and galleries; reviews and grants received. I will take this as a cue and adapt it to local circumstances to offer a quantified assessment of women artists' presence in the field. Taking into account the relatively little direct institutional resistance to women's participation in the Hungarian art scene, i will try and follow a line that is able to register more indirect or subtle forms of exclusion or marginalisation women artists may have faced. For this, i will take the artists' roster of the

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[220] A study by Éva Bicskei (2004) documents the history and organisation of the first "women's class" in higher art education in Hungary at the end of the 19th century.

[221] This pragmatic difference is also mirrored in the different types of surveys i chose for the two art forms. While a detailed database containing virtually all pertinent data about Hungarian feature film production between 1931 and 1998 is available (Varga 1999), and the annual Film Almanac can be used for the years not covered therein, no comparable source exists for the visual arts. This circumstance, merely pragmatic at first sight, however, is a result of more essential differences between the end products of film- and artmaking.

[222] It is increasingly so with contemporary art practice; the process called the dematerialization of the work of art led, in the last decades of the 20th century, to art forms such as Conceptual Art, Happening, Art Performance, Body Art, Process Art, Arte Povera, Action Art, Land Art & Environment Art, Mail Art, Fluxus, Installation Art, Street Art, New Media Art, Internet-based practices, etc.

chronologically relevant parts of a canon-creating exhibition series as a starting point,[223] and look up the gender-constitution of other relevant exhibitions and artist groups up to the mid-90s. From that time on, i rely on the emerging feminist critique-informed discourse and focus on the artists this discourse has highlighted, and eventually complete this list with my own observations about the most recently surfacing developments.

Another factor that divides my survey methodology follows from the different production environment of the two art forms. Filmmaking is a team work with key and subordinate positions, and as such, lends itself to inquiries about gender segregation and hierarchies within the formalized status ranking of a profession. Also, getting in power positions, or at least positions from where the acquisition of large budgets is feasible, is the precondition of the very making of a film. By contrast, the production of visual art pieces is not nearly as dependent on the availability of fairly large budgets as cinema is. And finally, unlike working in a film crew, art making is a basically individual form of creation. That said, however, i neither wish to disregard all the social factors and opportunities that underpin artistic creation, nor to dismiss collaborative forms of creation so popular with members of the Feminist Art Movement.

IV.2 Women as representers in the field of visual arts, 1945–95

IV.2.i A brief social history of the visual arts in Hungary after 1945

In Chapter III.4, i provided a survey of the major trends in Hungarian cinema in the past sixty years. In the following section, i attempt to give a similarly concise overview of the major developments and events of the visual arts. I am drafting this outline with a dual intention. On the one hand, i wish to situate within these developments the work and activity of the female artists i shall discuss in greater detail in the further sections of this Chapter. On the other hand,

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[223] *A huszadik század magyar művészete*; see next section.

similarly to the corresponding entries of my Chapter on film production, i also want to counter and revise some enduring notions of the cultural production of the state-socialist era that lump together the production of more than four decades into an undifferentiated corpus of socialist realism or art produced under totalitarian rule and severe censorship.

I principally drew on the two major sources when compiling this survey. One of them are the already mentioned catalogues of the fifteen-part exhibition series *A huszadik század magyar művészete* (The history of hungarian art in the 20th century; in fifteen parts, shown between 1965 and 1996 in Csók István Képtár/István Király Múzeum, Székesfehérvár). The second is an edited volume, *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit: Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert* (The second public sphere: Hungarian Art in the 20th Century; Knoll 1999).[224] As the titles immediately reveal, the subject and the intentions of the two enterprises are quite similar. Inasmuch as both undertake to provide a comprehensive view of a century's Hungarian art, including the contemporary period, they are quite exceptional enterprises within local art historical literature. As the editors and contributors of both my printed sources, as well as a number of other authors dealing with the art history of the second half of the century (Aradi et al. 1983, IRWIN 2006) point out, the scholarly coverage of this period has many gaps, partly because the constraints of cultural policy seem to have more adversely affected art criticism and history writing than art making itself (Kovács 1983:6). Sporadic studies may exist, but monographs and systematic assessments of the period are still due (Aradi et al., 481). The book *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit* takes the decades approach to account for tendencies in art after 1945, while the related parts of the exhibition tend to cover shorter periods, more closely defined by artistic developments unfolding in the given years.

The exhibition *The History of Hungarian Art in the 20th Century* was organized in fifteen parts between 1965 and 1996 in the István Király Museum in Székesfehérvár, a county capital some 60

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[224] Hans Knoll, a Viennese gallerist and a devoted supporter of contemporary Hungarian compiled the volume inviting eleven Hungarian art historians to contribute to the volume. In 2002 A Hungarian-language version of the book was published (Knoll 2002).

kilometers from Budapest. As both anecdotal evidence[225] and recently published texts (György 2008) suggest, it was probably for its provincial location that the museum could afford to have a progressive-thinking leadership[226] and could enlist the expertise of its staff when launching such an ambitious project as this chronologically defined series of exhibitions. The shows presenting the politically most "problematic" years (the short period of 1945–49 and the 1950s) were on view in 1977 and 1981-82, respectively. At this time, at the turn of the 1970s–80s, a sober account of the defects of the cultural policy of the presented decade and half was already possible; indeed, this is exactly what the organizers, Nóra Aradi and Péter Kovács, identified in their catalogue essays as one of the aspirations of the exhibitions (Aradi 1977, Kovács 1981). The closing part of the series dealt with the post-socialist years and was on display in 1996.

The volume *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit*,[227] published in 1999, collects more recent takes by acclaimed art historians on Hungarian art of the 20th century. While the short catalogue essays give very succinct introductions to the individual periods discussed, the texts in the book present their subjects in detailed and thoroughgoing studies. As both publications are bilingual (the catalogues are in Hungarian and English, the edited volume has a German and a Hungarian edition), they are both intended and accessible for non-native audiences as well. I shall use a basic narrative line as it unfolds from these publications and complement this account with insights from other sources when those are available and provide further, or different kinds of, information.

Beside consulting the artist selection sample of the relevant editions of the fifteen-part exhibition series and the individual chronological chapters of the volume, i looked up the gender

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[225] Verbal communication, Júlia Klaniczay, manager of Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest, August 20, 2008.
[226] The leadership and staff were progressive-thinking in their approach to contemporary tendencies in art; more detailed explanation follows later in this section.
[227] The non- or semi-official cultural underground of state-socialist societies came to be referred to as operating in a second, or parallel public sphere (in the sense of the Habermasian *Öffentichkeit*). Turning away from official public activity, members of "the counter-culture" relied on a parallel set of channels of social communication. Knoll's volume expands the understanding of divergent cultural norms (i.e., the simultaneous presence of an "authorized" and a repudiated aesthetic idiom) to earlier decades of the century, and closes the book with the 1990s when this distinction lost its relevance.

constitution of some prominent artist groups or collectives, as well as group exhibitions that my sources identify as most significant in the periods discussed (*Table 5*). Artists under socialist rule recognized that they can be more effective in acquiring legitimacy for less favored artistic trends if they act as a group. It is for this recognition and the closed circle-nature of the counterculture that i decided to also take stock of women's participation in artists' groupings and group exhibitions that are now recorded as milestone events. Beyond numeric data, such consideration can also provide information on the nature of women's involvement in the art world: were they included in the circles of vanguard artists or were they marginalized within this parallel public sphere?

From the perspective of the visual arts, the 1950s as a period in cultural policy and, consequently, art making was marked by two exhibitions. The period started in 1949 with the speech of József Révai, Minister of Culture and Education, opening an exhibition of Soviet painting. In his speech, the minister laid down the party's rigid requirements toward artists.[228] The obligatory artistic program that Révai announced in 1949 was that of "socialist realism". This program was quite similar to the conceptual frame that brought the "production movies" (discussed in Chapter III) to life. Paintings and sculptures (including public space monuments) were to mirror contemporaneous "reality" and safely orient the people between the clear-cut categories of good and bad. Perhaps more ominous than these requirements of content and tone, however, was the demand that this form of expression be the only existing, or at least visible, one.[229] Thus, while fairly more heterogeneous work continued to be produced in individual artists' studios, the public—who was greatly encouraged to meet the visual arts—could only encounter creative

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[228] This exhibition of Soviet painting and its opening speech came only a few months after another show, *Towards a Communal Art* (December 1948, Szabadszervezet). The 9th part of the exhibition series presenting the years 1945–49 evoked a brief interlude of the revival of ealier artistic tendencies and a post-war "enthusiasm and sincere anticipation" (Aradi 1977). Éva Standeisky, focusing on the relation between writers and the communist establishment, also characterizes the postwar years as inspiring, intellectually open, and full of hopes (2005:8, 114–18).

[229] Péter György's study, "The Mirror of Everyday Life, or the Will to a Period Style" (1992) delineates the formation of an exclusive idiom of artistic expression and visual culture. This monopoly of vision in the broadest term also gave way to a more pluralistic structure from the 1970s on (Hegyi 1999:264).

output that fitted this line of schematism (or dogmatism), as this idiom was critically referred to later on.[230]

In II.2.i, i also touched upon how the party state of the early 1950s was to control all aspects of its citizens' life, including social and cultural life. The state suppressed independent civil organizations and set up, instead, centralized councils. It similarly stifled the activity of a variety of artists' groups and brought to life a single union for those practicing fine arts with formal education (Magyar Képző- és Iparművészek Szövetsége/Union of Artists and Applied Artists, from1949) and an affiliation managing related financial matters (Képzőművészeti Alap/Fine Arts Fund, established in 1952).[231] It was a crafty way to subdue individual achievement to communal artistic output that, during this period, practically no solo shows were organized, only group exhibitions, most often in the form of large annual surveys (Aradi 1983:478–80, Kovács 1999:142, Kovalovszky 1999:186). Similarly to subsidizing film-making, the state acted as the patron of those visual artists who gained membership in the Union, and as a mediator of their works towards the public. In return, as it were, artists aligned with the requirements, or did not align and did not get shown; or attempted to maneuver within this framework and loosen its

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[230] Although it might appear as a far-fetched comparison, i can see a degree of similitude in the conflict characterizing the "women's question" and the agenda set for the arts. In both cases, the conflict arose from the fact that novel, even "revolutionary", concepts (such as women's emancipation, and the idea of a communal art, as opposed to art as the self-expression of an exceptional individual, the genius) were coupled with old, if not outdated, perceptions and practices. In Chapter II.2 and II.3, i wrote about the tension between the officially embraced program of women's emancipation and the traditional perceptions of women's social roles that created the context for implementing that program. As for the visual arts, the mirroring of the life of a restructuring society was expected to be delivered in stylistic paradigms dating from the end of the previous century: realism, academism, and a degree of theatrical romanticism (Kovács 1999:141). (In his article, "Historical Painting as a Hungarian Paradigm of Stalinist Art", András Rényi (1992) engages with this painterly idiom, and traces the iconography of the social component of art in paintings delivered in this style.) This aesthetic requirement, however, was not simply a strict guidance of communist cultural policy. It was also a remainder of a "struggle with the natural conservatism of society and audiences at large". Kovács relates this "natural" conservatism to the stylistic-conservatism-combined-national isolationism of the preceding half century, in the artistic canon of which more progressive Hungarian artists had not earned their due place (1983:5). Put in more political terms, this "natural" conservatism was also a heritage of the perception of national culture in the pre-war and war-time conservative-autocratic Horthy-era (1920-1944) and the far-right Arrow Cross rule (1944–45).
[231] Being a member of the Fine Arts Fund had very real material benefits in the form of access to a studio and work commissions; eligibility for social benefits, old-age pension and grant applications; and it also meant belonging to the pool from which regular state purchases selected (Beke 1999:214).

limitations. However, the problem with this maneuvering remained, as Péter Kovács (1981) asserts, that through these negotiations and the concessions achieved, the participants were actually reifying the prescribed framework.

The 1957 *Tavaszi Tárlat* (Spring Show) was a manifest termination of the period of rigid schematism.[232] The exhibition both acknowledged and resumed the pluralism of styles and forms of expressions (Kovács 1982), even if the years following the 1956 revolution brought about renewed centralization and control, and fomented the re-creation of transparent hierarchies within the art system. In 1958, the Studio of Young Artists (Fiatal Képzőművészek Stúdiója, FKS) started operation. The Studio was unique in the system of art institutions in state-socialist societies. It started out as the youth division of the Fine Arts Fund. As such, it was dependent on the central culture financing body, but at the same time it has always retained a degree of autonomy in professional questions.[233] In its capacity to draw emerging art practitioners into a centralized body, the Studio fostered a temperate (as opposed to radical and experimental) creative context but it was continuously pushing, at the same time, to broaden the scope of officially accepted forms of expression.

Art professionals active at the time (Kovács 1983, Aradi et al. 1983, Kovalovszky 1999, Hegyi 1999, interview, Maurer 2009:104) often characterize the coming decades, the 1960s, and especially the 1970s, as a period of growing social and political stability and cultural tolerance as well as intensifying artistic-professional activities. These were years when international exchange, in the form of professional trips, participation at international artists' colonies and symposia (in today's idiom, residency programs) and biennials, opened up to cultural producers, and when the

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[232] In fact, an 1953 party decree already broke with the doctrine of dogmatism, and the following year saw the restoration of independent artists' collectives that were allowed to also pursue art dealing activity (Aknai & Merhán 2002:204–05).

[233] Katalin Aknai and Orsolya Merhán's excellent study (2002) on the Studio's history gives a detailed account of this duality, and shows how the terms and conditions of the relative autonomy of FKS never reached a calculable equlibrum until the 1980s, and how acts of self-government and creative freedom were at times tolerated but penalized at other times.

spaces of contemporary art offered room for the presentation of, and vibrant discussions on, new artistic tendencies. Those in power did continue keeping records on those active in the unofficial cultural life but this no longer led to harsh acts of retribution (Standeisky 2005:319–20), yet the unpredictability of state power representatives' actions and reactions prolonged an atmosphere ripe with moral and ethical conflicts. The reification of the prescribed framework of allowable activities that Kovács underscored had a continuing relevance in these decades. As introduced above, with the 1957 *Spring Show* the grip of dogmatism slackened, and the existence of non-realist, non-representational tendencies became acknowledged, if still not highly appreciated, and the return to the pluralism and vitality of the first post-war years seemed possible. What thwarted this return, Kovács continues, was exactly the reified dogma, the praxis of granting actual existence to a set of abstract rules put forward by cultural politicians—as well as the continuing activity of those who first opposed the aesthetic monopoly but, by time, acquired some safe positions in institutional hierarchy. From these positions, they were now protecting the precepts of a lax socialist realism and were "sticking to an antiquated *esprit de corps*": by the mid-1970s it was not so much official cultural politics that raised objections to new forms of expressions but a network of influential art professionals (Kovács 1983:6 and 1999:150).

The title of the corresponding part of the exhibition series referred to the 1960s as "the sprouting years" and characterized the 1970s with an ever expanding degree of latitude. Towards the end of the decade a new generation of artists emerged "with the natural freedom of the newborn" (Kovács 1987:3). The first collective representation of this new generation—the "neo-avant-garde"—was the *Studio '66* annual exhibition.[234]

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[234] In order to filter out unwanted forms and contents, and to safeguard aesthetic quality as it were, exhibits had to undergo a jury procedure prior being shown to the public. The Studio of Young Artists managed to arrange to circumvent such censorship for its annual show in 1966, and presented all the works that were created in young artists' studios that year. The ensuing political and ideological debates contributed to a revived interest in the visual arts. The same attempt to exhibit without a state jury failed the following year, and several dozens of works were removed just before the show opened, and organizers were impeached.

References to an avant-garde in the discussion of late-20th century art may sound confusing, as Angela Dimitrakaki, a theorist exploring art practices in non-Western Europe, remarks (2005:278). The authors contributing to my two major sources are well aware of this puzzling anachronism and feel the need to clarify its meaning. In the given context, "avant-garde" meant the rejection of conservative aesthetic values upheld for a century and half, and pleading allegiance instead to a denounced artistic tradition (that of the classical avant-garde), alongside the embracement of most current artistic tendencies. Avant-garde became an umbrella term to signify any artistic activity that did not submit to official party ideology (Hegyi 1999:260). Artists belonging to the "neo-avant-garde" were part of the "second" (or "parallel") public sphere. Events that took place within this sphere did not become an integral part of the widely known cultural or intellectual life of the country, were not reviewed or discussed through official channels, and its practitioners did not make their living from this activity (Szoboszlai 1999:293). Yet, this public sphere enjoyed relative freedom, had its own venues, *samizdat* publications, and key figures, including a small number of theorists and critics. Many of the venues were outlying cultural houses, clubs or private apartments used as temporary exhibition sites where most major figures had solo shows and organized other art events.

By the early 1980s, the neo-avant-garde became mainstream, and only a few artists were still categorized as "prohibited",[235] and even in such cases, "it was rather the thorny behavior [of the artists] than the works' real or presumed political message that deterred authorities" (Kovács 1989:3). The general climate of economics and culture was relatively liberal also offering room for individual initiatives (Hegyi 1999:259). Émigré artists were allowed to return to, and exhibit in, Hungary; the selection for the national representation at the 1986 Venice Biennial[236] no longer served the purposes of mere political representation but displayed works by leading masters who,

[235] See III.1.ii (footnote 134).
[236] The Venice Biennial/La Biennale di Venezia is a major contemporary art exhibition that takes place once every two years in Venice, Italy, since its first edition in 1895.

at the early 1980s, contributed most to the artistic paradigm change and the recognition of contemporary languages of art (Kovalovszky 1993:5, Hegyi 1999:269).

1989, and the 1990s as the following decade, mark a period break in the social and economic history of the country, which, however, ought not necessarily entail a caesura from an art historical perspective. But there are a number of reasons suggesting that these dates do serve well as period marks here too. The economic structural changes affected state subsidies for the visual arts, whereby culture financing replaced political censorship as a controlling mechanism (Szoboszlai 1999:292–93). As long as the policy of the "three T-s" was operational, a "tolerated" artist was to sponsor his/her own exhibition while "supported" individuals and shows enjoyed considerable subsidy (apart from exhibition costs, the printing of invitation cards and catalogues as well as the transport and insurance of artworks were covered; see Aknai & Merhán 2002:222 and Sasvári 2003:14).[237] These conditions set for tolerated artists do not so much differ from the general situation today. Any discernible boundary between tolerated and supported artists had become undefined and permeable by the 1980s; those pursuing progressive artistic agendas were not persecuted; rather, they were "only" entirely marginalized by and within the official cultural life of the country (Hegyi 1999:259). After the collapse of socialist rule, the idea of political control over art and artists has expired, and the duality of the "first" and "second" public sphere became senseless. The removal of the political supervision of cultural products however, did not in itself improve the social status of contemporary visual arts, including progressive artistic agendas. Rather, these remained, and continue to remain, located on the periphery of national culture (Szoboszlai 1999:293), while losing the oversight of cultural policy caused a great deal of uncertainty for many artists and authors of how to positions themselves in the "new freedom" (Bán 2003). This peripheral social location of art, combined with the absence of a potent art-

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[237] Reflecting over the relation between state-socialist cultural policy and the material conditions of creative work for writers, Zoltán András Bán arrives to a similar conclusion. Literary works that were dubbed tolerated, says Bán, were in fact supported since they were printed in state print shops, on state-provided paper, and were distirbuted at state-subsidized prices. All this very much supported the so-called merely tolerated artist (2003).

market, however, creates the conditions in which art may indeed function as a counter-public sphere, situated outside the scope of ideological and economic manipulations—as outlined in II.5. The term "interstice" was used by Karl Marx to describe trading communities that elude the capitalist economic context by being removed from the law of profit; art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud borrowed the word and uses it to signify "a space in human relations which fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, but suggests other trading possibilities than those in effect within this system. This is the precise nature of the contemporary art exhibition in the arena of representational commerce: it creates free areas and time spans" (2002:21). The viability of this space of an interstice, however, has been called utopian by other Western theorists because under the hegemony of multinational capitalism, the semi-autonomy of the cultural sphere is lost as capital increasingly saturated the life-world (Carson 2003). But due to its marginal social role and its status as a non-lucrative profession or investment, the sphere of contemporary visual arts in today's Hungary might indeed have elements of such an interstice.

After the system transformation, further most important changes were those occurring in the system of art institutions: several new venues opened (museums, exhibition halls, institutions, galleries, including private ones), and the Art Academy, thus far offering rather old-fashioned education, was re-organized and reformed. The renewal of the only officially issued art review covering contemporary art (*Művészet* /Art, renamed in 1990 as *Új Művészet* /New Art) was followed by the launch of new art periodicals. Similarly to elsewhere in the international art world, a new exhibition practice gained ground. With the emergence of the curator,[238] conceiving the subject of, selecting artists and works, and doing the organizational work for a show, large thematic group exhibitions became the trend (as opposed to general surveys presenting the works of a number of artists without much interrelation in content).

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[238] On debates about the contested role of the curator, see Tannert & Ute 2004.

Access to the actual artefacts of international cultural production as well as to prevalent discourses, theoretical works, artistic and critical trends became easier. Throughout the essays in the catalogues and the edited volume, as well as in other accounts of the state-socialist period (e.g., Aradi et al. 1983, Petrányi 1998), there is a felt need to compare Hungarian developments with international (i.e., Western) tendencies. The aim of these comparisons is to prove that, from the 1960s on, these tendencies first arrived with a bit of delay, but soon the Hungarian scene witnessed the same movements and trends almost simultaneously.[239] This need to compare, however, led Katalin Néray and Péter Kovács, the authors of the catalogue essays for the closing part of the series, *Works and Attitudes: 1990–96*, to remark that while in the international scene, art and politics were strikingly intertwining in the 1990s (Néray 1996:5), local artists had had enough of constantly having to deal with the political context and were happy to submerge in the sheer joy of producing art objects. This is not unrelated to the peculiar understanding of the avant-garde tradition mentioned earlier. Since avant-garde became an overarching synonym for non-official art in the Hungarian scene, the relation of the avant-garde to modernism was blurred (Hegyi 199:260),[240] and mostly non-representational, abstract modes of expression—geometric or figurative—dominated the scene. Hence, modernist art practice, though widely challenged internationally, remained fundamentally uncontested here. As a general picture, the function(s) of art, the identity and goals of art and artists, or art world roles were not called into question and renegotiated. Drawing on the modernist image of the artist as a heroic and exceptional creative figure and on the legacy of the "behavior art" of the counter-culture,[241] many artists continued to view themselves as visionary outsiders.

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[239] See the very poignantly chosen title of the part covering the 1980s: "Us, the Eastern French."

[240] While according to the modernist paradigm, art is about the formal and material problems of a particular medium, avant-garde movements had a social orientation aiming at "revitalizing life" through art, and bringing art and life closer together.

[241] György Galántai, an artist and art organizer from the period, defined "attitude art", or "behavior art", as an indirect, and later direct, form of resistance to the aesthetic norms set by political ideology. (See http://www.artpool.hu/veletlen/naplo/0605a.html; accessed December 6, 2008). In exploring the cultural political background of the underground artworld, art historian Edit Sasvári noted how this

The tendencies described here are some of the traits that characterize the context in which the "feminization of the art world" took place and a feminist theory-inspired critical practice emerged. I mean by the "feminization of the art world" that, by the mid-1990s, a growing number of female students enrolled to art schools and an ever greater number of them did become professional artists.

The typical reason for young women giving up creative work after graduating from the art academy has been the "submersion" in household work and childrearing in case they entered an early marriage.[242] Four out of the six women artists whose work i am discussing in later sections of this Chapter are mothers: Szépfalvi, Radák, Benczúr, and El-Hassan. With the exception of El-Hassan, they all thematize motherhood in their work in this or that way and, in the interviews, referred to maternity and the related household duties as a factor that they find extremely difficult to balance with creative activity (interviews: Szépfalvi 2004:B205–07; Radák 2008:A009–050; Benczúr 2008:A082–85).

Taking notice of the growing number of actively producing women artists, the gallery of the Óbudai Társaskör launched a series of exhibitions entitled *Vízpróba* ("Water Ordeal", 1995). The series did not so much try to state anything about the characteristics of women's art; rather it meant to have a closer look at just what this growing number of female artists had been creating. *Vízpróba* was both preceded and followed by a number of other shows featuring exclusively women artists or adopting the approaches of the feminist critique of art history. The series *Hölgyválasz—Elfelejtett modernizmus a 20-as, 30-as évek művészetében* (The choice of ladies–Forgotten modernism in the art of the 1920s and 30s; Szombathelyi Képtár, 1998,) and another short-lived series of exhibitions in Kecskemét in 1992 set out to discover Hungarian women artists from the

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oppositional behavior or attitude itself was came to be regarded as a category of *aesthetic* judgement even by official critics denouncing it (Sasvári 2003:13–16).

[242] Gallerist Erika Deák holds that while the number of women art degree holders may be now high, a remarkable number of them still disappears from the scene after gradutation, partly for the good old reasons of family life and childrearing (personal communication, January 17, 2008).

19th and early-20th centuries. *Nőnem–Hímnem* (Feminine–Masculine; Bartók 32 Galéria, Budapest, 1996) and the series *Cherchez la Femme!* (Szombathelyi Képtár, 1996-97) displayed international contemporary works, and so did sporadic smaller shows in various venues. In the 2000s two larger exhibitions continued the list, claiming to have a definite intention to present contemporary women artists' work. *Second Sex: Women's Art in Hungary 1960-2000* (Ernst Museum, Budapest, 2000), an intensely debated show, was featured as the event re-opening the museum after a long break in its operation due to refurbishment, and newly headed by a women director. A couple of years later, *NE(A)T: Women on Women* (Kogart Ház, Budapest, 2005) explored young female photographers' and video artists' positions on female identity. This exhibition received no less informed criticism. In neither cases was the very idea of a women-only show, or the ambition to collect responses on issues of gender identity, criticized but the unclarity and ignorance of the curatorial concepts. Critics (András 2000, Bordács 2000) strongly disputed the *Second Sex* exhibition, arguing that the curator (Katalin Keserü) failed to clarify the meanings and the implications of the citation ("the second sex") and the term ("women's art") she had chosen as the title for her show. In addition, the curatorial concept was caught up in a modernist paradigm; insisting on the universality of art, Keserü stated on the opening page of the exhibition catalog: "Women's art is nothing radically different from what we understand by human art" (*Women's Art*, 2000:5). This approach severely limited the scope of the selected artists and artworks, leaving out a number of contemporary artistic positions and new media practices.

In the case of *NE(A)T: Women on Women*, it was not the reviewers again, but many of the invited artists that shied away from legitimating, with their contributions, a perchance feminist-sounding exhibition, although the curators themselves were careful not to label their enterprise with this term. With very few exceptions, the participating artists explored, or rather just reiterated, gender codes in a de-politicized realm of the "personal", rehearsing fairly familiar "female representations" (Stepanovic 2005:4). The show mustered pieces of lens-based media, and this selection—especially still photography—gave way in many instances to projects conceived as

"political ethnography" (Cull 2005:56). The authors of such projects tended to portray ill-fortuned women in ways that impose passivity and victimhood on them, and invite a response of pity.

Several of these above-listed exhibitions issued a catalogue or related publications (András & Andrási 1995, Andrási 1999, Keserü 2000, *Women's Art 2000*, Timár & Bálványos 2004) with articles analyzing the artworks of the participating artists and attempting to locate them in the Hungarian as well as in the broader international artistic arena. Some of these volumes also included historical perspectives; in 1992 a conference brought together art historians researching earlier forgotten and now re-discovered oeuvres from the first decades of the 20th century (Reczetár 1998). This revived interest in the activity of women artists in the early- and mid-20th century led to monographs on a number of these artists (e.g., Kovács 1995, Turai 2002, Hajdu & Bíró 2003, Forgács 2004).

In I.3.ii, i already forecasted my discontents with much of the discourse that emerged from these texts and curatorial concepts. While the art historically oriented studies are certainly important pieces of research contributing to a reconstructed cultural history, these are mostly descriptive accounts of art history "proper", rarely employing methodologies that challenge the value system and basic assumptions of an art historical tradition based on the idea of "autonomous art". Pieces dealing with contemporary artists similarly refrain from a critical approach that would involve the investigation of the social structures within which art is produced. Keeping clear of an ideological feminism, authors—even if they acknowledge the legitimacy of feminist art criticism—use the categories put forward by such critique as any other tool of purely aesthetic analysis, or they follow the discourse of "lack" seeing no substantial relations between Hungarian women artists' dispositions and feminist trends in art. Writings that yield valuable insights for my present analysis are referenced throughout this chapter.

IV.2.ii An overview of women's participation in the Hungarian art scene, 1945–2000s

The individual parts of the exhibition series *The History of Hungarian Art in the 20th Century* attempted to give general overviews of the given periods and therefore are somewhat less likely to be over-determined by a particular perspective. The book chapters, while also aiming at a general view, are to a greater degree impacted by their author's specific take on the task. In some cases this may explain the discrepancies in the data on women's participation from the two sources (*Table 3* and *4*);[243] especially when the shows—unlike the book chapters—also considered applied arts (e.g. in the case of the 1945–49 period). Apart from these slight differences, the data and descriptions from both sources corroborate each other. In the artistic-intellectual scene of the newly forming post-war art world (affiliated with the European School[244] or working independently), there was a small but steady number of women participants, artists or non-artists; many of them coming from artist's families or having artist partners in private life). With the forced demise of independent artists' groups, women's participation significantly dropped within the official art scene of the Stalinist period.[245] As the grip of cultural politics loosened in the 1960s, some women artists already active in the pre-war years (e.g., Erzsébet Schaár) and/or connected to earlier disbanded artists' groups (e.g., Lili Ország) could also re-enter the art world. The 1980s show a decline (5 or 2 women artists mentioned in the exhibition part or in the book chapter; 8.4 or 4.5 % respectively) which is preceded, however, by a definite rise in the 1970s. This increase is largely explained by a peculiar development textile art witnessed, to which i will

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[243] E.g., Lóránd Hegyi (1999) presented a picture of the 1980s from the perspective of "the trans-avant-garde" and "radical eclecticism". These were artistic trends Hegyi was a major theoretician and organiser of, and were, at the same time, almost exclusively male-dominated creative environments; hence the very low number of women mentioned in Hegyi's contribution.

[244] Európai Iskola/European School (1945-1948) was the most important artists' grouping of the postwar years; its initiators and members intended to revive the fine arts scene and infuse it with the new developments in European art.

[245] Participation expressed in percentages can be misleading. 7.1% does not seem extremely low for the first glance, but broken down to actual numbers and names, the book chapter mentions one single painter who became noted for a single most popular, quintessentially Socialist Realist picture (Mrs. Anni Feleki: *Füttyös kalauz/Whistling ticket collector*). The Székesfehérvár show gathers five women, yielding a ration of 9.6%).

return after a brief remark on women's different ratio in the general overview than in defining events or artist groups.

It attracts attention that the parts of the Székesfehérvár exhibition series include a greater number of women than the articles in the volume which tend to limit themselves to "most important" artists and events (*Table 3* and *4*). Just as the book chapters in *Zweite Öffentkichkeit,* focusing on landmark events and canon-creating artistic achievements take note of fewer women than the more comprehensive surveys of the exhibition sequence, women artist's representation is a lot lower in those landmark events and defining artist groupings than within the overall picture. These canon-creating exhibitions or forums (such as the two *Iparterv* shows, *Szürenon,* the *R-show*, or the Balatonboglár Chapel Studio; see *Table 5*) hardly featured any women artists, or if they did, oftentimes these were *not* prominent members of the art scene, unlike the male participants who are all noted figures of the neo-avant-garde.[246] In other words, only few women artists that the more exhaustive period surveys do note participated in milestone events or artists' collectives of the era.[247] Apart from shedding light on the essentially male-dominated nature of the alternative art world despite the factual presence of a number of female artists, the non-involvement of women artists in benchmark events and important groups has a special significance in the given context. Like i noted earlier, from the 1960s through the 80s, forming groups and stepping up jointly was a conscious act of self-defense, if not a "lobbying" strategy of a kind, to counterbalance the aesthetic demands of official cultural politics. The so-called "behavior art" rooted in this oppositional attitude shaped the identity of most members of the progressive art world. With a very few exceptions (Dóra Maurer, El Kazovszkij, Ágnes Háy, Ilona Keserü),

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[246] The creative workshop InDiGo had a relatively high number of active female participants (19 out of a total of 50); only three of them, however, were visual artists. InDiGo stands for **In**ter**di**szciplináris **Go**ndolkodás / Interdisciplinary Thinking, and the group indeed involved young people from various wakes of intellectual life (mathematicians, architects, philosophers, filmmakers, etc.), but its core were (male) visual artists.

[247] The exhibition catalogues, invitiation cards, or recently published comprehensive source books (e.g., Novotny 2002, Klaniczay & Sasvári 2003, Hornyik & Szőke 2008) clearly list the names of participating artists. Thus we can quite certainly rule out that women did participate in these events in higher proportions but they were deleted in subsequent narratives or descriptions.

women were not part of these forums and did not share this group identity. The community forming around textile art was unique in this respect.

Textile art *by default* has always been a women-dominated area and is usually viewed as a form of applied art or a kind of craft rather than "grand art"; its products are practical or decorative objects as opposed to distinctive works of art. In Hungary, however, between the late-1960s and mid-80s, the domain of textile art accommodated those concepts and progressive forms of artistic expression that were lesser tolerated in fine arts "proper" (painting and sculpting). Having been regarded as a branch of decorative arts where no countercultural activity might take place, the authorities did not exercise control over the workshops and showrooms of textile art, which then enjoyed considerable freedom while the related creative praxis was also officially supported. The boundaries of the genre have expanded, and textile art has gradually become highly conceptual and experimental,[248] an independent carrier of artistic thought (Fitz 2002, Kovalovszky 1999:206–07). At this point, it remained only the material—textile—that connected this form of expression to the applied arts; the problems and ideas it addressed were those that the period's conceptual, constructivist and abstract-geometric tendencies also engaged with. This transformation, i suggest, has "desexualized", or rather de-sensualized, textile art. As the organizer of the *Textile after textile* show introduces them, some of these works were "mere skeletons of textile" or abstract formulae representing the idea of textile taking "an ascetic distance from the coaxing qualities of the material itself" (András Bán, quoted in Fitz 2002:30). Anna Wessely (1981) reviewed the 1980/81 workshop, a practically black-and-white exhibition, bereft of any aspiration to be visually pleasing.

Due to its heightened conceptual affiliation, several male artists of the neo-avant-garde took part in textile art exhibitions, yet the ratio of women and men artists tended to be the opposite than in

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[248] This was also indicated by the appearance of *thematic* exhibitions of textile art and by the very titles of these shows; e.g., *Textile after textile* (Textil textil után1978), *Textile without textile* (Textil textil nélkül, 1979), *Vital textile* (Eleven textil, 1988).

regular exhibitions. Partly because of this reversed gender-imbalance within textile art, i tend to view the Velem workshop—the site of biannual textile artists' symposia—as a *community of practice*.[249] Etienne Wenger, cognitive anthropologist, one of the originators of the concept, defines communities of practice as groups formed "by the sustained pursuit of shared enterprise" (1998:45); a band of artists seeking new forms of expression is one of Wenger's own examples for such a community. The knowledge that is shared and learned in communities of practice is social capital; the individual as an active participant in the practices of social communities constructs his/her identity through these communities. Gender is also being produced and reproduced through membership in different communities of practice (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, quoted in Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:16). Even though textile art in its "progressive" form was stripped of the qualities that usually relegate it to the sphere of *l'art féminine*, and became instead a medium of constructivist and conceptual experimentation, some of the works produced established some thematic links with the gender of their creators.[250] Even more importantly, the women working at the Velem workshop seem to have formed a community of practice resembling of the male circles of vanguard artists. While performative genres were a preferred form of expression with international women artists at the time (and most especially those belonging to the Feminist Art Movement), no women in the Budapest scene were seen in performances unless as un-agentic participants in male-authored pieces. In Velem, however, female artists engaged with Performance Art and Action Art whereas the Performance/Happening/Action Art scene in the capital city in the 1970s and 80s remained an almost exclusively male-dominated art form. It is from the perspective of membership, i propose, that the creative workshop of Velem is particularly interesting in exploring the gender dynamics within the unofficial art scene.

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[249] Velem is a village in Western Hungary. The biannual artists' camps here took place from the early-1970s till the mid-80s.

[250] That is how Péter Fitz describes a work (*Tükörtér/Mirrorspace*) by Lujza Gecser: "In a raspingly clear-cut and obfuscatingly bare space [defined by a deceptive array of transparent and opaque walls] stood distressingly lonely women-shaped shells [rough canvas or silk formed and hardened by enamel] (2002: 37). This mirrorspace is a trap; everything seems to be strikingly public yet hopelessly concealed."

The few exceptions to men-authored performance outside the textile workshop were a piece by Orsolya Drozdik to be discussed in IV.3.ii, the sound poetry performances of the Novi Sad-based Katalin Ladik, and the scarcely recorded pieces by Judit Kele and Dóra Maurer, about which i found unprocessed documents (scripts, drafts, photos, and invitations) in the archives of the Artpool Art Research Center, Budapest, and retrieved information during my interviews of the artists. As these and other unprocessed archival documents—that i will introduce below—suggested, and my interviews confirmed, both Kele and Maurer turned out to be enthralling informants from the perspective of the availability and perceived relevance or irrelevance of feminist critical perspectives in Hungary in the 1970s.

Early in her career, in the 1960s, Dóra Maurer (b. 1937) acted out a small number of Fluxus-kind-of Events[251] with her female fellow-student, Vera Vásárhelyi, did several series of conceptually based and analytically inclined photo-actions, studied objects of nature, and made a series of "*Actions in Nature*" with materials such as vegetation, fur, animal parts, etc. In János Sturcz' reading, these latter pieces sometimes involved sensuous or erotic allusions. Around the mid-1970s, a creative turn marked Maurer's artistic direction: she took to painterly experiments with geometric shapes, color qualities, and spatial effects. Inspired by feminist interventions in art theory, Sturcz sees this creative turn in gendered terms. According to him, with this shift, Maurer "eliminated the 'feminine', sensual, erotic, voluptuous allusions" and the enigmatic combinations of various materials, and switched over to "masculinely monumental geometric formalist post-hard edge painting" (Sturcz 2000b:42). Her art slid toward a "masculinely" rational and abstract direction, while her personality and dynamic activity as an art organizer, her systematic, rational thinking, as well as her creative "perseverance and 'masculine' consistency [...] largely contributed to the recognition of the intellectual equality of women in Hungarian art" (ibid, 35). Sturcz also

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[251] "Event" is a genre invented by the Fluxus network of artists. The concept of the event is based on that of a musical script: it contains simple instructions and the performer (any performer) is supposed to perform them.

suggested that this turn was a submission, on Maurer's part, to the standards of a male professional world (interview, Maurer 2009:501–10). Maurer disagrees with this evaluation for, according to her own narrative, her preference for forms of geometric expression and spatial arrangements goes back to her high-school years. She tried to leave behind lines and basic geometric shapes for more representational forms until she finally accepted—and this acceptance marks the artistic turn—her own attraction towards such abstract ways of expression (ibid., 516–26). Even so (and having been informed about her husband's intellectual impact on her work around the time of her creative shift [ibid.]), one is tempted to see in Maurer's case women professionals' frequent—and often unconscious—compliance with the expectations of a professional male world. As it has been often observed, women artists and professionals often opt for disregarding, when in public, their personal experiences as women in order not to contradict the precepts of an allegedly gender-neutral world of experiences (c.f. Wessely 2004:43, Pollock 1996:69–72, Bordo 1995:482-83). Interrogating femininity, or what it means to be a woman creator, was viewed as a psychologizing exercise, as Maurer admitted elsewhere (*"F": Nők a művészetben*, 1979), and as such may not be welcome in a professional environment preoccupied with strictly aesthetic questions of form and color and the like.

However, another set of unprocessed (and, until my interview with Maurer, unidentified) documents i found in the Artpool archives shows that Maurer, for a short period in the late-1970s, took an effort to explore what the feminist critic of art history and contemporary art practice were about. These documents are the artist's type-written interview with the members of the Vienna-based union of women artists "IntAkt",[252] her notes taken after the interview, a tape-

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[252] Apparently, Maurer who was partly based in Vienna since 1967, mediated relevant information between the Austrian capital and the Hungarian scene just as most of the male artist circles (e.g., the Zugló Circle, Pécsi Műhely) did by acquiring, translating and sharing international art publications or personal experiences.

recorded radio broadcast, and a type-written response from Zsuzsa Simon[253] entitled "Four questions i asked myself at Dóra Maurer's feminist meeting on March 20, 1979" (all documents date from 1979). The 1979 radio broadcast was a discussion that Maurer initiated and moderated about women's position in the visual arts (*"F": Nők a művészetben*/"F": Women in the arts, 1979).[254] Maurer today says that her interest in feminist thought was part of a general intellectual openness and was not more personally motivated than "the interest of a bug collector in any unfamiliar creature" (email correspondence, December 3, 2008), but, as the above documents reveal, she made substantial efforts in the late-1970s to disseminate, both publicly and more privately, issues of feminist criticism.

The manuscripts of both Maurer and Simon as well as the speakers' contribution in the radio broadcast *"F": Nők a művészetben* show a clear understanding of feminist thought on the identity of women as social subjects and creative workers and the inequalities they face on both levels. Also, Maurer's interview documented how the Austrian feminists and fellow-artists were intrigued by the working of a gender regime in Hungary that legally guaranteed women's rights to professional self-development.

Another Hungarian woman artist engaged with Performance Art, Happenings, visual poetry and sound performances, Katalin Ladik (b. 1942), lived in Novi Sad, Yugoslavia (later Serbia and Montenegro) till 1992, when she moved to Budapest. Since the mid-1970s she came to perform to Hungary regularly; before that date she only had sporadic appearances within the Budapest underground scene. In my interview with her, Ladik built her narrative around the complex struggle with existential, artistic and—equally importantly—social issues and difficulties she as a female artist faced. Many of these issues are transposed into her works in the form of a set of

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[253] Zsuzsa Simon (b. 1943) is an art historian. From 1979 on, she hosted exhibitions and lectures in her home, and between 1980–83 she was one of the initiators and organizers of Rabinec Gallery, the first (unofficially operating) commercial gallery in Budapest.
[254] Her discussion partners were artists Judit Kele, Zsuzsa Szenes, art historians Ágnes Gyetvai and Lóránd Hegyi, and another unidentified voice.

recurrent motives: androgyny, the anima/animus duality, or the usage of gender-neutralized figures (the angel) or gender-neutralized linguistic devices (interview, Ladik 2008:a000–50) as well as the "scream therapy" (ibid., 265) to vocalize, very literally, gendered conflicts in her private life. On the occasion of her first appearance on the Hungarian unofficial scene in 1970, she performed an untitled piece that brought her relative renown in Yugoslavia—not so much in her native Novi Sad but in Zagreb and Belgrade, and not only in professional circles but in tabloids as well (ibid., 336–465). As she recalls, this performance brought her quite a different reputation in Hungary. The performance was a quasi-shamanistic fertility ritual in which the performer (Ladik) recited her sound poetry pieces, accompanied them in rudimentary musical instruments, and was dressed in a fur gown that revealed one of her breasts. While this piece perfectly fitted the profile of alternative theater and art festivals (Bitef; Festival of Expanded Media) and was welcome in the above Yugoslav cities, the event caused outrage in Budapest. It earned Ladik the epithet "the undressing poetess", and the artist identifies this *entrée* as a lasting reason hindering her official recognition in Hungary. At this time, Ladik commented, one of the distinctive artistic features of the acclaimed Hungarian film director, Miklós Jancsó, was using stark naked female extras in his films without no apparent function. By contrast, a woman using her own body (in a clearly motivated way) was hardly tolerable (ibid.) This restriction is especially sharp when juxtaposed with one solid reason why international women artists have often chosen to turn to Performance Art: through the staging of their actual bodies, they could assert themselves as speaking subjects, instead of featuring as mere objects of depiction or spectacle.

When disregarding issues of sexual autonomy, Ladik's personal narrative matches that of Zsuzsa Simon and Dora Maurer. In the interviews, they all related that they took the instantiation of women's emancipation for granted (Ladik 2008:A076–156, Simon 2009:070–85, Maurer 2009: 110–18). "Emancipation has been achieved", had declared Simon in her manuscript (Simon 1979), adding that she could not compare women's current social situation with an oppressive

previous one for she had not lived through that. Especially when compared with the previous generation, the internalized desire for "emancipation" as well as part of their lived experience promised to bring women's equality (*női egyenjogúság*, as it figured in my respondents' accounts) within reach. Both Simon and Ladik saw the task and possibility of creating one's own financial and existantial[255] independence as a social norm generally endorsed by women around them.[256] In Maurer's account, the discourse on women's equality was indeed liberating, and the fact that she as a woman has never encountered resistance or discrimination as long as her professional output proved to be good, was a major reason why feminist thought did not eventually appeal to her. Nevertheless, a host of gender-based difficulties or inequalities come to surface in the narratives.

These delibarations center around the social, professional and personal relations of women-creators, admitting that a theoretical endorsement of equal rights and actual everyday life practices did not necessarily corroborate each other. To start an artistic career, they had to overcome an environment that hardly conditioned them to creative work, but expected, and prepared for, domesticity and relative passivity. A male-dominated professional environment offered entrance on one's own right but required a degree of "masculinization" and maintained double standards for male and female behavior (Simon, 104–10). Maurer regarded these double standards "self-imposed barriers", and deemed observing them an act of "personal diffidence" (interview, 330–46). Simon thought of men's social and professional privileges as something "onthologically given" (interview, 154). Relations in the private sphere often called for the subordination of women's professional aspirations to male artist-partners. Interestingly, at this point, the narratives did not so much recounted the individual respondents' own life stories but referred to cases of colleagues (Maurer 2009:192–213, Simon 2009:209–18). Where the narratives returned to the respondents' own lives was the experience of male partners' professional jealousy.

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[255] Under this label, Simon also included lifestyle issues such as marrying or having children in or out of wedlock (interview, 2009:076–84).
[256] Ladik comes from a working class family, and very consciously took advantage of the opportunities of education and employment newly opening for women (interview, 2008A:076–90).

This proved to be a situation difficult to manage even for Maurer (interview, 276–93), and led to actual divorces in the life of Ladik (interview, A242–66). Ladik herself set this issue as a major motive structuring our interview. As the artist related, she was ready to enter a traditional marriage and family relation and take on the extra effort to produce creative work, but she very much resented if her partners were jealous of the little time she could devote to art making, and was not ready to take infringements of her creative freedom.[257]

The testimony of these women helped me to fill up with empirical evidence the category of "independents" described in Mária Neményi's research (1999:136–40; summarized in II.4). As Neményi characterized the women she sorted in this group were people in the lives of whom self-fulfillment ranked higher than the adaptation to socially assigned gender roles, even if that required embarking on a difficult path. However, beside pointing to a positively influencing social environment, even a social constructionist feminist researcher (like myself) has to leave room for quite individual personal traits that shape people's subjectivity. Partly based on some colleagues' portrayal of these artists (of Maurer: Sturcz 2000b:35; interview, Radák 2008:005/12; on Simon: interview, Maurer 2009:219–26; on Ladik: János Sugár, personal communication, August 26, Szigliget), and partly based on my own impressions on the occasion of our encounters, it is most likely that these women have always been strong-willed and self-sufficient persons. And while the state's emancipation discourse or its policies certainly did not produce their overall subjectivities, these apparently bore upon whether or not the individual saw certain subject construction viable or constrained.

While Maurer hardly refused any of the gendered problematizations of feminist thinkers, she maintained that herself, just like others around her, have viewed these as private conflicts requiring individual solutions (interview, 274–86, 318–26). It remains to be explored what were

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[257] One such case, when she was invited for the first time to participate in a happening (*UFO*, 1968) and meet members of the semi-official Budapest art scene, became a ground for divorce (interview, A271-88).

the reasons for this insistence on tackling difficulties solely on the individual level. Was it an unspoken consent to certain gender-based injustices, willingly assumed in return of a range of newly opening possibilities? Was this willing consent brought about effectively by a political rhetoric that silenced discussions on the difficulties of reconciling traditional and "emancipated" lifestyles and personal aspirations, and one which did not identify private and interpersonal relations as a major sphere of reform? Can individual coping strategies be regarded as a usual feature of a context in which members of disadvantaged groups do not seek political connections to one another? Had this lack of political solidarity also got something to do with the atomization of society that the political leadership of state-socialist Hungary so powerfully effectuated?[258] Yet another potential answer lies in the general disinterest of the Hungarian avant-garde of the 1970s–80s in contemporaneous social reality.[259] Within this self-isolated world, the promise of equal treatment "as long as one's output proves to be good" (c.f. Maurer above) and the lived reality of little overt institutional discrimination may have helped to overshadow, and misrepresent as naturalized gender imbalance ("onthological given"), the more subtle processes of the marginalization of women and women's concerns within the counter-culture.

From one respect, however, the progressive art world can be seen as a culturally marginalized social group whose members did seek political connections of some kind to one another sharing a common "oppositional" role construction (c.f. "behavior art" above). And as Edit András asserted, within unofficial underground art, all forms of minority or sub-cultural identities tended to fall victim to this counter-cultural commission; gender, too, has been denied to have any relevance when collective political identity was at stake (András 1995:26). Here lies yet another question to be examined. Maurer made references to a small number of women (artists, art historians, writers) who, as she recalled, were receptive to feminist ideas and were more insistent

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[258] This process of "atomization", "infantilization" and "alienation" is traced in Hankiss 1990:11–50.
[259] On this see Szántó 1993, György 2008, and Zsuzsa Simon's narrative (interview, 2009:245–50).

than herself on a continued engagement with them. One of the six women Maurer named[260] committed suicide in 1991 (at the age of 39), the others have all left Hungary around the turn of the 1970s and 80s. The question that arises is whether these were all isolated events of emigration, or there was any meaningful connection between the strong male-domination of the Hungarian avant-garde of the period and the departure of these creative women demonstrating an interest in the gender analysis of second-wave feminism.

One of these women, Orsolya Drozdik,[261] left Hungary in 1978. Drozdik's recollection of the neo-avant-garde circle seem to confirm András's above claim: the patriarchal perceptions of the alternative art world did not differ much from the patriarchal perceptions defining official culture, and women's perspectives could not form part of the prevalent artistic idiom of the period (Drozdik 2006:57). Thus while her early work, in which she addressed the situation of a female artist within the artistic tradition, was not exactly refused, she felt that she was dealing with this subject in a vacuum (interview, 2001:473–67).

Another artist mentioned by Maurer, Judit Kele (b. 1944), left Hungary in 1980 and is now based in Paris. I interviewed her in 2005, before the question of emigration narratives emerged in my research. Although the reasons for her emigration was not explicitly targeted in the interview, Kele did identify two interrelated motives. Both reasons pertain to a very low tolerance for dissenting attitudes and practices within the art scene at the time (interview, 2005:080–86, 098–114). At times, this intolerance had gendered overtones. Being frustrated by an outdated, academic and non-inspiring art curriculum at the art school, and with nude drawing in particular, Kele did a spontaneous action with a female classmate. They locked up in one of the studios, and were drawing each other nude, engaged in various performative activities (climbing a ladder, e.g.). This proved to be an act for which Kele was nearly expelled from the Art Academy, was charged

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[260] Art historian Ágnes Gyetvai; artist Orsolya Drozdik, Judit Kele, Mariann Kiss, Julia Veres, and writer Zsuzsa Forgács.
[261] Since Drozdik has been party based in Budapest since the 1990s and thus forms part of the contemporary scene, i will discuss her artistic activity in IV.3.ii.

with homosexuality, and caused her female colleague to avoid her company interview, 2005:087–91. When she left, she embarked on a peculiarly gendered escape route. Intended as a performance for the 1980 Biennale de Paris, Kele posted an advertisement in the French journal *Libération* in which she presented herself as a work of art, and offered this artwork for an auction. The auction took part in the Musée d'Art Moderne Paris with participants selected from among those who responded to the ad. For 1 CHF participants could purchase one minute of possession of the "artwork". One bidder, however, purchased her for several years, and was insisting on having the art object (Kele herself) in his home. At the time this was only possible through marriage, so Kele divorced her Hungarian husband, and the new wedding was organized. Kele remained "in the possession" of the French husband till 1983, and she had to return the price for the "unserved" possession period upon divorce (interview, 115–187).

If subsequent research ascertains that the departure of some women artists taking a gendered approach to their own art practice was indeed meaningfully connected to the indifference, "vacuum", or upbraiding that these approaches met, than the vanguard art of the period will have to be seen as regressive and reactionary insofar as it withheld the new possibilities that the simultaneous social developments offered for women. If so, the Hungarian neo-avant-garde appears to carry on the spirit of the historical avant-garde in yet another way. As Alessandra Comini characterized early 20th-century vanguard art, running parallel with the first wave of feminism, it was a movement in which social and creative freedom was a freedom for men only because it depended on the domination of others (1982).

I stopped measuring the degree of women's participation in large group exhibitions after 1989 (except for those providing yet another survey of earlier decades). Earlier on i had already referred to a number of exhibitions that registered a growing number of active female members of the arts community and started to showcase their output. Nevertheless, in order to provide some evidence for the process i called the "feminization of the art world", i did look at the

gender constitution of more recently formed artist groups and/or artistic initiatives, many of which have been artist-run projects. Some artist groups that were formed in the 1980s and continued to be active in the 1990s (*Table 6*) continue to yield similarly low proportions of female members as earlier formations. From the 2000s on, however, creative collectives and initiatives start to show strikingly reversed gender proportions: women's lowest representation in my sample from the post-2000 period is 50%, but generally is at least 75%, while women-only formations are not rare. Five out of the six women artists to be discussed in IV.3 had their so-called mid-career solo shows in major Hungarian art institutions and/or represented Hungary at the Venice Biennale.[262]

In the 2000s, female art critics, curators, gallery personnel (commercial or non-profit) and initiators of new projects and spaces—all considered to be institutional power positions—have outnumbered their male colleagues in the Budapest scene. This creates a sense of equalized opportunities, but art practitioners will rarely relate this seemingly favorable condition to the oft-described processes of the feminization of professions. One of my interviewees, Eszter Radák, artist and, since 2000, an instructor at the Budapest Fine Arts Academy, did comment on the changing gender ratio of art students with women by far outnumbering men, and directly connected it with the fact that being an artist is not a profitable occupation (interview, Radák 2008:205–12). This was the case in earlier decades as well, but then this was more of a general condition, as economic differences between most members of society were less significant and economic marginalization less threatening than today. Also, due to the heightened attention cultural producers received from cultural politics during the state-socialist period, being and artist

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[262] Ágnes Szépfalvi—*Recent Works,* Ludwig Museum Budapest—Museum of Contemporary Art (2004)
Orshi Drozdik— *Adventure in Technos Dystopium,* Ernst Museum (1990); *A Retrospective,* Ludwig Museum Budapest—Museum of Contemporary Art (2002)
Emese Benczúr— *Tackling Techné,* 48th Venice Biennial (1999); *Visible/Invisible,* Szent István Király Múzeum, Székesfehérvár (2005)
Róza El-Hassan—*Aperto,* 45th Venice Biennial (1993); *R Thinking/Dreaming about Overpopulation: A Retrospective,* Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle, Budapest (2006)
Kriszta Nagy—*Up Until Now,* WAX Culture Factory, Budapest (2007).

had a kind of romantic air of social importance which is no longer there. What Haraszthy &

Hrubos (2002) identify as possible reasons explaining the growth of women's proportion among

researchers and scholarly workers may apply here too as all these areas collect women with

professional and/or creative ambitions: considerably shrinking state subsidy, dwindling financial

remuneration, precarious employment conditions, and the declining social prestige of the

profession. In the early 1990s two of Budapest's three largest state-owned galleries/museums of

contemporary art (Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle and Ludwig Museum—Museum of Contemporary

Art) were headed by women; and when the third one (Ernst Museum) became independent from

Műcsarnok, it also re-opened its gates under the directorship of a woman art historian. This

changed in most recent years. The newly appointed directors of the two largest and most

representative contemporary exhibition sites (Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle [new director appointed in

2005] and Ludwig Museum [2008]) are men again (Ernst Museum was subsumed under

Műcsarnok in 2005). In recent years these prominent institutions have been re-gaining

prominence and their status is promoted through public-private partnership, whereby they may

come again to fulfill, to a degree, functions of political representation. In the past years,

contemporary art started to be seen as potential capital investment. It is too early to tell whether

these two processes—men re-appearing in the most propitious positions of a feminized

professional community, and the moderate rise in prestige of these positions and institutions—

are coincidental, or there is a meaningful relation between them.

One status within the art world is still almost exclusively reserved for men: that of the artist-

professorship at the Budapest Fine Arts Academy. Up until 2000, Dóra Maurer (see above) was

the only woman hired as full artist-professor ("mester"/"maestro"). Since then, the Painting

Department has employed two more women as associate professor (Orsolya Drozdik and Eszter

Radák, to be discussed later in the Chapter). The Intermedia Department, supposedly the only

progressive-spirited division at the Academy in terms of its artistic profile, has never hired any

woman (other than occasional visiting faculty). Senior artist-professor positions here are filled with the great figures of the neo-avant-garde. Since the Hungarian Fine Arts Academy is still very much indebted to the master-discipline educational system,[263] the presence or absence of female artists as professors/masters might have a serious impact on students' development and the shaping of their fields of artistic inquiry.

IV.3 Self-representers. Artists and oeuvres that have mobilized feminist interpretative approaches

IV.3.i Negotiators of female identity: Without strategy (Ágnes Szépfalvi, Eszter Radák)

In 1999 art historian Edit András, one of the initiators of a gender-conscious art critical discourse in Hungary, made the following comment about the artistic output and attitude of newly emerging women artists: "gender aspects appear in the works […]; yet, in self-reflection and statements of intention, gender is glaringly absent" (András 1999b). The interviews i conducted with some of the women artists whose names the incipient discourse carried drove me to refine and supplement András's statement. I would propose that gender aspects are not glaringly absent in women artists' self-reflection; the resulting observations, however, may not be voiced in statements communicated to a broader public, and are not normally formulated as a systemic critique of social relations or conditions within the art world. These reflections may even recognize ways in which family, culture, material as well as social conditions script gender roles, but the artists do not feel it "appropriate" to directly contest these scripts in their works. Rather than attributing this attitude to a reserve towards gender- or feminism-related problems only, i would relate it to a more general evasion, in the Hungarian scene, of taking up clear theoretical positions, coming out with lucid artist's statements, or working with clearly set agendas and

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[263] In this system, art students belong to a class of a senior artist ("master") who supervises and often strongly influences their professional advancement.

strategies. This holds true to the two women artists i am discussing in the present section, Ágnes Szépfalvi (b. 1965) and Eszter Radák (b. 1971). Both admit that they initially turned to and pursued gender-related problematizations without an awareness of related theoretical or art critical inquiries, and that they are fairly apolitical artists insofar as they are most pre-occupied with painterly problems and are producing work for galleries and the art market (interview, Radák 2008:596–600, Szépfalvi 2008:265–78). I present the two of them in the same section because, in my view, their quest for a female artist's identity is deeply intertwined with negotiating their relation to the artistic tradition of their medium—painting. Both Szépfalvi and Radák are painters and even though their works differ considerably in painting method and subject-matter, they both paint narrative-figurative pictures.

As art historian Katalin Timár reminds in a catalogue of Szépfalvi, painting, even after the first wave of feminist art, remained an area typically dominated by men; in Hungary, however, a great number of young women artists have chosen the genre of painting (Timár 1998). Also, within the feminist art movement, painting was denounced as an outmoded negatively-loaded medium for women and a great many of feminist artists turned rather to mixed media, film, video, performance and scripto-visual works (Deepwell 1996a). Yet, as Katy Deepwell argues, painting, or rather the re-appropriation and re-working of the codes of an outdated form and convention has a feminist potential when it is understood as a vehicle for personal expression and is "linked to a common understanding of women as *speaking out* or *giving voice* to perspectives which are in opposition to men's or *different*" (ibid.). I argue again that without consciously employing a strategy, both Szépfalvi and Radák apprehend and invoke this potential to bring gender difference into play, while remaining deeply indebted to painting as their fundamental form of artistic expression.

After participating in a few women-only self-organized exhibitions in her art student years at the Budapest Fine Arts Academy (Szépfalvi 2004:A000–015), Szépfalvi almost became one of the

(female) art graduates giving up their artistic career after leaving school due to early marriage and motherhood. However, when the five-year "pause" due to pregnancy, childrearing and a chronic lack of a studio finally ended in 1995, Szépfalvi returned to painting and became part of the generation of young women artists that emerged in the mid-1990s, although she herself attended the academy between 1984–90. As she recalls her student years, she was the only woman student in her class and other painting classes had similarly low numbers of women. Szépfalvi found it difficult to conform to the expectations of both her family and the artist community of what a (woman) painter should act and look like (interviews, 2004:A251–63 and 2008:030–76). Usually wearing stylish two-piece suits with high heels, and not joining the predominantly male gang in their nightly bohemian pub discussions, she did not quite assimilate to this environment. The remarks and teasing she received were not strongly derisive as the artist recalls; she could have easily retorted, had she had the self-confidence back then—yet, they created a relatively uncomfortable milieu.[264] Also in the longer run, it took her a long while to verbalize that which was painful and outrageous in this and other settings, and to recognize the inequalities appearing in a myriad of tiny things (Szépfalvi 2004:A154–72).

Rather than confronting this environment with alternative female values, Szépfalvi's intention was to align and keep to the rules (Szépfalvi 1999:111). Yet, her decision to paint narrative-figurative pictures that were considered doubly out-of-place, contradicts this intention of lining up. The narrativity and figurativity of her pieces did not conform to the neo-avant-garde's preoccupation with structural and formal questions; and as a genre, painting was becoming outmoded at the time when "the death of painting" had been announced and artists were enthusiastic about installations, conceptual and dematerialized works. More than the painting style alone, Szépfalvi's recurrent subject-matter was also unusual. Female figures dominate her

[264] The unacceptance of decisively feminine looks comes back in the narrative of another artist, Kriszta Nagy (discussed in IV.3.iv): the stated reason for Nagy's unsuccessful first application to the Art Academy was that "we do not accept divas here!" (interview, Nagy 2005:B082–100). Anna Wessely sees in such reactions the reflection of "typically male interests, fears and concerns and the need of men to distance themselves from the world of women and thus defend male autonomy" (2004:51).

pictures, flaunting explicitly stylish, elegant and high-class womanliness, all of them shining with delicate and attractive femininity.

Art critics' opinions now differ about whether the "unabashed" figurativity and strong narrative character of Szépfalvi's painting style was novel at the time. The artist herself and her reviewer János Szoboszlai (1995) think so, remarking that the painter's notorious choice of subject-matter, her lyrical-sensual mode of expression and the transmitted artistic attitude irritated fellow-artists and critics alike; while art historian Ágnes Berecz sees Szépfalvi as the follower of a freshly formulated trend (Berecz 2001:50). Szoboszlai also offered a sensible explanation of how the figurativity and purported sentimentality of the paintings relate to the artist's woman-ness. In his argument, the two factors do not relate on the basis that the preference of figurativity, lyrical expression and emotions are "natural" feminine qualities. As Szoboszlai contends, it had to be precisely a woman, marginalized anyway and thus not anxious about the loss of her mainstream status, who could afford to make an artistic statement about the possibility to ignore the current art world consensus (Szoboszlai 1995).[265] In explaining her particular subject choice, the artist said that she has been simply delighted at the sight of beautiful people, the average would not interest anyone anyway (Szépfalvi 1999:113). The scenes in which Szépfalvi captures her exquisite and apparently wealthy women are most often taken from printed media, television, or popular films. This circumstance lessens the chance that the paintings would have much to do with the transgression or destabilization of dominant representations of women. Yet, a closer reading of Szépfalvi's account for her subject choice reveals an intention to sanction the expression of her woman-self and counterbalance the effects of allegedly gender-neutral public and professional spheres where women can only enter if they "disavow [their] bodies and act as part of the

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[265] A couple of years after Szoboszlai's article was written, figurativy, narrativity and photo/hyper-reality did become a painting trend, and Szépfalvi is now registered as one of its first representatives. This development was lengthily discussed in a series of articles in the art magazine *Műértő* in the course of 2003, and later the Institute of Contemporary Art in Dunaújváros devoted a group exhibition to the topic (*Technoreal?— Egy vita margójára/ Technoreal?—Annotations to a Debate;* July–August, 2004). All this, however, does not obliterate the fact that when Szépfalvi started to work in that style, she was not yet backed up by confirmed canonic expectations.

brotherhood" (Pateman, quoted in Fodor 2003:34). The artist characterized her choice as impertinent and teasing, rather than combative, and as one that also gives way for an ongoing quest for femininity: "[s]omehow i really like women. I've always painted women. […] That's what I'm familiar with. […] Women can write kitschy stuff wholeheartedly while men will blush or be cynical when doing so. […] Women will do unexpected and bold things, which embarrasses people" (Szépfalvi 1999:110, 113). What is being negotiated here is the visibility, in artistic representation, of the domain that she as a woman is familiar or can identify with. The gesture of turning, or freezing, particular banal moments into paintings, a venerable genre of the visual arts, lends these "snapshots"—featuring e.g., female friends spending time together (*Barátnők*/(Women)friends; *Bár*/Bar; *Café*[266]) or pictures of brides—a heightened relevance. Szépfalvi switches from an unadmittedly male-defined universe to a woman-defined and – populated one. She only occasionally paints the women's male partners, and even then the men's presence is often practically erased as their faces are blocked from our view (*Kocsis menyasszony*/Bride in a Car, 1996); or the size of the male figure is significantly smaller in scale (*Mozi*/Movie, 2002); or because the female figure, passive and frail as she is, nevertheless blocks the male figure out (*Like a Doll*, 2005).

Although Szépfalvi's pictures are well-painted and look nice, the pleasure that comes from looking at them is contaminated with a degree of uneasiness, as several of her reviewers have remarked (Néray 1998, Timár 1998, Tóth 2003). The uneasiness most probably results from the fact that unlike the throng of young women usually offered for view in media images, most of the women Szépfalvi paints have attributes other than their pleasing appearance; they bring their own narratives into the image. Szépfalvi's women come across as powerful and self-sufficient even while they retain their charming femininity. The painter also subverts the usually unequal role distribution between the owner and the object of the gaze: the beautiful woman who, according

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[266] The original title of this work is in English, that is why i only provide an English version. I will do the same in the case of other works of Szépfalvi or other artists where the original title or text included is in English.

to her ordinary role in dominant modes of representation, merely *appears* (c.f. Berger 1972:47), here often owns the gaze. Although the appearance and the attributes written on the body of these women promise obedient and docile creatures, they return the look and thus suspend the pleasure found in a submissive woman (*Woman in yellow skirt,* 2002).[267] Szépfalvi's women also confidently own the gaze even when their gaze does not interact with the viewer, but has a disconcerting or even sinister impact within the scene depicted (*Mérték* /Measure, 2004; and *Women,* 2005).

Katalin Timár gives another explanation for the capacity of Szépfalvi's pictures to embarrass the viewer. The scenes and the protagonists she paints are so familiar that one starts searching one's memories to find the original of the given picture—but one finally has to reach the conclusion that these pictures are "copies without an original" or "null denotations" (Timár 1998). This is increasingly so in the case of scenes which the painter takes from films, advertisements, magazines or private photo collections and then places in a new context, or scenes that she supplements with new details. In these (re-)used or montaged images, the many "copies without a source" or "null denotations" are, in fact, femininity or the way femininity is represented in popular culture: an iconic sign that has no original and signified in the social sphere.

Having returned to painting around 1995, Szépfalvi (re-)introduced another theme into oil and aquarelle painting: the theme of children. Her choice of subject-matter is not so self-evident again. The theme of children, even in its high biedermeier period was considered a subject suitable to less respected genre painting only, and continued to be regarded a mushy one—unless some erotic implications were brought into play.[268] Szépfalvi, however, recognized another

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[267] The artist noticed that some of the private or institutional customers intending to buy a picture from her tend to opt for the more dreamlike compositions where the female figure blends into the image instead of the ones where she returns the gaze (personal communication, Szépfalvi, April 18, 2005, Budapest).
[268] In commenting on Márta Mészáros's film *Just like home* (1978), Catherine Portuges took note of how the film's topic, the friendship of a young girl and a man, was met with abashment: critics and colleagues

relevant subject-matter in depicting the development, or mere existence, of her daughters—just as many artists of the Feminist Art Movement did (*Anna és a hegyek*/Anna and the mountains, 2000; *Nina és Nyugi*/Nina and Nyugi, 2003).

While Szépfalvi did not encounter a supportive environment at the beginning of her career, and felt the need to stubbornly, albeit not combatively, confront this environment with experiences, perceptions or mere sights that it had been shutting off, the other painter discussed here under the heading of "Negotiators of female identity: Without strategies", Eszter Radák found her professional and private surroundings limiting in another way. Radák started the Budapest Art Academy in 1991, the year following the so-called "revolution" at the art school (see also IV.2.i) when new professors were hired (mainly protagonists of the neo-avant-garde) and a curriculum offering a wider-reaching education was adopted. Radák spent most of her student years in the class of Dóra Maurer (discussed in IV.2.ii), and it took her a long time to mitigate the effects of a strictly structuralist pictorial language (interview, Radák 2008:350–60). As i put forward above, although both Szépfalvi and Radák paint narrative-figurative pictures, their painting style and subject choice is quite unlike. While there is practically no Szépfalvi-picture without human figures (the vast majority of which are women), no people at all appear on Eszter Radák's pictures. Human presence is only hinted at in the form of a very few random silhouettes or body-parts as in *Ostoba turista* (Stupid Tourist, 1998) and the series *Lábasok* (Legs, 1999). As Radák says, after a solid structuralist training, it was a long struggle to accredit identifiable objects in the picture and arrive at a pictorial language that allows for meaning and narrativity (interview, Radák 2008:285–300).[269]

There are frequent hints to female presence, too, in Radák's "ice cream-colored" paintings: these

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"referred jokingly to the film by arguing that if a strange man shows interest in a little girl, there can be no doubt that he is motivated by perverse desire" (1993:133).

[269] Whitney Chadwick reports of a number of British women painters who, in the 1970s, similarly re-oriented painterly conventions by using figurative imagery in opposition to the orthodoxy of formalist abstraction (1990:326).

are fancy bags, women's shoes and clothes scattered around pieces of loudly patterned furniture. Radák's reviewers (c.f. Mecsi 1998, Berecz 2001) associate the colors of ice cream and the colour shades of the paintings for the coloring also reflects the artist's frivolous attitude. The destabilizing perspective of the room interiors still reserve something of a deconstructivist painterly approach and so does the technique of "stitching" the pictures:[270] sharply contoured color fields and patterned color patches, both applied with versatile facture, piece together the depicted scenes as patchworked quilts. Radák's fairly animated still lives carry long narrative titles.[271] All in all, the paintings take on a personal and impersonal character at the same time. The aloofness of the human-less pictures is diluted by the ice-cream colors, the exposition of personal objects and private spaces, and the chatty picture titles. It seems that the fundamental principles of her training are not entirely cast off but this tradition is being re-appropriated and is carried on with a different attitude. As Radák remembers her early career and the "boom" of young women artists inventing their own independent and personal medium of communication, this was a period of exhilaration. After the regime change and the reform at the Academy, the attitude they represented with their artistic practice was a pert critique of the work and activity of the older generation (interview, Radák 2008:064–105). Coming upfront as women and flaunting, with a bit of provocation, the attributes of femininity was the *language* of this liberation (ibid.). The expression Radák uses to describe this attitude is "embracing blond-woman-ness". I argue that this is a reverse attitude than complying with the standards of a male-defined professional world. This "embracement" or "endorsement" of "blond-woman-ness" carries a refusal of the expectation to disregard, in a professional environment, one's difference as a female subject—as it becomes manifest in one's most trivial choices of personal appearance—and lifts the virtual ban on "writing" this difference on the body—or on one's own canvas, for that matter.

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[270] The very phrase "stiching pictures" comes from Mariann Újházy (2005:33).

[271] E.g., *Why Aren't the Shoes this Pretty in the Shops Too?; The Only Flower which Survived my Gardening; Who Was the Dummy Who Brought Sweet Instead of Dry?; Ugh! Where Did I Throw my Bag?*

Theorists who investigated the power relations within the act of looking at products of visual culture (e.g., John Berger 1972, Laura Mulvey [1975] 1989; see also footnote 121) stated that the implied active viewer in this act is always male, and the image is to meet *his* gaze and desire. Radák's dialogical picture titles imitating "girl talk" as well as the objects and life situations depicted invoke fragments of women's life whereby they primarily (or exclusively?) address the female spectator. The casting of the viewer changes here, and the implied spectator becomes female.[272]

A maneuver through which Radák re-works the conventions and masterpieces of grand art from her own perspective and for her purposes is what she terms "Lop Art":[273] she borrows or quotes images, styles, motives, or artefacts from art history or popular culture in creating her own pieces in which these elements are appropriated and re-worked in a disrespectful manner. On the one hand, the artist mocks the uniformity of international art production. When leafing through the British contemporary art magazine, *Frieze*, as Radák narrates, she got the sense that her place of residence really does not matter for the art trend of the day is universally set (interview, Radák, interview, 2003:012/3–6). So then she decided to obey and, instead of inserting her ingenuity, set out to re-paint the trendiest artefacts of today's culture. On the other hand, with her "thefts", she appropriates and 'inhabits' pieces of the art historical heritage through bringing them into banal proximity and turning them into diary-like records of her own life. As Beatrix Mecsi detected, a photogram by the internationally acclaimed member of the Hungarian classical avant-garde, Moholy-Nagy is turned into a teacup; a heroic lonely figure of Caspar David Friedrich (*The wanderer above the sea of fog*, 1818) reappears here as a stupid tourist; an oriental carpet resembling the Luxemburg Garden actually hides allusions to the landscapes of Poussin and the palette of Wassermann (1998). The title of the large 8-piece tableau, *Eszti körkép* (translated by the painter

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[272] This operation is similar to the strategy of some feminist writers/authors who strategically replace the generic "he" with "she" (instead of having recourse to some neutral or inclusive formulation).

[273] A word for word translation would be "theft art", but the sound of the compound in Hungarian connotes "Op Art", the strictly geometrical optical art of the 1970s.

as *Eszti's Panorama [Can't See any Ancient Hungarians]*, 2003) ambitiously echoes the title of a 19th-century monumental panorama painting featuring major figures of the great moments of Hungarian history, *Feszty körkép* (The Feszty Panorama)*,* painted by Árpád Feszty between 1892–94; today on permanent display in the National Historical Memorial Park, Ópusztaszer, Hungary, in a rotunda devoted to it. But *Eszti's Panorama* does not muster heroes of history and instead offers a view of the land surrounding the Radák estate, observed from Eszti's living room (Eszti is the diminutive of Eszter, Radák's given name).

Borrowing, quoting and appropriating are also strategies of postmodern art. Pluralism and a proliferation of viable standpoints, favored in postmodern thinking, too, had an impact on works by Radák that portray the same object from various angles even within the same painting (*Nézegetem jobbról, nézegetem balról, közben kihűlt a teám*/I Look at it From the Right, I Look at it From the Left, and in the Meantime my Tea's Gone Cold; 2004). Rather than an informed, or knee-jerk, refusal of feminist standpoints, it is this inclination to adopt a variety of positions that has kept Radák from structuring a one-dimensional (woman) artist identity.[274] When recalling the emergence of her generation, Radák reminds that it was a fairly context-dependent incarnation of women's art: in that particular situation (a constraining cultural politics was cleared off, the art academy was being reformed, and the growing number of female fellow-students), their approach could indeed come across as doing women's art, even if in other contexts, failing to express a political commitment and consciously address the social dimensions of women's position in the world, might have ruled out such qualification (interview, Radák 2008:484—95). As an instructor, she assesses young women painters who seem to follow a similar track with their subject choice and manner of execution, and identifies a difference. In that particular situation some ten years ago, the calculated display of femininity as a language of breaking free from earlier professional and personal constraints, and the presumption that this language is meaningful and has a broader

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[274] She is also convinced that the relatively small and centralized Hungarian art scene would not allow for artists building their oeuvres around one single axis (personal communication, Eszter Radák, December 19, 2003, Budapest).

relevance, seemed "self-evident" and needed no further justification. Whereas today the same subject and unideological mode of expression comes across as "private sniveling" in an environment where young women artists practically face no institutional obstacles or gender-based discrimination. This mode of presentation has apparently flattened out, or did not move on, and failed to re-engage with a variety of potentially relevant questions. Put differently, artists seem to be stuck in "representing femininity" and a putative identity search which, however, is very much caught up in mainstream representations of gender difference. The interview arrived at the conclusion that, in the Hungarian scene, women's art has been regarded as one of the transitory trends of the international art world. As such, it has faded after a couple of years while its problematizations, strategies and discourses remained largely unexplored, and unabsorbed as a viable position or approach, Radák attributes this disengagement to the fact that the activity of international feminist artist was mediated –through images mostly, while the related critical and textual information vanished (ibid, 468–80).

In relation to her own artistic practice, Radák registered a change in that this practice and her actual life practices have disunited since she became a mother. In her own words, the pictures are bolder now than the life she lives inasmuch as the pictures maintain the earlier zest while she, as an artist with a young child, encountered an unexpected force of social expectations in her private surroundings, and a great degree of ignoring her changed condition within the professional environment (interview, Radák 2008:009–25). So while her paintings carry on with the same visual quality, the picture titles add sardonic comments on a social context that expects, from a woman, self-effacement and a submersion in her role as mother (ibid., 574–95) (*Ez lakás vagy munkahely?*/Is this a home or a workplace?, 2008; *Na még egy menet, és teljesítem házastársi kötelességemet*/One more number[275] to go, and I'm done with my marital duty, 2007) Insofar as Radák's comments play on openly acknowledged elements of cultural awareness, they contain a

[275] The word in the Hungarian title has a double meaning: it means a load of laundry and is slang for (usually paid) sexual intercourse.

critique of the gender regime she inhabits, but her criticism is not sharply articulated in her work and remains rather implied.

IV.3.ii The lone heroine: A self-admitted feminist artist (Orshi Drozdik)

In I.3.ii i referred to a professional consensus that has formulated about the absence of feminist art in the Hungarian visual arts scene and, in IV.3.i, to the rather reserved ways in which gender-related reflection is being tackled in the artworks. There is one artist, however, whose work and broader activity is not covered by this general statement. Orsolya Drozdik (b. 1946) graduated from the Budapest Fine Arts Academy in 1977, and a year after left the country[276] and lived in the Netherlands, Canada and, from 1980 on, in New York, United States. Since 1989, Drozdik has been partly based in Budapest again, and this is why i am considering her as part of the generation of women artists that emerged in the mid-1990s. According to her statements (Drozdik 2006:82, interview, Drozdik 2001:A542–68), when in the 1970s she questioned, in her works, traditional male-biased art practices and problematized the limited choice of role models available for her as a female artist, she did so without an awareness of an ongoing feminist discourse on the same topic elsewhere. What drove her there was rather the masculinist atmosphere of the counterculture in which she was to start her creative practice. In the early pieces of *Individual Mythology* (1977–2001), Drozdik cast Isadora Duncan, the "liberator" of modern dance, as her role model, and projected images of the famous dancer on her own photographed image captured in dancing poses.

Another early piece, *Nude Exhibition* (1977), addressed women's problematic functions within the art world. The feminist criticism of the emerging male-structured art system of early 20th century exposed how women did not only had the function of the muse or the model but also of the

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[276] This is when she started to use the artist name Orshi Drozdik.

mistress. These roles may have opened up new relationship models beyond the morals of middle-class marriage for female members of the Bohemian world, but hardly let them be regarded as producers, and confronted them with massive criticism from male colleagues whenever they "expressed" themselves (Elisabeth Wilson, quoted in von Osten 2005:165). The performance *Nude Exhibition* engages another conflict-ridden moment a woman artist encounters: how is she to relate to the drawing of female nudes, one basic exercise in art education and practice? As Anna Wessely wrote in relation to this work, "[t]he woman artist is generally trained by male masters and taught art history in a way that allows her only to experience the tasks, problems, and achievements of art through the ages as defined by the exclusion of woman as a creative subject" (2004:49).

Nude Exhibition was performed on consecutive nights during a one-week long program at the Young Artist's Club (Fiatal Művészek Klubja, Budapest); one of the most frequented venues of alternative culture at the time. In one of the rooms of the Club, well lit and separated from the visitors by a rope, Drozdik was drawing a live nude model. In this scene the artist undertook both the roles of the viewer-creator and the viewed: the predominantly male audience was watching her draw a female nude. Since Drozdik clearly dissociated herself from the audience—a community of predominantly male artist and art professionals—spatially, and seated her female model with her back to them, the event signaled a defiance to the customary role distribution, and posed a number of related questions: Is the woman artist supposed to disavow her own female-ness and observe the naked female body as any other neutral object to be depicted? Is she supposed to differentiate her artist self from her female model, or is she to identify with the model on the basis of their shared femaleness and reveal the hierarchy between the viewer and the object of viewing as well as the dilemma this hierarchical relation poses to the female

subject?[277] The theatricality of the whole arrangement (well-lit "stage", a separation of "stage" and "auditorium") also commented on the performative nature of gender role fulfillment.

The subsequent phases in Orshi Drozdik's oeuvre show a clear correspondence to the historical development of feminist criticism. After the above-mentioned first works that, as the artist alleges, unknowingly assumed a female perspective, Drozdik focused on inserting this missing perspective into the prevailing masculine modes of rational thinking and purportedly objective scientific knowledge production. The pieces of the photo series *Kaland a technikai disztópiumban* (Adventures in Technos Distopium, started in 1983) capture the forms, modes of classification and metaphors with which science has represented nature and the human body. Drozdik invented the figure of Edith Simpson (1983–86), a fictitious scientist from the late-18th century in an attempt to introduce an outstanding woman into the history of the natural sciences, also a pseudo-persona for herself as a creative woman. Having disclosed the gender-biases and exclusions of patriarchal culture and "adding women" to it, feminist criticism set out to demarcate its own specific concerns and inquiries. One of these was to explore—in Michel Foucault's words—the "technologies of the self". Drozdik dubbed this process the manufacturing of the self (*Az én fabrikálása*/Manufacturing the Self; various versions from 1993 on), and produced, already in New York a series of installations focusing on the coming into consciousness of the self. Almost each piece of the artist's highly homogenous oeuvre finds similarly direct linkages to respective sections in feminist theory.

To position herself within the feminist art scene, Orshi Drozdik claimed to undertake the reinstallation of visual pleasure into art making in the conceptual idiom, or, in other words, to reconcile the sensuality and theory-split in (feminist) conceptual art as this trend often refrains

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[277] Drozdik addressed similar questions—encountering the objectified naked female body—in her photo-performance *Pornography* (1979; already delivered in Amsterdam) beyond the painter/model relation. Here the artist projected the frames of a porno movie onto her own naked body while she was nibbling at an apple.

from producing actual artifacts in favor of tackling intellectually sophisticated concepts. In the pages of a Hungarian art monthly, Drozdik acknowledged her indebtedness to the patriarchal artistic heritage and the use of traditional techniques, genres and mediums. But unlike what she encountered as a general attitude within the New York City art world feminism, she has been more interested in the possible applications of this heritage rather than disowning it altogether, while the intellectual content of her work was also more complicated than that of a number of renowned US conceptual feminist artists (Drozdik 1999:10).

It is arguable, however, what other factors contribute to Drozdik's insistence on the patriarchal tradition and object-making. It might also be a rationalization for her gallery-oriented art practice which demands the production of marketable art objects, combined with an unwillingness or incapacity to surrender dominant aesthetic measures.[278] If so, such practice is blind to the interrelations of critical conceptual art and Institutional Critique.[279]

Drozdik's activity has involved efforts to alleviate the feminism-illiteracy of the Hungarian audience by writing on, and editing a rather advanced reader in, feminist theory (Drozdik 1998) as well as a book on her own artistic production (Drozdik 2006). Since 2006, she has also run a class with a feminist program at the Budapest Fine Arts Academy. This diverse activity could qualify as a way of consciousness-raising, an enterprise that could be a constitutive part of engendering a feminist public sphere in Hungary. The artist's public statements disclose that she herself sees her undertaking as a consciousness-raising mission; but she may be unaware of elements in her approach that liken her efforts to a (culturally) colonizing, if not imperialistic, mission. She posits the theoretical or ideological backwardness of one geographical location

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[278] In reviewing Drozdik's retrospective exhibition in the Ludwig Museum Budapest, Kriszta Dékei suggested that visual qualities overdominate theoretical analysis in Drozdik's recent works, and the quest for self-identity is replaced by the (over-)re-interpretation of classic female social roles (2002:114). Since the retrospective show Drozdik exhibited paintings (*Lipstick-paintings à la Fontana*, Atelier Pro Arts, 2006; *Venuses: Draperies and Body Curves*, Budapest Showroom, 2007)—a genre that has not formed part of her artistic repertoire before, and one that is most sought after in commercial galleries. The pieces presented also return to questions addressed by feminist art in the 1970s, and invest a lot in pictorial qualities.
[279] See footnote 214.

compared to another: in an 1995 interview Drozdik, anticipating the "catching up" of the Hungarian art world, described the local public as one not yet ready to embrace her work (Drozdik 1995:7).[280] What is missing from Drozdik's consciousness-raising bid is a recognition of "mere differences" (Yuval-Davis 2006:199): cultural differences that do exist between different cultural and historical contexts and do shape knowledge projects differently, without, however, testifying to the more or less "developed" nature of any of the cultures considered. Drozdik's work is admittedly indebted to Western feminist theory, and this alliance seems to work against reflecting over the particularities—"mere differences"—of a different cultural context and gender regime insofar as she expects replicas of the concerns raised by that "master feminism".[281] This context-ignorance of both her artistic and "educational" pursuit most probably stems from an approach that fails to perceive feminism as a social current marked by the particular historical contexts in which it emerges. This approach, however, brings on further incongruities in her artistic practice.

First, positing that the concerns of (Western) feminism are selfsame across time and geographical location retains much of a Western-centered universalism. This also tells of an undifferentiated and normative view of Western feminism, as well as an ignorance of the debates within feminist thought and the pluralism of possible standpoints, including post-modern and post-colonial feminisms' critique of earlier essentializing concepts. Also, failing to situate (feminist) artistic activity in particular social and economic relations discloses an eventually preserved belief in art's autonomy within society and a non-recognition of the contextual nature of knowledge- and cultural production: another fundamental myth of modernist art that New Art History and later

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[280] As the artist herself as well as a reviewer of her book pronounce, the purpose of her recently published volume was to remedy the omission of local critical attention to duly assess—in fact, canonize—her oeuvre (Drozdik 2006:79, 134; Máthé 2007:43).

[281] Several authors, writing on Western feminists' curiosity in post-socialist societies, have pointed to a similarly missionizing and even imperialist attitude of these women expecting to find replicas of their own concerns (e.g., Gal-Kligman 2000a:99; Watson 2000:190–93).

the feminist critique of art history have powerfully unveiled.[282] Both these failings seriously

undermine (if not collapse) the stated foundations and the integrity of Drozdik's very consciously

constructed artistic enterprise, itself heavily based on post-modern theories. As it is the case with

many mainstream cultural texts/products when exposed to deconstructionist readings, a

text/product may turn out to offer "a critique of itself through the contradictions that appear

between its overt ideology and its formal properties [...]. In such texts, "an internal criticism is

taking place which cracks the [text] apart at the seams" (Comolli and Narboni, quoted in

Chaudhuri 2006:27).

There is a comparable crack, i argue, between the postulates of the theories that Drozdik frames

her artistic practice with (feminism and post-modern thought) and the communicative strategies

she employs. I already touched upon her insistence on producing handcrafted objects for

"retinal" pleasure; here i would underline her authorial strategy to totalize the meaning-producing

activity of the spectator. In my view, Drozdik's works may be formally complex,[283] but they tend

to operate like vectors: they prescribe one-way linkages to particular points of the corresponding

theory, whereby they also act like illustrations or mouthpieces for those ideas.[284] This is where the

artist's orientation towards post-modern thought conflicts with her authorial attitude and the

relationship she establishes between her "text" (the work of art) and the recipient. According to

poststructuralist and post-modern theories of cultural texts, works of art are to "facilitate the

active response of the viewer: the viewer must fill in, add to, build upon suggestive elements in

the text supplying extraneous historical, personal, and social references, rather than , as in

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[282] See my brief summary of this critique in I.2.ii.

[283] For instance, the various editions of the installation-series *Manufacturing the Self* combine the following elements: a rubber cast of the artist's naked body featuring as a dummy used for medical studies in earlier centuries, lying in a calculatedly erotic pose; a number of silver plates with love letters carved on them; photos taken of scientific devices in various museums of natural science.

[284] In her analysis of Drozdik's oeuvre, Andrea Tarczali (2000) gives a detailed account of the linkages connecting to the various texts of Foucault, Barthes, Kristeva, etc.. She does so, however, without problematizing the very compelling application of theory. Dimitrakaki also only factually refers to this method when writing about Drozdik's video piece *Double* (1979–80): it "is almost an illustration of the concerns preoccupying video artists at the time […] and women artists in particular" (2005:274).

modernism, transporting himself to the special world and time of the artist's original production" (Wallis & Tucker 1984: xvii).

Postmodernism thus favors authorial strategies that allow for a multiplicity of interpretations and invite active meaning production by the viewer, while the vector-like correspondences impose one preferred reading and suppress the interplay, indeterminacy and heterogeneity of meaning. Another textual device contributes to constraining meaning in Drozdik's work: the mode of adding textual elements to visual information. Textual elements incorporated in works of visual art can effectively bring meaning to closure or fixation. When the visuals plainly redouble the information given in the text, or when "the text *directs* the reader through the signifieds of the image, causing him to avoid some and receive others", Roland Barthes identifies a case of redundancy or illustration ([1964] 1977:40–41). When this happens, the denominative function of the linguistic message *anchors* all the possible (denoted) meanings as it *fixes* the floating chain of signifieds, limits the projective power of the image, and constitutes "a kind of vice which holds the connoted meanings from proliferating" (ibid.). Anna Wessely registers the same illustrative-connotative relation between image and text in the art of Orshi Drozdik: "The *Love Letters of the Venus Medica* are compelling, but they are, on the second thought, poetic translations of familiar tenets of Lacanian feminist psycho-analytic theory" (2004:52).[285]

The critical reviews on Drodik's work evince how possible interpretations are effectively anchored: these discussions (Tarczali 2000, Pap Z. 2001, Dékei 2002, Drozdik 2002, Wessely 2004) exclusively draw on the framed discourse of feminist theory and arrive at rather uniform readings. These readings also correspond to what the artist's own statements spell out. I already discussed, in I.3.iii, textual strategies that would delimit the complexity of signification and the meaning-producing activity of the recipient in order to anchor meanings; there i referred to this

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[285] This installation contains love letters written to scientific instruments, including the Medical Venus, an 18th century anatomical wax-model made for medical studies.

strategy as closure of meaning. I also discussed how this textual organization and address are frequently encountered in mainstream texts, or texts that intend to transmit their signifieds as clearly as possible, and would therefore establish a hierarchical relation between author and the inactivated recipient. I reminded that cultural products that wish to communicate feminist ideas may resort to such closure of meaning and a reductionist or functionalist aesthetics that subsumes artistic production into a direct expression of ideological interests to ensure that the work will be read as intended. Anette Kuhn lists several options that producers who want to actively influence the range of meanings may opt for. They may choose to address a very specific audience only (an audience conditioned to produce the "right" reading; e.g., art professionals with a knowledge of feminist art); may deal with issues on which positions are already to some extent clear; and may further limit meanings through other—extra-textual—ways: interviews, reviews, personal appearances and statements, etc. (Kuhn 1994:16). The reviews of Orsolya Drozdik's art may be so unanimous because the artist has opted for several of the above extra-textual strategies and has always exercised close control over material published on her work. These operations—as well as the self-authored volume on her own oeuvre (Drozdik 2006) i mentioned above—clearly serve to channel interpretations and bring about the desired understanding of her artistic output.

Thus while Drozdik's works heavily draw on feminist theory and postmodern thought, her textual practices and authoritative attitude towards the recipient are caught up in a mode of representation and author-recipient relation that seem to be unaffected by these critical currents. Thus there appears a conflict between what her pieces communicate on the level of content and through their address of the recipient. This diversion evokes Kuhn's distinction of *feminist* and *feminine* texts.

IV.3.iii Towards feminine texts (Emese Benczúr, Róza El-Hassan)

In III.3, i briefly cited Laura Hollósi's discussion (2000: 78–86) of two movies—*The Girl* by Márta Mészáros and *The Princess* by Pál Erdőss—focusing on very similar subject-matters which may qualify both pieces as "woman's films". The reason why i am now returning to this comparison is that Hollósi sets apart the two films on the basis of the modes of representation, i.e., the cinematic language both directors use. Her juxtaposition, i hope, may help further clarify what are ways feminine cultural texts treat their subject-matters differently and therefore work towards demolishing patriarchal structures not only through their content but also through their textual organization and mode of re/presentation. Hollósi argues that, unlike Mészáros, who would resist hackneyed camerawork and dramatic scenarios, and would let instead the character of the female protagonist govern the unsensational narrative, Erdőss falls back on cinematic techniques used in dominant cinema. He would place his heroine in woeful situations (a rape scene included) but would not account for the reasons leading to these events; the motivation of the protagonist's acts and her private relations are undefined, and so is her personality. The viewer never sees the events through her eyes, while the actress is frequently captured in close-ups: a method of photographing that exposes the character to the viewer's gaze. All these elements effectively divest the heroine of any agency and show her as a mere victim of the events of her life. Since the story has nothing to say about the problems it touches upon, the film reifies, rather than shifts, the prevailing treatment of some specifically women-related issues. In what follows i will look at two Hungarian women visual artists, Emese Benczúr and Róza El-Hassan, who were both singled out by the emerging feminist discourse in art although their work only tangentially engages gender-related issues. Their works call for the tools of feminist interpretations, it was suggested, as their meanings cannot be exhausted with the formalist analysis of modernist aesthetics (András 1999b). More important than the tangential ties in content are, i argue, the "textual politics" Benczúr and El-Hassan employ. Neither of the two artists centre their identity around one single axis (that of femininity, or any other), and even if they negotiate issues

pertaining to their lives as women, the gender aspect is not made the master identity of a solid, clear-cut, unified subject and artistic universe. Benczúr deconstructs age-old hierarchies and myths surrounding the social status of art and the artist, and de-hierachizes the process of meaning-production, while El-Hassan instantiates a model of authorship that draws very near to the construction of self that some feminist theorists advance. In the early 1980s, Kate Linker (1984) and Craig Owens (1983) discussed the work of several women visual artists, not all of them explicitly feminist, as forms of representation that destabilize identity and undermine authoritative subjectivity. Linker sees these artists' investment in dismantling the centered self and fixed categories of meaning as part of a broader quest in the social sciences for a model of subjectivity that is different from the centered humanist self (63). While such re-conceptualization of the creative self appears fundamental to me for any critical art practice, this quest seems to have lost its prominence in later art theoretical literature. In a recent article, however, Carys J. Craig (2007) returns to the relevance of reconstructing the author-self as based on dialogism and the relational self. A feminist view of the author, Craig argues, coheres with a view of the individual as socially constituted and thus competes with the Romantic author concept and the Enlightenment ideals of individuation, detachment, and unity.

Emese Benczúr (b. 1969) graduated from the Budapest Fine Arts Academy in 1996 and subsequently worked with the particular medium she already engaged with in her student years: the embroidering of graffiti-like, often endlessly repeated sentences on various surfaces. It was certainly this medium that drove Benczúr's reviewers to establish connections between her activity and women's art since the re-valorization of a craft-based tradition, such as embroidery and quilting, was one of the tasks feminist art history and art practice undertook, Benczúr, however, did not turn to this form for its decorative functions or in an apology of female creativity channelled into the private domain. János Sturcz (1999) called this kind of art making

"sensual conceptualism",[286] also noting that the sensuality of Benczúr's works does not come from their being beautiful objects but from the emphasis on their handcrafted nature and very immediate materiality.

Some reviewers (Spengler 2003, András 1999a) suggested that although Benczúr's work connects on many levels to her femaleness and addresses a range of subject matters particular to women's lived social experience, her critique of the social construction of gender is delivered in an ironic and playful tone rather than in a militant one. Her approach reflects on how gender infiltrates everyday existence and how the ongoing task of performing (or getting round) gender is being assigned. Thus, while her works are not framed as feminist enunciations, they make a range of feminist readings possible. This is a case then when reception and interpretation become crucial cultural interventions and turn out to be viable critical practices.

In my reading, the techniques and materials Benczúr uses mobilize an expanded net of references and indicate the possibility, or rather actuality, of the simultaneous presence in a person of those characteristics that have been socially constructed as belonging to only either one of the two sexes. The first medium of the artist's embroidered "graffiti" was the unprimed canvas itself; later she used rough and rather functional types of textile (such as lifting belts or denim) or, just the opposite, velvet or silk or other extraordinary and precious material; yet another time, however, she embroidered on lemon skin. Later on, motherhood provided her with an excuse to purchase all sorts of futile materials (for the kid and herself), and build these— tiny flashing LED displays, candy wrapping, bubble foil, etc.—into her artworks. Fixing together the LED displays in a circuit to form words and sentences, however, is no longer a typically feminine or safely playful activity (interview, Benczúr 2005:A318–22). Several of her works play on this hybridity. *Mit takargatnék?* (What should i hide?, 1997) is a piece of black velvet showing the embroidered letters

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[286] Sturcz (1999) distinguishes this artistic approach both from the ideological character of classical conceptualism and the theoretical and cynical neo-conceptualism that would forgo sensuality and objecthood and would instead identify art with its definitions and institutionalisation.

of the title-phrase as well as the close-up of a long-nailed female hand for each character. The fingers have just been immersed in a traditionally female activity, embroidering—embroidering "their" corresponding letters—but in the moment when a second sequence of photos are taken, they are already keen to cover the evidence of the previous act, and impress with their delicateness instead. This work can be read as a reflection on the frequent catch when women are supposed to meet certain requirements related to their gender that are generally devalued (like the "work of beauty"), and for which they might as well be ridiculed in turn. Or, by a similar token, the letters can be taken as particles of writing and thus a metaphor for reason and intellect, the reverse side of the catch takes shape when women are driven to balance their "masculine" traits—reason and intellect—with a display of "feminine" delicacy or charm.

The experience of childbirth and motherhood also found expression in Benczúr's works. The first such work is *Akkor jó, ha észre sem veszed, hogy dolgozol* (It's good if you don't see that you are working, 1999). Fresh motherhood is not overtly thematized in the work, "only" its actuality is incorporated as a factor that cannot be overlooked by her—even if it might go unnoticed by others. Some three months after her daughter was born in 1999, the Ludwig Museum Budapest offered the artist an exhibition in its project room. Since the artist lived nearby, she used the time slots in between breastfeeding sittings to go to the museum and write the above title-sentence on the wall—allegedly as many as 2880 times. This was she was in constant shifts between two kinds of monotony and two kinds of joy, without possibly counting on that people out there will consider the fragmentation that the psyche, attention and time of a woman (artist) with a newborn baby experiences. The pencil shavings left by the sharpener and used-up pencil stubs were left behind on a white sheet of paper spreading along the wall to let the visitors' footsteps also create a pencil drawing, letting them, too, work without noticing.

Beside casually challenging a constraining gender regime, Benczúr is also disrespectful towards conventional hierarchies and mystifications in art: she systematically challenges the genre

hierarchy, the distinction of high *versus* low art, or the cult of authorship and the heroic ego of the artist. A number of her works interrogate the precarious status of art in today's society and, concomitantly, her own status as an artist. Her artistic method should be rather called a method of labor as it bears more resemblance to duty than inspired creation. This feature as well as the unmistakable materiality and hand-made character of her artefacts bring artistic practice close to everyday activities and substances. As she says, the reverence with which both recipient and producer are supposed to approach the genre of painting, estranged her rather early in her career (interview, Benczúr 2005:B542–75).

A lack of an overflowing (artistic) ego on the part of Benczúr is also mirrored in that although the handmade quality and rich materiality of her works are important factors, these are not employed in order to arrive at fetishized art objects. Benczúr puts no emphasis either on the uniqueness or the marketability of her work (interview, Benczúr 2005:A188–206; see also András 1999a:82), nor even their public presentation or "presentability". The museum of the Dutch town, Sittard wanted to buy the work *Should I live to be a hundred—Day by day I think about the future*, most probably her longest assignment in embroidery. In 1997, when she commenced the life-long project, she had 2500 meters of cloth tags manufactured bearing the endlessly repeating words: DAY BY DAY. Actually, their number was not at all endless—it is exactly the number of the days left provided Benczúr lives to be a hundred years old. As a daily assignment, she has embroidered (up to this day) under the factory-woven words her addition: I THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE. The way the artist imagined the deal with the Sittard Museum was that she would deliver an amount of the completed tags from time to time and, in return, the museum would pay her perpetuity. But since the director could not guarantee that his successors would keep renewing the highly conceptual contract, the reels of tags stayed with the artist.

Benczúr prefers creating pieces to be touched, and usually places these pieces within spectators' reach. Her 1999 exhibition *Munkáim új nézőpontból, ahol minden cérnaszálon múlik* (My works from a

new point of view, where everything is hanging on threads) testified to this preference. Various earlier pieces were hanging from the ceiling on threads of varying lengths all over the place not allowing the viewers to keep a comfortable distance: the viewers had no choice but *entered "the picture".* This arrangement also gave a nicely graphic illustration of the many conceptual and associative ties connecting the individual artworks within the oeuvre. Recently, Benczúr creates installations using bicycles; these works rely entirely on the participation of the viewer: it is the spectator who has to set them to work. Only when someone starts pedaling the bike does the text, hidden in an abstractly patterned display of tiny LEDs, become intelligible (*Be positive!* , 2005).

Finally, i want to contrast the way Benczúr uses the texts that appear in her works with how Drozdik does. Benczúr's banal colloquial phrases (often repeated to "infinity")[287] are placed in contexts in which they lose their instant and unambiguous interpretation. As Sándor Hornyik remarked, there is not only a single way offered to piece together the ensemble of text, applied material and the particular method of execution; the outcome is contingent upon the spectator's active participation in the interpretive process (Hornyik 2000). Rather than fixing one meaning, the titles and subtitles invite a web of associations instead of a linear reading while they also have the capacity to connect these works of arts to various theoretical discourses, feminist criticism among them, without conferring an exclusive explanatory function on any such operation (ibid.). Returning to Barthes' line of argumentation about the functioning of visual and textual elements ([1964] 1977:39–41), Barthes contrasts textual elements put in the function of anchorage or *relay*. In the latter case, "text and image stand in complementary relationship. […] The unity of the message is realized at a higher level. [The text] functions not simply as elucidation but really does advance the action by setting out […] meanings that are not to be found in the image itself."

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[287] Further such phrases are: "I do my duty" (embroidered on movers' strap), "It must be great to have so much free time" (on unprimed canvas), "Sameness is relative" (on cut-off pieces of jeans).

Thus, in this latter arrangement, the acquisition of the information requires more intellectual investment. The multiple associations and interconnections within and between the titles of, and phrases in, Benczúr's works exploit the playful aspects of language and invite the audience's active participation, both in a physical and intellectual sense. Through this authorial strategy Benczúr assumes an identity and realizes an art(ist)–recipient relation that negates the ego-centered, author-focused practice inherited from modernism.

From the purposes of my present inquiry i will review the activity of Róza El-Hassan, the second artist dealt with in this section, from the perspective of a creative turn in her artistic career. This turn was a shift from a conceptual and meditative artistic practice to a distinctly more personal, political, and critical approach. The shift originated in the identity search of the artist, or rather the recognition of the problematic nature of identity.

In her early artistic praxis, till the late-1990s, Róza El-Hassan (b. 1966) worked with abstract forms or wrapped up objects representing no human figures, and explored the differing qualities of various materials and objects in an attempt, as Eszter Babarczy noted, to unravel the paradoxes between conceptuality and objecthood (1996:13–14). Babarczy also registered, that "the artist forces a type of discipline or asceticism upon the viewer, which prohibits fantasizing and projecting personal contents onto the work." Indeed, during this period the artist consciously disregarded motifs of a personal or corporeal nature. This was also the predominant approach within the avant-garde and modernism-indebted Hungarian art scene. As art historian Edit András noted, the employment of the personal voice as medium or metaphor have practically failed to pierce through this art world convention (1995:36). El-Hassan's statements from this period comply with this protocol. She said in a 1997 interview, "all the works are founded on personal experiences, which one tires to conceal. [...] In my opinion, any overemphasis on personal experiences verges, in a way, on bad taste. I have always been interested in the visualization of linguistic and philosophical ideas". (1997:5)

Babarczy also highlights the artist's strict approach when discussing her conceptual works of art. She contrasts El-Hassan's impersonal rationalism evoking the austerity of scientific knowledge with "our strongly subjective art and culture" (1996:13–14). However, what transpires in this de-subjectivization is not the mastering, ordering and separating "male" rationality that the feminist critique of Enlightenment exposed, but one that is "flexible", and is able and willing to also register "life's sensual little facts" (ibid).

The shift that followed in Róza El-Hassan's artistic approach a couple of years later is also significant from the perspective of the above-mentioned convention in artistic practice. While, at the beginning of her career, a strict conceptual approach made El-Hassan unique amongst contemporary young Hungarian artists, the mobilization of political concerns as related to her own identity quest made her "an existential propaganda artist", and demonstrated an attitude that "put an end to a certain degree of infantilism and withdrawal from the matters of the world in the current Hungarian avant-garde scene. […] El-Hassan [brought] us an alternative to the attitude of shutting oneself up" (György 2005:183). The "personal turn" is also remarkable because the artist does not mobilize micro-personal content to disclose a self-referential and private world (as it has been often the case with artists turning away from a credo repressing personal contents), but for critical reflection.

The work entitled *Anastasia* (1998) signals the creative transition. Róza El-Hassan is of Syrian-Hungarian descent and thus has a double cultural affiliation. Prior to *Anastasia*, the only reference to the "other", non-European culture was in a video she made during her student years at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts. The film depicted the making of Arabic unleavened bread, an act which made a formal reference to other circular or spherical objects El-Hassan engaged with at the time. *Anastasia* is an object-installation made from found objects, and it was originally accompanied with a two-hour performance at the São Paulo Biennale. (The very introduction of performance—that is the physical presence of the artist—was also new in this work.) Part of the

installation is a black-and-white reproduction of one of European painting's iconic images, Edward Munch's *Scream* (1893), enlarged to the size of a billboard poster. Standing opposite is a plaster cast, also black-and-white: a bust of a one-time slave woman worshipped as a saint by a South American cult. The female figure, however, cannot scream back, as there is an iron muzzle covering her mouth. According to the story of *Anastasia*'s inception, the computer threw up Munch's painting of existential agony after a search for the word "scream" on an Internet search engine (interview, El-Hassan 2006:B295–326); thus *Scream* is a component of *Anastasia* largely by chance, but at the same time it mobilizes its own net of associations. Munch's painting is one of the key works of Expressionism, a movement characterized by subjectivity, the projection of inner experience, and clear-cut anthropocentrism—factors that were hidden, if not directly repressed, in El-Hassan's early works, and so were any consideration of gender relations or of other social or political inequalities. In this work two signs from different cultures come face to face with each other, registering intercultural clashes between the dominant European-Atlantic tradition and other traditions rooted in different parts of the world. At the same time, these two kinds of lives—the male (artist) and his famed existential torment, and the female (slave-saint) with an unrecorded past—also refer to the relation between the silenced female and the dominant male experience within cultural history.

The most important figure in El-Hassan's work from the present perspective is a roughly carved, hunched up sculpture. It first appeared as a drawing, was later personified by El-Hassan during a performance, and finally became a recurring figure, covered in a black shroud and holding an orange balloon, in the series *R. Thinking/Dreaming about Overpopulation* (from 2001 on). From that point onwards "all impersonal and ahistorical approaches eschewing moral and cultural meanings" (Babarczy 1996:13) disappeared into thin air. The black veil is clearly recognizable as a chador, and in this way the reference to the artist's dual ethnicity and cultural bonding is easily

recognized. Through the chador and references to fertility,[288] the gender of its bearer is both identifiable and significant: the wearer is female. This element thematizes the artist's gender identity and brings up the dilemma of how Róza El-Hassan, with her hybrid ethnicity, can possibly relate to Muslim culture that so tightly defines gender difference? The roles and deeds that both women and men may undertake with dignity and appreciation seem to be so narrowly set in that world that the striving of the individual can hardly bring forth a more equalized relationship between the sexes (interview, El-Hassan, 2006:A469–543).

The artist's way of thinking challenges Cartesian patterns of thought: her thinking process does not follow an either/or dichotomous approach, or does not aim for categorizations and divisions, and thus is able to viewing the complex and varied mass of beings together with all their inherent contradictions. What alerted El-Hassan to the problematic nature of a unified identity was an event—the September 11 attacks—that thwarted transparent diagnoses and in the political repercussions of which the artist could not help feeling personally implicated. In the aftermath of the attacks, media responses and the foreign policy of the United States have absurdly accused all people of Arab or Muslim descent of being collectively guilty, labeling them as potential terrorists. "How can I identify with this created image of Arabs and my own Arab origins from now on?" quotes Péter György the question of Róza El-Hassan whom he defines as "a Hungarian, Syrian, European, and Arab woman, a visual artist, and a mother"; a person who bears all these attributes simultaneously, but "won't play off one possible identity-aspect against another" (2005:183–199). She is not willing to conform to any one set of mono-cultural norms only to be biased against another. El-Hassan transposed the many intricately entangled questions relating to the subject into a performance.

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[288] The color orange is the symbol of fertility and life in the Buddhist religion; the figure gently and tenderly holds this soft, orange, formless thing in its lap. During the performance first featuring the veiled figure, "Róza El-Hassan crouched in the corner in a burka, with an orange balloon in her lap, which she repeatedly inflated, then deflated; in the meantime Milica Tomić [the co-author of the performance] stripped off her many layers of clothes, and when she was wearing just one item of clothing, she proceeded to put all the others back on again. This sequence was repeated for two hours, creating a powerful visual metaphor of the materiality of the cycle of birth, life, and death" (Schuller 2006:147–48).

On 12 September, 2001 the Palestinian president Yasser Arafat and 500 Palestinians donated

blood in Gaza and then sent it to the victims of the attack in New York. Making use of a famous

media image documenting this event, El-Hassan staged a blood donation event, and repeated it in

three different cities (Belgrade, Budapest, and Zürich). In doing so she sought answers to her

questions scrutinizing the prospects and modes of identification. In Budapest the performance

was going to take place at the Ludwig Museum–Museum of Contemporary Art, but due to what

was dubbed the tense political atmosphere (general elections were to be held later that year), the

institution refused to host the event. The director feared the stir that might be caused in certain

sections of Hungarian politics (viz. that the action, because it expresses sympathy for the "Arab

terrorists", might be labeled anti-Semitic), and disfavored the idea that barefaced politics might

gate-crash the domain of art (interview, El-Hassan 2006:B019–78). Thus the performance had to

be moved to another location and postponed until a later date. It finally took place at a blood

bank.[289] In such a discursive climate it was rather surprising when Toma Sík, a Jewish "social

non-artist", having lived for most of his life in Israel, stood out in support of the El-Hassan's

action and its opaque political statement? On principle—due to his ethnic background—he

might well have been repelled, just as others were, when El-Hassan demonstrated solidarity with

the Arab world through donating blood. Yet on reflection it was all too thinkable that it was

precisely Toma Sík who committed himself to Róza's cause, as he, too, is an individual with a

hybrid identity: in Israel he has been fighting for the rights of the Palestinians through the

movement Gush Shalom.[290] Since their meeting, the artist has several times incorporated the

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[289] In this medical setting, the event that the museum deemed audacious, unfolded peacefully, earning the sympathetic indifference of the hospital staff, and practically no audience was present. The reception of the performance at the other locations, too, graphically outlined the local political processes and political mentalities. In Belgrade, El-Hassan performed at the re-opening of the Museum of Contemporary Arts following the NATO bombings of autumn 2001. In this context, both the anabashed political tone of the performance and the inherent critique of America came across as stances requiring little justification. In Zürich the performance took place in the Confederate Technical College (in November 2002), organized by a well-oiled and smoothly efficient agency, the local Red Cross office. But this meant complying with a number of restrictions that stripped the politics from the performance.

[290] El-Hassan refers to Gush Shalom as a "neo-pacifist" movement and with this counter-slogan wishes to offset the charges of "anti-semitism" (interview, El-Hassan 2006:A167–88).

physical and intellectual legacy of the anarchopacifist Toma Sík in her works, e.g., in her 2006 solo exhibition in Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle (see footnote 262). Her equal handling of Sík's self-made artful banners and his writings throws light on El-Hassan's interests reaching beyond the institutionalized structures of contemporary art. According to Péter György, Róza El-Hassan, through her "non-choice between a minimum of two identities", is an artist with a radical lack of identity: she brings the inhumanity and senselessness of homogenizing, mono-cultural ideologies into collision with "hybrid cultural norms and concepts derived from different social contexts" (György 2005). And indeed, the radicalism of El-Hassan's aesthetics lies in that her art is a political art that, rather than demonstrating a clearly identifiable commitment, operates with artistic methods that invite co-operative thinking and dialogue.

IV.3.iv Venturing out into the public (Kriszta Nagy)

Kriszta Nagy (b. 1972 [?]) is an artist explicitly refusing to declare "symbolic allegiance to the professional […] male world"—as Susan Bordo worded the attitude (1995:482-83)—and intending "to subvert that arena with alternative 'female values' ", more explicitly than just "embracing blond woman-ness", as is the case, i propounded, with Eszter Radák and Ágnes Szépfalvi. She has been repeatedly launching attacks on traditional womanhood as visual artist and author of what could be termed as "protest paintings" and "protest actions", the singer and lead of the music band *Tereskova*,[291] and a quasi-celebrity speaking out publicly and invited to television talk shows. Having an overtly critical agenda, she also anticipates to make the issues raised matters of general concern and public debate: a rare attitude within the fairly apolitical Hungarian art scene that Péter György (2005) also pointed out in his article i cited in IV.3.iii. However, with her clinging to a narcissistic and heroic artist's ego, passed down from a

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[291] Note the choice of the band's name (which, through an understandable transfer, also came to be the artist's publicly used nickname): Valentina Tereskova, the first woman in space, embodies a woman having penetrated a domain earlier exclusively reserved for men.

modernist genius paradigm, her overall activity is a good bit controversial from a feminist perspective.

Kriszta Nagy (or Kriszti or x-T as she recently signs her works and is known in the media) graduated from the Budapest Fine Arts Academy in 1998. With her early works and (mock?) infantile or obscene behavior, she soon earned qualifications such as impertinent, straightforward, provocative and sarcastic (András 1999c:79, Wessely 1999:17) as well as naive, banal, infantile or adolescent: her work was said to be "permeated by a kind of childishness, which has become her trademark" (Bordács 2004). There are several reasons that may explain, but not necessarily corroborate, such opinions. By time, Kriszti's perspective, strategies and artistic output came fairly close to the problematizations within feminist criticism, but she never familiarized with feminist thought,[292] and does not (or cannot) wrap her messages in the framed discourse of theory, and has always used a "lay" language. Also, Nagy's persistent idea about the artist as medium or chosen individual can be taken for juvenile heroism; i would relate it to her adherence to the modernist vision of the artist that i briefly mentioned above and will come back to later. Certainly, it is a matter of personal willingness whether or not Nagy would edify herself once it so happened that feminist criticism, or critical thinking at large, was not part of her education at the art school. Still, even though she cannot fall back on the standardized formulations of theory to name various problem-clusters, she has been determined to try and clarify what is exactly problematic about those issues. She herself thinks of her own artistic and personal development as a continuous learning process that can accommodate mistakes, rudiments, and changes (Nagy 2004b:41). Tibor Gyenis (2002) also sees here a subject-in-progress; identity and a multitude of working strategies being constantly shaped: "a more motile and flexible type of identity is being fashioned, ready to rearrange itself when needed. Apparently,

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[292] Nevertheless, most recently, in the public communication of her shows (brief statements in invitation circulars and program magazines) she does not mind being introduced as an artist engaging with gender issues; this—perhaps somewhat calculated—self-presentation still does not mean a thoroughgoing acquaintance with feminist ideas.

the artworks of Kriszta Nagy interrogate the identity of the artist and the status of creation in a fairly premeditated and persistent way."

Lacking the analytical tools of theory may show some of her formulations as banal and less detached indeed since she would present problems already explored by feminist criticism as freshly discovered and issuing from her own personal experience. Kriszta Nagy's subjectivity, i would propose, is very much impacted by the ambiguous and conflicting messages she as a female social subject has received from two consecutive gender regimes. She is vocal about her yearning for more equal gender relations but, at the same time, she adheres to certain female "prerogatives" (like being financially supported) or supposedly essentially feminine qualities (like being competitive over men) (interview, Nagy 2005:A468–84). Equally importantly, she would have rather unclarified, if not conventional, demands and expectations towards the other gender, men. In Anna Kende's research that i drew on in Chapter II, the researcher identified a sub-category in the group of her respondents. She called this group "conflicted-emancipated" and described the young women belonging here as wanting to lead an emancipated lifestyle but not being quite able to cope with it because they have too deeply interiorized traditional roles assigned to women (Neményi & Kende 1999:136). This conflicted emancipation, missing an understanding of the various social forces and structures that perpetuate oppressive gender regimes, permeates, i proffer, Kriszta Nagy's investigations as well. But it is still the case that she goes beyond merely rehearsing the single issues—the representation of sexual difference or self-representation—most other female artists, her "epistemic community", would limit themselves to. Alison Assiter uses the term epistemic community to define a group of people who share certain values, and where these values "become the unifying factors and shape access to knowledge collectively rather than individually" (Assiter, quoted in Yuval-Davis 2006:199). In the absence of politically aware fellow-artists, Kriszta Nagy appears to have been withouth such epistemic community. In what follows, i will discuss the issues Kriszti's gender-sensitive works

address and the strategies they use. The process of identity formation is centred around two major aspects: gender and her social position as artist. The way she perceives, she has been more self-possessed, independent and determined as an artist than as a—female—individual: "Ever since my second year at the Art Academy, a degree of uncompromisingness and undeviating sincerity has informed my work as an artist. As an individual, I've just started to try and rely on the same qualities. […] I have eventually acknowledged that no matter how hard society or Mum wants me to wear a certain dress, i just won't be able to wear that, but will have to find my own way at any cost" (Nagy 2004b:41–42; also interview, Nagy 2005:B000–058).

The kind of simultaneous activity on multiple fronts that involves a multitude of strategies and genres (including the production of texts) is itself a phenomenon that characterizes feminist art practices (Owens 1983:63) and one that Kriszta Nagy shares, as i wrote in the opening paragraphs of this section. One of the strategies she employs is using a personal voice in art. Building from one's own biographical material or radically conflating private life and publicly presented creation are important strands in feminist art—as well as in feminist theory, for that matter. The work of art and the artist's personality inextricable interlock in Kriszti's case too. As she says, "[i]n all my statements, I spell out that my art is my life, and my life is my art" (Nagy 2004a). In doing so the ideas or critique to be expressed are being actualized through the artists' own life events. Although the individual artist risks her own skin as it is her own offence and implicatedness that is being revealed in such cases, she is able to resolve the particularity of the single occurrence, as some of the reviewers of Nagy do not fail to note: Kriszti as the protagonist of her own pictures "appears in contexts in which her own age, gender, and social position are confronted with the desirable ideal suggested by commercial culture. [...] She always chooses her own self, body, sexuality, or emotions as subject-matter; nevertheless, it is always her social roles that are being under scrutiny" (Petrányi 2000).

Kriszti, however, does not try to resolve this particularity in the "universal human" but in the

experiences or conflicts that the members of the social groups she herself inhabits—contemporary artists and women (artists)—arguably share, whereby she addresses concrete and partial publics. Linda S. Klinger (1991) recorded how critical theory had not ben able to accommodate feminist art practice in which the woman and her work are presented as inseparable, not allowingt for a distance- keeping. Neither can this theory accommodate, Klinger says, the intricate sociology[293] of this kind of art practice or the artist. This incomprehension seems to apply to the critical voices commenting on Kriszta Nagy's activity; part of her reading as banal and naive stems, i think, from mistaking the personal voice as a medium of expression for a mere direct expression of a personalized narrative. This is especially so with those pieces and often sensational gestures that the artist realizes outside the closed domain of contemporary visual arts.[294] The art press generally overlooks her interventions of not strictly artistic nature, although, as Kriszti warns, "the paintbrush is not the contemporary artist's only tool" (Nagy 2004b:43). Art critics tend to also disregard her "Tereskova-oeuvre", i.e., her output as a band leader, lyrics writer and singer, even if the artist herself has never considered these two kinds of activities as sharply separate.

Not only the employment of the personal voice as medium proved to be an infrequent occurrence within the Hungarian scene, as Edit András noted, but also the use of the artist's body as a medium of expression, or the deployment of deconstructive or radical approaches to questions of embodiment and the representation of the body (1999c:49). This is squarely unlike the strategies and discourses within international art, including feminist art, of the same period.[295] Such a restrained handling of the subject of the body in the Hungarian scene is coupled with an emotionally detached kind of representation of sexuality, which has an impact on the reception

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[293] By this Klinger means the political and institutional conditions of art making as well as more frequently considered textual/ interpretative / theoretical issues.

[294] I will discuss two of these below: a "protest-painting" (*A nő egyetlen esélye…*/The woman's only chance…) and the reworking of a pop song (*Magyarország*/Hungary*)*.

[295] Apart from Kriszta Nagy, András only mentioned, in 1999, a male artist—Tibor Gyenis—having taken such direction.

and interpretation of works engaging with both subjects: the body and sexuality. In one of her best-known pieces, entitled *Kortárs festőművész vagyok* (I am a contemporary painter, 1998), Kriszta Nagy poses in underwear on a billboard poster like a fashion model—or, only for the first sight so. Several reviewers have disapproved of this work for, in their interpretation, x-T is just trying to promote her work and personality through marketing them with her own quasi-naked body. Amelia Jones remarks how a creative approach that is both sensual/corporeal and conceptual is unthinkable for the distanciation principle of Greenbergian modernist avant-garde aesthetics (1993:27), and her remark seems to apply to the Hungarian art world conventions as well.

In *Kortárs festőművész vagyok*, Kriszti addresses the same two aspects of subjectivity—the artist-self and the woman-self—that she would pursue in her later pieces. Both are defining aspects for the individual self, but are marginalized in society. The whole arrangement of the iamge—the female body clad in underwear with the equally important title-text taking up the other half of the poster—radiates an uncomfortable air of commodification that contemporary culture and culture industry forces on both artists and women.[296] At this time, however, the artist held out some hope for the emergent art market. She recognized the fact that Hungary had introduced market economy, and if artists have not problematized this development itself, then the earlier ethos of the artist in defiance of the political-economical establishment no longer holds, but becomes hypocritical (interview, Nagy 2005:A108–154). And insofar as the contemporary artist takes now for granted that s/he lives in a market-oriented consumer society, then marketing will have to become a crucial factor for his/her products as well.[297] Her incorporation of advertisement

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[296] Note how John Berger, in his *Ways of seeing* (1972), also connected the commodification of art to the commodification of women and the representations of women.

[297] Six years later, the exhibition *Minta halál* (Model Death, Godot Gallery, 2004) exemplified one of the turning points in her learning process: the disappointment in the ways private capital entered the sphere of art. (She details this experience in her text written for the catalogue of the exhibition *Out of Time*, Bora 2001:18–19.) The exhibition was staged as her obsequies; her testament was pasted on the "Wailing Wall" erected in the gallery. The testament was authenticated by a notary, and she wished that her works of art still in her possession at the time of her death, be destroyed so they never be in commercial circulation. The images displayed—wallpaper cut-outs with drawings on them—were not items for sale as they were to be inevitably destroyed upon being removed from the gallery wall.

techniques was befitting also because her billboard was not a sterile studio exercise: it was on public display on a Budapest square where FKSE (Association of Young Artists) has run a "billboard gallery" with monthly changing pieces by contemporary artists.

At the beginning of her career, x-T proved to be doubly subversive because she introduced the gender theme in another medium, digital art, which was a territory "untouched by such an approach, since it was strongly imbued by conceptualism […] and had been a monolith in terms of its gender-character, and which had been colonized by artists who were raised on avant-garde conceptual traditions" (András 1999c:79). In the six-part digitally manipulated computer print, *HUF 200.000*, Nagy poses in jeans and a short fur coat which is open to reveal the breasts—except the breasts are not hers, and are different on every print since she "borrowed" them from friends. Kriszta Nagy so comments on the variety and actuality of female body forms, holding them up against to the standardized beauty of implants one can get for those 200.000 Hungarian Forints. In János Szoboszlai's view, Kriszta also directs attention to the working of mainstream media with this work: magazines manipulate the female body in a similar way to adapt it to a standardized appearance. Szoboszlai notes the model's sculpture-like posture and her glance in which eerie seriousness and amused casualness combine, which makes one wonder if she is being manipulated by the media, or she is manipulating them (Szoboszlai 1999:317).

Like most of the time indeed, in a 2004 painting, *A nő egyetlen esélye…*(The woman's only chance…) Nagy portrays herself again—this time, being penetrated from behind by a well-identifiable television personality.[298] The couple, captured in this not quite so gently intimate moment, exchanges the following lines:

> [SHE:] Ahhh… Can I be your art director?
> [HE:] Keep cool bitch! I'll knock down the planets for ya.

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[298] The work was painted for the annual MEO auction of contemporary art; MEO, founded in 2001, Budapest, housed a Collection of Contemporary Art—until its bankruptcy only after a few years of existence.

The inscription on the top of the painting reads "The woman's only chance—being the love-toy of the male"; and at the bottom reads an upside-down "no".[299] The work was reproduced in the women's supplement of the political and cultural review *Magyar Narancs* (8 January, 2004) where Kriszti accompanied it with a statement. In this uniquely straightforward and frank piece of writing, the artist does not shun her own personal involvement. She laments over the persistent objectification of women, manifest in the always already over-sexualized gender relations that occur even in professional contexts: "I wonder what sorts of chance a woman, as the object of male desire, has if she wants to work in professionally fitting positions other than becoming a plaything in romantic hunting games? Can she say no, or how can she say no, without hurting the male pride of the macho man? […] This role i am cast in […] has caused me a great deal of pain over a long time now". The problem she raises here is an equivalent of the one broached by sociologist Mária Adamik in relation to an enduring obstacle to more equal gender relations in contemporary Hungary: "Is there any chance of even dreaming about social equality in an environment where, in interpersonal relationships, men deny it, and continue to put out such a stout resistance to the emerging changes in the men-women relation that constantly befuddles foreign analysts?" (2000:233).

The textual part of this piece revokes the pleasure or titillation to be potentially found in the image in itself, and this ambiguity is also present in her other body-related works i referred to above. On the second look, the viewer finds that Kriszti's posture on the billboard, her plain, rather than luscious, undergarment and the intimidated expression on her all lack the confidence and ease fashion models normally display. This lack of sweltering eroticism or arousal, normally present in pieces playing on sexuality, and the shyness hiding in x-T's look were noted by other authors as well, also in relation to other works by Kriszta Nagy. They (Tatai 2000, Bordács 2004), however, accounted for it as a missing quality rather than something that was never meant to be

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[299] Meant, by the artist, to disclose that "no, the intercourse has not happened" (interview, Nagy 2005:A372–408).

there. I more agree with Tibor Gyenis (2002) proffering that the interpretations of Kriszta Nagy's body-related works does not turn on whether or not they are "sexy". When not reduced to a missing quality, Kriszti's uninviting eroticism turns out to sidetrack the objectifying male gaze, and questions—in the poster piece—the naturalness of female erotic glow and desirability: no matter how hard she tries, she can only poorly fake what others (models, for example), who exercise femininity as a gainful employment, had learned. This maneuver of sidetracking is more complicated in the case of a recent series, *A ki nem adott album borítója I–XXII* (The cover of the never released CD I–XXII).

For her mid-career solo show *Eddig* (Up Until Now*)* in WAX Kultúrgyár (WAX Culture Factory) in 2007, Kriszta Nagy brought together two branches of her creative activity that art professionals have practically failed to do. For a while then, she had been planning to release a new CD with lyrics radically addressing the ways women's body and sexuality have been abused and repressed through pornography and actually prevailing sexual practices.[300] The CD has not been recorded for the time of the show, but x-T made a series of computer prints intended as covers for the musical album. These photos feature the artist clad in lacy black underwear in an interior resembling a motel room, and in poses familiar from erotic magazines; part of them, however, are blurry and out-of-focus. The images are inscribed with lyrics from the songs; their defiance and dirty language contradicts the overly pleasing or self-offering postures, yet the question remains whether the text can really overwrite the visual information. In the artist's own interpretation, the lyrics are not to overwrite the visuals, but convey the tense contradiction she herself has experienced: she refuses such self-effacing and humiliating sexual behaviour but she will do it for the culture around her forces her to do so, and she hardly sees alternative ways to cope. This is certainly a disempowered position, yet the disturbing way of presentation has the capacity—like other feminist works dealing with female sexual experience— to pose "an open

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[300] Personal communication, Kriszta Nagy, March 14, 2007.

threat to patriarchy: challenging a phallogocentric, controlled sexuality and its visual representation" (Kubitza 2001). Other feminist voices, however, would dispute the use of the nude in artistic representation and warn about the automatism with which a scantily dressed woman's body is immediately read as an incitement or invitation to consume (as it was the case with Nagy's billboard work too). "From a materialist feminist perspective", Jill Dolan says, "the female body is not reducible to a sign free of connotation" (1987:160). Just because an artist chooses to appropriate a given visual sign (the nude in this case) and places it in a context s/he created, that sign will not be automatically freed from the connotations it has acquired over history. One of the aspects Lauren Rabinovitz collected to guide through the values of a feminist aesthetic is the requirement that female imagery be used without misappropriation or objectification, and that the artist deal consciously with the far from transparent act of making images into "art" (1980/81:40).

Earlier on i asserted that Kriszta Nagy's subjectivity is largely defined by two non-dominant identity aspects. It is from this position that she re-worked (re-wrote the lyrics of, and re-recorded) a pop song, *Magyarország* (Hungary). The intention of the author of the original song was to create something like an updated and pop edition of the national anthem, which would retain the patriotism of the actual Hungarian anthem but would no longer portray the country and its people as doomed and dogged by ill fortune, but proud and confident.[301] With her slight but highly calculated modifications in the text, Kriszta Nagy points to the problematic picture of "national culture" and "national identity".[302] Uma Narayan marked the contestation and re-direction of homogenizing discourses (like that of the nation) as an important task for feminist politics. Such dominant narratives "would claim the entire edifice of 'our Culture' and 'our

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[301] See http://www.music.hu/news.php?cikk=4004.

[302] I am presenting two snippets of the lyrics for comparison. While the original starts out like this: "There's a country where i've been while asleep: Hungary", Kriszta's begins with "There's a country where I must live wide awake: Hungary"; and where the original text says "Hungary! / Be a guarantee for the future—I've entrusted my life to you", Kriszta sings: "Hungary! / Be a guarantee *for me too*— I, too, have entrusted my life to you."

Nation' for themselves, converting them into a peculiar form of property, and excluding the voices, concerns, and contributions of many who are members of the national and political community", and would cast practices and values that pertain to a specific privileged group as values of the "culture" as a whole (1997:10–15). In closing Chapter II, i considered feminism among a host of new social movements and critical trends that are essentially anti-hegemonic, and inclusive, rather than exclusive. I find it fascinating that Kriszta Nagy expresses a critique of the view of the nation from a similar perspective which goes far beyond the standard set of issues normally tackled by an art world feminism.

In the opening paragraphs of this section, i referred to Nagy's vision of the artist's role as one of the reasons that might invoke unfavorable opinions of her. The critics i have quoted there used qualifiers such as "naïve" or "immature". I think such evaluation also results from critics' hesitations whether her enunciations delivered in a personal voice are pure private expressions or strategic uses of a personalized narrative. I argue that they are a combination of both.

 Especially her public (i.e., outside-the-art-scene) appearances generate the former opinion. At one such recent occasion, she was invited to the television talk show in which a more or less standard set of seven celebrities and media personalities give witty comments on various pieces of news from the respective week.[303] While some of the standard male members occasionally rotate, there is only one standard female participant of the show (Judit Hernádi, an actress). Kriszta Nagy was never re-invited and her performance provoked fairly violent negative reactions both on screen, in the very show, and subsequently on online forums.[304] While most commenters were angered by her "annoying" "postmodern Barbie" style and foulmouthed manner, there were also occasional voices that pointed to the prejudiced minds and harshly exclusory attitudes of Kriszti's partners in the show, having no tolerance for views, values and lifestyles other than what

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[303] RTL Klub—"Heti hetes" (ca. "The weekly seven"). Kriszta Nagy featured in the 2008. February 25 edition.
[304] In the online edition of the daily paper *Népszabadság* (http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-483505); or on private blogs (e.g., http://mover.blog.hu/2008/02/25/hetes_a_lejton), the latter with 121 comments..

they are accustomed to see in their own social environments. But even some of these latter commenters problematized x-T's exhibitionism and self-centeredness, and the way she hijacked the program striving to draw all attention to herself but being inactive when any other subject came up.

I cite this television event here because i think it well illustrates the kind of vision of the artist-self Nagy adheres to. This artistic ego is modeled after the narcissistic and self-focused male creator insofar as it envisions itself as an exceptional individual, even an outsider or outlaw. While Kriszta Nagy touches upon a great many salient issues defining a still oppressive gender regime in contemporary Hungary, her particular identity construct precludes (very literally or empirically too) that she seek connections to other (women) and their experiences, and thus use a radically personalized artistic voice as a strategical tool. This moment certainly poses a problem for my analysis performed from a feminist perspective, which—among other things—looks out for instances in women visual artists' works that destabilize identity and undermine authoritative subjectivity.

IV.4 Conclusions

My survey of Hungarian women visual artists' creative praxis is not the first enterprise that considers their works from the perspective of feminist criticism. In my view, however, many of these undertakings have too exclusively drawn on the discourses and analytical categories of Western feminist art criticism. As a result, they seem to a) vindicate that gender-related problematizations have escaped the attention of Hungarian women artists, or b) curtail the political moments of feminist perspectives by reducing them to means of "disinterested" aesthetic analysis. While my findings do not sharply contradict many of their propositions themselves, and i too rely on the insights of feminist art theory, in my sample analyses of a

number of women artists' practice i attempted to combine these with the two guiding aspects i introduced in I.3.iii. These aspects—the notion of a feminist counter-public sphere, and the idea of feminine modes of representation—were convoked to help me capture the political moments in the practices discussed.

My interviews with female artists who worked within or parallel with the Hungarian neo-avant-garde generation of the 1960s-80s recited the perception that the feminist struggle for the equal rights of women was largely impenetrable for them for they took the achievements of women's emancipation for granted. They did notice men's overrepresentation within the art world and their existing privileges but viewed these as naturalized sexual difference, and resorted to individual strategies to overcome the related professional injustices, disadvantages, and private-life difficulties. Such perception may have been shaped by the common counter-cultural platform that underwrote the opposition to official cultural policy as the only credible political identity.[305] Although the testimonies of Orsolya Drozdik—the only Hungarian women visual artist who has exhibited a continuous and conscious feminist concern ever since the late-1970s—are not entirely consistent,[306] what remains stable in the available accounts is that she perceived herself as an equally accepted member of her early-career artist community, but her works bringing a female perspective into play met with indifference. It remains a question to explore in future research whether the emigration of other female cultural producers whom my respondents recalled as involved with the questions of contemporary feminism was in any way connected to this unreceptivity of the avant-garde circle, and whether they kept up their concern in their new place of residence.

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[305] Such mono-focus as well as many of the members' creative performance in the new regime drove me to question what sort of critical intentions and potentials this automatically valorized oppositional attitude really has had. I also critically regard how oppositional strategies in Communist times determine the absence or presence of critical artistic positions today, and how they relate to the transformation of a more broadly understood political culture.

[306] My interveiw with her (interview, Drozdik 2001:B087–97), her own statements in her book (Drozdik 2006), and the related parts of my interview with Dóra Maurer (interview, Maurer 2009:052–78) provide differing evidence on Drozdik's knowledge at the time of the issues in feminist art criticism and the favorable or neglectful reception of her creative output.

I had a closer look at the artistic praxis of a number of women artists who emerged in the mid-1990s. These artists were featured in the feminist critic-inspired discourse that developed around the same time in the Hungarian scene. In my sample analyses of the works of a number of these artists i tried to identify why, how, and to what degree their particular ways of speaking from a woman's position may turn out to be critical praxis in the given socio-cultural context. I found that an increased number of women art students and an incipient discourse did not necessarily bring about feminist works or any alliance between women artists, but it may have facilitated their entry to the art world according to the "difference principle":[307] Unlike female members of the underground of earlier decades, these young artists (Eszter Radák, Ágnes Szépfalvi) no longer disowned their women-selves but demonstratively acknowledged it, and incorporated various aspects of specifically female life or social experiences in their artworks. These gestures contained little social critique in the strict sense; rather, this kind of expression signified a liberation from the constraints of a male-defined artistic tradition and male-dominated creative environment.

The progressive art world of the state-socialist period existed as a "parallel" cultural space to official culture. In the new regime, visual arts lost the attention it earned from an over-politicized cultural policy. This in fact aggravated its marginal status, while, at the same time, artists were happy to cut out political overtones from their creative activity and further turned away from the social world. Certainly, this circumstance was not a favorable one for critically inclined or socially engaged art practices which, however, were in the ascendant in the international scene in the 1990s.[308] In time, a number of artists took to politically informed explorations of social issues and injustices, but this new criticality has been essentially inattentive to gender-based problematizations.

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[307] Here i am recalling Éva Fodor's concept, already summarized in II.2.ii (2003:33–37).

[308] My reference here to the international scene is not to reiterate a compulsive comparison with tendencies in the "world at large", but i cannot leave aside the concurrent "globalization of the artworld" in the form of biennales and large international exhibitions collecting artists from various continents. This process has expanded the international scene, connected practitioners from virtually all continents, whereby it also, to an extent, homogenized internationally sought-after practices and forms of expressions.

It is from this respect that i credited the activity of women artists (Róza El-Hassan, Kriszta Nagy) who did take up questions of sexual difference in their openly critical or political projects; Nagy also making conscious efforts to articulate her critique beyond the closed domain of art. I found, however, that apart from not being fully conscious about the theoretical bases for her practice, Nagy as an artist is caught up in a modernist role perception. Orsolya Drozik whose oeuvre, on the contrary, is concentrated on theories turns out to be similarly captured, i argue, by modernist views of art and the artist. I find coupling feminist aspirations with such cornerstones of modernism problematic because these originate in a kind of subjectivity that is in conflict with feminist theory's critique of the unitary, complete and mastering liberal subject, and because it also entails a mode of signification that rests on a hierarchical and domineering relationship between author/text and recipient. From the perspective of an analysis that expands the understanding of feminist cultural practice towards this direction—as my analysis does—the artistic praxes of Emese Benczúr and Róza El-Hassan are exemplary. In these works, the gender-related criticism that is communicated on the level of content is subtle, but their conceptual underpinnings and the modes of signification they realize undermine the substructure of a patriarchal cultural tradition.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION

In this research, i inquired into the kind of factors—public and private ideological and material conditions—that shaped female subjectivity and constructs of femininity in state-socialist and post-socialist Hungary. I looked into political, social and cultural processes and discourses to identify these factors, and explored how these may have also affected women cultural producers' subject and speaking positions and impacted their artistic agendas in the corresponding periods. This exploration also involved capturing such elusive things, first consciously studied by Clifford Geertz, as the particular "mood" or "tone" that a cultural system gives to daily life. My research contributes to cultural theory projects that, while developing a strong theoretical framwork, insist on also engaging the social context.

Having chosen to investigate a combination of factors and reading society as a "text" allowed me to do two things. First, rather than merely providing aesthetic analyses of individual artworks or oeuvres, and taking cultural texts as discrete products, i could view them within the complex intertextuality of the sociocultural environment which encompasses and conditions artistic enunciations. Second, regarding cultural producers as social subjects, i could embed them within a personal, social, ideological, and historical context. I needed this operation in order to deconstruct an assumed East–West sameness for political identities (Watson 2000), in other words, the presupposition that identities under different political regimes and historical circumstances are the same. Such deconstruction was crucial for an analysis of contemporary Hungarian women artists' activity from a feminist perspective. Not wanting to collapse a feminist approach into an automated application of the concepts and categories of (Western) feminist art criticism, i both had to historicize gender, and recognize the contextual nature of cultural production. Engaging the social context into my study of cultural producers' work raised a question central to my project: how did the gender regimes of state-socialist and post-socialist

Hungary enable, encourage or constrain particular subject and speaking positions for creative women? What sort of "social voices" (Deborah Cameron 2001:15) have been available, and opened up, for them, and what sort of possibilities of utterances were thus defined?

To capture the "mood" or "tone" of two consecutive regimes in Hungary and the ways these regimes have interpellated individuals and produced particular identities and subjectivities, i examined their prevalent ideologies, discourses and (visual) representations. In their capacity to sustain, reconfigure, or engender social practices and to give form to individual consciousness, discourses and dominant representations are actual agents of social construction. Available discourses make public acts and certain identifications recognizable and meaningful. As my analysis in Chapter II and the interviews with women artists showed, feminist thought and feminist political identities (as understood in the terms of Western feminism) did not come through as meaningful for many women in the wake of a impugnably devised and implemented state-administered "emancipation" program, or within the context of a re-traditionalizing gender regime in Hungary. This has not obviated, however, that women develop partially emancipating identities, procure a certain sense of entitlement and licenses as female social subjects, and acquire actual material gains and practical resources. Framing this way the relation between Western definitions of feminism as a social movement and intellectual critique, and the impact of social processes and a worldview[309] advanced by the socialist regime, helped me to retain agency to Hungarian women (as an abstract group) even when problematizing—from a feminist perspective—certain aspects of their political consciousness.[310]

I put forward the idea of the creation of a feminist counter-public sphere as a conceptual site within the Hungarian discursive arena where woman as a political category can be constituted,

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[309] I am consciously using the word "worldview" here; its Hungarian equivalent (*világnézet*) was practically used as a synonym, or euphemism, for the term "ideology" in state-socialist official language. It was meant to refer to a comprehensive set of ideas, beliefs and values framing the common experiences of a people living in a given geopolitical location under a given economic and socio-cultural system.
[310] Or, *our* political identity. Viewing my research from this angle, it also has elements of an autoethnographical inquiry.

and the related problematizations can be meaningfully argued out. As some segments of contemporary cultural producers often regard their activity as taking place in a counter-public sphere that resists both state and market interests, and where a "subversive attention" and politically critical public opinion are being exercized, i envisioned this conceptual site as also a reservoir for the contributions of women cultural producers who critically negotiate their contextually determined positions as female social subjects and creative individuals.

Identity construction and subjectivity were addressed from another angle in the disssertation. The juxtaposition of feminist *versus* feminine cultural texts did not only enable me to unhinge interpretations of cultural products from their authors'—stated or assumed— feminist intentions and identifications. It also helped me to devise and introduce an analytical category that has no compensatory[311] overtones as it could, and indeed should, be a tenable aspect of a feminist discussion of artistic expressions from any contemporary context. This category is the reconstructed author-self: a model of subjectivity that refutes an alleged unity and relinquishes mastery and authority over the interaction of texts and recipients. Seeing the reconstructed (author-)self as a crucial feminist aspiration is preconditioned on the understanding of feminism as a social and cultural critique that works towards the utopia of essentially anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical social and inter-personal relations.

In Chapter II: *Emancipation as an expendable goal*, i reviewed a number of legislative pieces, women-related policies, and social practices that in this way or another have conveyed messages for female social subjects. I did not identify any of these and their effects as single most crucial factors from the perspective of women's equality, but intended to weave them together, and uncover their intricate net of interrelations in both periods. I agree with Éva Fodor's assessment of state-socialist women's politics as a unique experiment with an old feminist dream: the

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[311] Compensatory in the sense of attempting to confer some sort of latent feminism on an environment by and large disinterested in feminist politics as we know it.

purposeful inclusion of women in the public spheres of work and civic engagement while taking their specific differences into account (2003:136). But this social "experiment" was framed by a patriarchal gender ideology as the state did not identify the home and gender relations as major spheres of reform. The resulting antithetical messages gave form to a "contradictory female consciousness"; such consciousness may be affected by the discrepancy between the notion of equal rights and the lived reality of gender inequality, but does not acknowledge it as a problem requiring solution. The political will (and the economic need) to follow through the "experiment" gradually waned in the last two decades of socialist rule, and discontinued to be a declared political intention (and economic feasibility) after the democratic transition and the re-structuring of an economy formerly based on socialist redistribution. By this time, however, the abstract ideal of gender equality and women's employment became a social norm and (the latter) was a decades-long social experience. With the system change, women-related political agendas did not grow more consistent, and post-socialist political and social discourses did little to alter a patriarchal gender regime. Men's social roles continued to be largely unaddressed, and one of the most troubling continuity is as vital as ever: women's self-effacing attitudes and voluntary submission to male partners. Sociologists, historians, philosophers, political scientists, filmmakers alike have tried to come to grips with this phenomenon widely experienced across social strata, as the samples and commentaries i presented in Chapter II demonstrate.

Feminist film theory holds that films often function as the unconscious of ideology and thus cinematic representations mediate a given culture's vision of itself (while they also form and inform social practices, relations, and behaviors). In Chapter III: *Women and/in Hungarian cinema (industry) in the past sixty years*, i traced to what extent women gained access to producing filmic representations, and in what ways their contribution influenced such representations. Opening up a broader vista, i also surveyed to what extent women's elevated public participation and public visibility influenced (women's) representations on the cinema screen. My findings show that

processes within feature film production have relatively closely reflected social processes. The industry saw women's emergence and growing numbers in some positions as well as the related patterns of job segregation, and later a certain re-arrangement of gender proportions following the re-structuring of the industry. As far as representations are concerned, the films of the early "post-revolutionary" period profoundly re-shaped female characters; frequently detaching them from indispensable male partners but framing them in a new dependency from a paternal state. Later decades developed a film style and film language, both practiced by women and men film makers, that deployed cinematic codes and narrative techniques that led, in a great many cases, to nuanced and complex portrayals of women and women's concerns. I argued that this film style was also pre-conditioned by non-commercially driven production conditions, and that it dried up when these conditions were replaced by the logic of profit-oriented movie entertainment. Parallel with changes in the industry structure, women were becoming obliterated again from cinematic representations, or were filmed in ways that, as feminist theorists would argue, adversely affect women.

Segregation/feminization processes took a different course in the domain of visual arts, and while the dominant artistic paradigm in film subserved a variegated and refined engagement with women's concerns, the precepts of an uncleared modernist-avant-garde artistic tradition eschewed thematizations and modes of expression that would have accommodated a comparable engagement. The research findings i presented in Chapter IV: *Artists, artworks, and subject positions: The activity of Hungarian women visual artists from 1945 till today* show that the few female participants of the vanguard art scene of the 1970-80s were "professionally masculinized" or marginalized. From the mid-1990s on, the number of actively producing women artists and art professionals conspicuously rose, which gave way to a commonly experienced "liberation" from earlier imposed artistic and attitudinal norms as well as to the formation of a feminist-informed art critical discourse. Both the period of exhilaration and the active discourse were short-lived, and

did not entail a sustained critical interrogation of the particular position or issues of women as social subjects and/or creative individuals. I attribute this to a combination of factors. Much of the modernist concept of artmaking still prevails; a great majority of contemporary artists are preoccupied with art-immanent themes, and as they do not experience institutionalized gender-based discrimination within the art world, they are less ready to devote attention to, or do trivialize, issues of gender identity or gender inequality in society at large. The system and nature of art education in Hungary assists in keeping up such (a)political and uncritical approaches and tend to promote a model of an artist-self that draws from the image of the creative genious characterized by a strong individuality. I argued that the creative pursuit of the only Hungarian contemporary women artist, Kriszta Nagy, who would openly and deliberately address gender-based social and personal grievances, is being shaped in a field of these paradoxical forces.

During my investigation, i identified two moments that may set the path for further research. Similarly to my proposition concerning film production, i argue that a number of male cultural producers in Hungary—visual artists,[312] writers,[313] pop musicians[314]—have proved to be more willing or better able to address issues elsewhere typically tackled by female artists/authors or feminist theorists. They do so with a varying degree of political consciousness. This observation warrants an exploration whether these are unrelated sporadic instances or they are in some way meaningfully related both to each other and to the gender-related transformations within the social and cultural context in which they emerge.

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[312] E.g., Tibor Gyenis, Róbert Szabó Benke and Géza Szöllősi; on their activity see my forthcoming article "Boys Do Cry: Contemporary Hungarian Male Artists Engaging with Gender Troubles;" to appear in Angela Dimitrakaki and Katarzyna Kosmala (eds.), *Sexing the Border: Gender, Art and New Media in Central and Eastern Europe.*

[313] E.g., Sándor Weöres and Péter Esterházy as well as an expanding body of texts in modern Hungarian literature that operate with a fictitious female authorship; on this see my article "A History of Things That Did Not Happen: The Life and Work of Two Fictitious Hungarian Women Authors"; Hock 2008.

[314] My pertinent observations are largely empirical at this stage, and they bear on the pop groups *Kispál és a borz*, *Kiscsillag* (see my motto for Chapter III), and *Bëlga*.

In my interviews with women artists and in personal communications with acquaintances working in the film industry, several respondents commented on the conspicuously changing gender proportion of the youngest generation of art and film students: women are no longer in flagrant minority in these schools. It remains to be seen whether, upon acquiring their diploma and starting their careers, young women artists will move beyond meddling with gender codes and female identity in the de-politicised realm of the "personal", and whether women filmmakers will manage to build more sizeable oeuvres than most female directors before them, and which direction of Hungarian cinema the subject choice and film language of their movies will carry on with.

Appendix 1

Definitions of behind-the-screen positions in film industry, and explanations of use of terminology.

director – visualizes the script and controls a film's artistic and dramatic aspects while guiding the technical crew and actors. In various systems, it is not always unambiguous who has the most artistic control over the making of a film: the script-writer, the director, or the producer. In a system where the director is usually selected by the producer, film directors do not always have absolute artistic control as producers have veto power over everything from the script itself to the final cut of the film. Except for the period of tight political control over the film studios when directors were appointed for film projects, Hungarian cinema operated in an *auteur* system in which directors propose the projects they want to work on. Also, in the era of state subsidy, it was the director's task to mobilise his/her social capital, and lobby for subsidy at the Central Film Department (Filmfőigazgatóság), while the production manager only prepared and managed the budget of a film.

film producer – initiates, coordinates, supervises and controls matters such as fundraising, hiring key personnel, and arranging for distributors. The post of the producer was non-existent in state-socialist Hungary, while in the American film industry (and to a certain degree in the system introduced after the political changes in Hungary) it is usually the producer who ultimately has the greatest degree of control.[315]

screenwriter or script writer – writes the screenplay from which movies are made. Screenplays can be original works or adaptations of literary (or other) works. (In the latter case, i refer to the author of the original work as writer.)

film editor – although an important and notable behind-the-scene post,[316] it is also a painstaking job, or at least used to be so before the introduction of digital technology. (Until then it meant in effect cutting and gluing back together film snippets in a dark room.) The editor "turns raw celluloid into gold" connecting shots to form a sequence, and then connecting sequences to form an entire movie, often re-writing the film during the editing process.

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[315] Executive producer is a major role in the industry but one that is ambiguous and often difficult to define clearly – and one that has also been largely nonexistent in the state-socialist system. The closest equivalent here is perhaps the production manager (see below) without, however, any hands-on control over artistic aspects.

[316] In fact it is the only function that is unique to cinema and which defines and separates filmmaking from almost all other art forms.

production manager – the "household manager", literally responsible for managing all issues of production below the actual directing of the film. Hence a position of power but unrelated to the creative section of the work.

cinematographer or director of photography (traditionally the camera operator himself) – operates the camera and/or manages the camera and lighting crew; responsible for achieving artistic and technical decisions related to the image.

storyline editor or dramaturge – refines the dramatic composition and structure of the storyline; could be compared to the editor of a written text. (Dramaturge is a term originally related to drama and theatre.) It is a function non-existent in the Hollywood system, but in Hungary during the tight control of the 1950s it was a central element in the film-making process (Kulcsár 2005).

costume designer – designs, chooses (and, earlier within the Hungarian industry, used to make) clothing and accessories for the actors to wear. The designer needs to possess strong artistic capabilities as well as a thorough knowledge of pattern development, textiles and costume/fashion history.

assistant director – helps the film director in the making of a movie; duties include setting the shooting schedule, tracking daily progress, arranging logistics, checking the arrival of cast and crew, maintaining order on the set, rehearsing cast, and directing extras. Before the institutionalisation of film education, the role of an assistant director was a stepping stone to directing work.

Appendix 2

Full title, director and production year of the Hungarian films mentioned in the thesis; in order of production year.

(The English titles of the individual films correpond to those in *Hungarian Feature Films* (Varga 1999) and/or follow the titles used in foreign distribution or at festival premieres, except for the two titles translated by myself and marked with asterix.)

2x2 Are Sometimes 5 / Kétszer kettő néha öt – 1954, György Révész

A Cosy Cottage / Kertes házak utcája – 1962, Tamás Fejér

A Full Day / Egy teljes nap – 1988, Ferenc Grunwalsky

A Glass of Beer / Egy pikoló világos – 1955, Félix Máriássy

A Kind of America / Valami Amerika – 2002, Péter Herendi

A Priceless Day / Ajándék ez a nap – 1979, Péter Gothár

A Study About Women / Tanulmány a nőkről – 1967, Márton Keleti

A Woman Finds Her Way / Egy asszony elindul – 1948, Imre Jenei

Adoption / Örökbefogadás – Márta Mészáros, 1975

After the Day Before / Másnap – 2004, Attila Janisch

Anna / Édes Anna – 1958, Zoltán Fábri

Awakening / Ébredés – 1994, Judit Elek

Bálint Fábián Meets God / Fábián Bálint találkozása istennel – 1980, Zoltán Fábri

Binding Sentiments / Holdudvar – 1968, Márta Mészáros

Bitches / Csajok – 1995, Ildikó Szabó

Bunny / Tücsök – 1963, Miklós Markos

Car of Dreams / Meseautó – 2000, Barna Kabay

Catherine's Marriage / Kis Katalin házassága – 1950, Félix Máriássy

Cha-cha-cha - 1981, János Kovácsi

Dad Goes Nuts / Apám beájulna – 2003, Tamás Sas

Daughters of Luck / A szerencse lányai – 1998, Márta Mészáros

Dealer – 2004, Benedek Fliegauf

Devil's Ferry / Pokolrév – 1969, Miklós Markos

Diary for My Children / Napló gyermekeimnek – 1982, Mészáros Márta

Diary for My Father and Mother / Napló apámnak, anyámnak – 1990, Mészáros Márta

Diary for My Lovers / Napló szerelmeimnek – 1987, Mészáros Márta

Do You Know "Sunday-Monday"? / Ismeri a Szandi mandit? – 1969, Lívia Gyarmathy

Eszterkönyv – 1990, Krisztina Deák

Fast and Loose / Könnyű vér – 1989, Ibolya Fekete

Fateless / Sorstalanság – 2005, Lajos Koltai
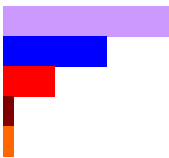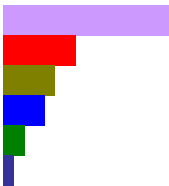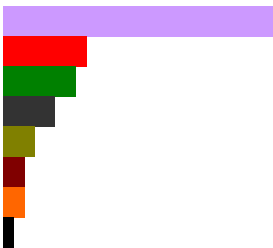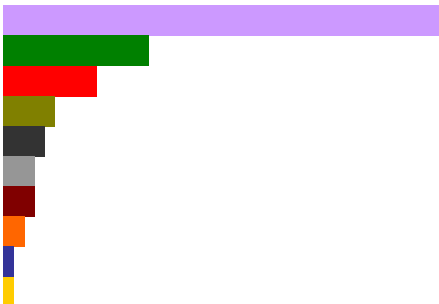
Fetus / A magzat – 1993, Márta Mészáros

Four Girls in a Courtyard / Négy lány egy udvarban – 1964, Pál Zolnay

Gangster Film / Gengszterfilm – 1998, György Szomjas

Guarded Secrets / Mélyen őrzött titkok – 2004, Zsuzsa Böszörményi

Honour and Glory / Becsület és dicsőség – 1951, Viktor Gertler

Hungarian Vagabond / Magyar vándor – 2003, Péter Herendi

Hungarians / Magyarok – 1978, Zoltán Fábri

Jadviga's Pillow / Jadviga párnája – 2000, Krisztina Deák

Je t'aime / Zsötem – 1991, András Salamon

Just Like at Home / Olyan, mint otthon – 1978, Márta Mészáros

Just Sex and Nothing Else / Csak szex és más semmi – 2005, Krisztina Goda

Kisses and Scratches / Csókkal és körömmel – 1994, György Szomjas

Kontroll – 2003, Nimród Antal

Little Vilma – the Last Diary – 1999, Márta Mészáros

Love Emilia! / Szeressétek Odor Emíliát! – 1969, Pál Sándor

Maria's Day / Mária-nap – 1983, Judit Elek

Men Are Different / A férfi egészen más – 1966, Tamás Fejér

Merry-Go-Round / Körhinta – 1955, Zoltán Fábri

Mistletoes / Fagyöngyök – 1978, Judit Ember

Mrs. Déry, Where Are You? / Déryné, hol van? – 1975, Gyula Maár

Mrs. Taylor / Szabóné – 1949, Félix Máriássy

Narcissus and Psyche / Nárcisz és Psyché – 1980, Gábor Bódy

Natasha / Natasa – 1998, Tamás Tóth

*Never-never Gloria / Sohasevolt Glória – 2000, Zsolt Bernáth

Nine Months / Kilenc hónap – Márta Mészáros, 1976

Oh, Bloody Life / Te rongyos élet – 1983, Péter Bacsó

One Skirt, One Pant / Egy szoknya, egy nadrág – 2005, Bence Gyöngyössy

Pleasant Days / Szép napok – 2003, Kornél Mundruczó

Red Colibri / Vörös Colibri – 1995, Zsuzsa Böszörményi

Reflections / Tükörképek – 1976, Rezső Szörény

Riddance / Szabad lélegzet – 1973, Márta Mészáros

Sarah, My Dear / Sárika drágám – 1971, Pál Sándor

Sexploitation / Aszex – 1989, László Hartai

Signal / Lássátok, feleim! - Lajos Fazekas, 1967

Stop Mom Theresa! / Állítsátok meg Terézanyut! – 2004, Péter Bergendy

Sunday Daughters / Vasárnapi szülők – 1979, Rózsa János

Sweet Emma, Dear Böbe / Édes Emma, drága Böbe – 1991, István Szabó

Tale on the 12 Points / Mese a 12 találatról – 1956, Károly Makk

The Book of Esther / Eszterkönyv – 1989, Krisztina Deák

The Bridgeman / A hídember – 2002, Géza Bereményi

The Cangaroo / A kenguru – 1975, János Zsombolyai

The Confrontation / Fényes szelek – 1968, Miklós Jancsó

The Documentator / A dokumentátor – 1988, István Dárday & Györgyi Szalai

The Girl / Eltávozott nap – 1968, Márta Mészáros

The Heiresses / Örökség – 1980, Márta Mészáros

The Iron Flower / Vasvirág – 1958, János Herskó

The Lady from Constantinople / Sziget a szárazföldön – 1969, Judit Elek

*The Pizza Boy / Pizzás – 2001, György Balogh

The Princess / Adj király katonát – 1982, Pál Erdőss

The Rapture of Deceit / A csalás gyönyöre – 1992, Lívia Gyarmathy

The Red Countess / Vörös grófnő – 1984, András Kovács

The Unburied Dead /A temetetlen halott – 2004, Márta Mészáros

The Unhappy Hat / Boldogtalan kalap - 1980, Mária Sós

Vera Angi / Angi Vera – 1978, Pál Gábor

Walking to Heaven / Gyalog a mennyországba – 1959, Imre Fehér

Woman at the Helm / Asszony a telepen – 1962, Imre Fehér

Tables

Table 1

Women's participation in various behind-the-scene positions of Hungarian feature film production, 1945-2005

period **1945-49**	total number of films made: 19	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employed in the position*
functions women featured in			
costume designer		6	31.5
production manager		4	21
editor		2	10.5
choreographer		1	5.2
writer		1	5.2

period **1950-55**	total number of films made: 48		
costume designer		15	31.2
editor		7	14.5
script writer		5	10.4
production manager		4	8.3
story line editor		2	4
lyrics		1	2

period **1956-60**	total number of films made: 111		
costume designer		59	53
editor		17	15.3
story line editor		14	12.6
set designer		11	9.9
script writer		7	6.3
choreographer		3	2.7
writer		3	2.7
consultant		1	0.9

period **1961-65**	total number of films made: 92		
costume designer		77	83.6
story line editor		26	28.2
editor		16	17.3
script writer		9	9.7
set designer		7	7.6
assistant director		6	6.5
choreographer		6	6.5
writer		3	3.2
lyrics		2	2.1
director		1	1

number of films
employing women
in the position*****

% of women
employed
in the position*****

period 1966-70   total number of films made: 106

position	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employed in the position*
costume designer	92	86.7
editor	35	33
story line editor	31	29.2
script writer	12	11.3
director	7	6.6
set designer	5	4.7
choreographer	5	4.7
writer	3	2.8
assistant director	2	1.8
lyrics	2	1.8
idea	1	0.9
production manager	1	0.9
music	1	0.9

period 1971-75   total number of films made: 96

position	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employed in the position*
costume designer	78	81.2
editor	40	41.6
story line editor	34	35.4
script writer	13	13.5
consultant	12	12.5
director	6	6.2
assistant director	6	6.2
lyrics	5	5.2
writer	4	4.1
set designer	4	4.1
music	3	3.1
choreographer	1	1
idea	1	1

period 1976-80   total number of films made: 110

position	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employed in the position*
costume designer	85	77.2
editor	82	74.5
story line editor	45	40.9
script writer	20	18.1
director	13	11.8
writer	10	9
consultant	8	7.2
set designer	7	6.3
music	5	4.5
assistant director	4	3.6
choreographer	3	2.7
production manager	3	2.7
idea	2	1.8
lyrics	1	0.9

	number of films employing women in the position*	% of women employed in the position*

period 1981-85   total number of films made: 102

position		number of films	% of women
editor		87	85.2
costume designer		75	73.5
story line editor		43	42.1
script writer		18	17.6
director		9	8.8
production manager		9	8.8
consultant		8	7.8
writer		4	3.9
set designer		3	2.9
lyrics		3	2.9
choreographer		3	2.9
idea		3	2.9
sound		3	2.9
cinematographer		2	1.9
music		2	1.9
assistant director		2	1.9
special effects		1	0.9

period 1986-90   total number of films made: 88

position		number of films	% of women
editor		84	95.4
costume designer		70	79.5
story line editor		38	43.1
script writer		13	14.7
director		13	14.7
set designer		8	9
production manager		7	7.9
consultant		5	5.6
writer		4	4.5
music		4	4.5
special effects		2	2.2
sound		2	2.2
producer		1	1.1

period 1991-95   total number of films made: 85

position		number of films	% of women
editor		80	94.1
costume designer		58	68.2
script writer		28	32.9
story line editor		21	24.7
director		15	17.6
producer		11	12.9
studio manager		10	11.7
set designer		9	10.5
production manager		7	8.2
writer		5	5.8
idea		3	3.5
consultant		3	3.5
choreographer		2	2.3
sound		2	2.3
cinematographer		2	2.3
music		1	1.1

		number of films employing women in the position[*]	% of women employed in the position[*]
period 1996-2000	**total number of films made: 99**		
editor		72	72.7
costume designer		52	52
producer		20	20
production manager		16	16.1
script writer		16	16.1
story line editor		10	10
set designer		10	10
director		8	8
music		7	7
choreographer		4	4
consultant		4	4
special effects		2	2
cinematographer		2	2
studio manager		2	2
writer		1	1
lyrics		1	1
sound		1	1
period 2001-05	**total number of films made: 119**		
costume designer		71	59.6
editor		64	53.7
production manager		29	24.3
producer		23	19.3
set designer		20	16.8
script writer		17	14.2
director		8	6.7
story line editor		8	6.7
special effects		7	5.8
music		5	4.2
writer		2	1.6
sound		1	0.8
cinematographer		1	0.8

* Cases when women fill the position individually or in mixed-gender teams. For the differences between the number/percentage of women filling the position individually or in mixed-gender teams, see *Table 2* .

Table 2 Number and proportion of women in selected behind-the-scene positions of Hungarian feature film production, 1945–2005
(highest numbers and percentages in bold face type)

Position (Period, number of films analyzed)	Director				Script writer				Storyline editor				Editor				Costume designer				Production manager			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
1945–49 (19)	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5.2	-	-	-	-	2	-	10.5	-	6	-	31.5	-	4	-	21	-
1950–55 (48)	-	-	-	-	3	5	6.2	10.4	2	-	4.1	-	7	-	14.5	-	15	-	31.2	-	4	-	8.3	-
1956–60 (111)	-	-	-	-	7	-	6.3	-	10	14	9	12.6	17	-	15.3	-	59	-	53	-	-	-	-	-
1961–65 (92)	1	1	1	-	5	9	5.4	9.7	26	-	28.2	-	16	-	17.3	-	77	-	83.6	-	-	-	-	-
1966–70 (106)	7	-	6.6	-	5	12	4.7	11.3	30	31	28.3	29.2	33	35	31.1	33	89	**92**	84	**86.7**	1	-	0.4	-
1971–75 (96)	6	-	6.2	-	6	13	6.2	13.5	34	-	35.4	-	39	40	40.6	41.6	78	-	81.2	-	-	-	-	-
1976–80 (110)	12	13	10.9	11.8	12	20	10.9	18.1	41	**45**	37.2	40.9	80	82	72.7	74.5	85	-	77.2	-	1	2	0.9	1.8
1981–85 (102)	8	9	7.8	8.8	6	18	5.8	17.6	38	43	37.2	42.1	85	**87**	83.3	85.2	72	75	70.5	73.5	8	9	7.8	8.8
1986–90 (88)	10	13	11.3	14.7	11	13	12.5	14.7	34	38	38.6	**43.1**	80	84	90.9	**95.4**	69	70	78.4	79.5	3	7	3.4	7.9
1991–95 (85)	12	**15**	14.1	**17.6**	11	**28**	12.9	**32.9**	21	-	24.7	-	72	80	84.6	94.1	51	58	60	68.2	3	7	3.5	8.2
1996–2000 (99)	7	9	7	9	8	16	8	16	10	-	10	-	58	72	58.5	72.7	44	52	44	52	14	16	14.1	16.1
2001–05 (119)	8	8	6.7	6.7	5	17	4.2	14.2	4	8	3.3	6.7	59	64	49.5	53.7	63	71	52.9	59.6	23	**29**	19.3	**24.3**

1 Number of films with a woman in the position
2 Number of films with a mixed-gender team in the position (when applicable)
3 Percentage of women in the position
4 Percentage of with mixed-gender teams in the position (when applicable)

Table 3

Number and proportion of male and female artists selected for the individual parts of the exhibition series *The History of Hungarian Art in the 20th Century*

EXHIBITION TITLE AND DATE OF EXHIBITION	PERIOD COVERED BY THE SHOW	TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTISTS SELECTED	WOMEN ARTISTS SELECTED	% OF WOMEN
Európai Iskola / The European School (part 8, 1973)	1945–48	33	6	18
Magyar művészet 1945–49 / Hungarian art 1945–49 (part 9, 1977)	1945–49	97	10	17.5
"Az ötvenes évek" / The "fifties" (part 10, 1981/82)	1949–57	52	5	9.6
A kibontakozás évei 1960 körül / The years of denouement about 1960 (part 11, 1983)	1957–67	58	8	13.7
Régi és új avantgárd / Early and new avant-garde (part 12, 1987)	1967–75	54	8	14.8
Az avantgárd vége / The end of the avant-garde (part 13, 1989)	1975–80	44	11	25
Mi, "kelet-franciák" / Us, the "Eastern French" (part 14, 1993)	1981–89	59	5	8.4
Művek és magatartás/ Works and attitudes (part 15, 1996)	1990–96	33	8	24.2

Source: Catalogs for the relevant parts of the exhibition series *A huszadik század magyar művészete* (The History of Hungarian Art in the 20th Century); in fifteen parts, shown between 1965 and 1996, Csók István Képtár—István Király Múzeum, Székesfehérvár, Hungary. Numbers and percentages are my own computation.

Table 4

Number and proportion of male and female artists mentioned in the individual chronological chapters of the book *Die zweite Öffentlichkeit: Kunst in Ungarn im 20. Jahrhundert*

PERIOD COVERED BY THE BOOK CHAPTERS	TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTISTS LISTED IN THE TEXT	WOMEN ARTISTS LISTED	% OF WOMEN
1945–48 (The European School) (Horányi 1999)	34 (47)*	6 (7)*	17.6 (14.8)*
The 1950s (Kovács 1999)	14	1	7.1
The 1960s (Kovalovszky 1999)	58	5	8.6
The 1970s (Beke 1999)	67	10	14.9
1980s (Hegyi 1999)	44	2	4.5
1990s (Szoboszlai 1999)	58	16	27.5

*Not all members of The European School were visual artists (but art theorists, collectors, philosophers, writers, poets, journalists, and doctors). The first figures in the table show number and proportion of visual artists; the figures in brackets show number and proportions of all participants.

Source: Knoll 1999. Numbers and percentages are my own computation.

Table 5

Number and proportion of male and female artists in representative group exhibitions and exhibition series, 1945–mid-1990s

YEAR OF SHOW	TITLE AND VENUE OF SHOW	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPATING ARTISTS	PARTICIPATING WOMEN ARTISTS	% OF WOMEN
1957	Tavaszi Tárlat /Spring Show (Műcsarnok/Kunsthalle)	245	32	13
1966	Stúdió '66 (Ernst Museum)	146	24	16.4
1968-69	Iparterv I-II (in the headquarters of the construction company "Iparterv")	13	1	7.6
1969	Szürenon (Kassák Lajos Művelődési Ház / Kassák House of Culture)	13	0	
1970	R-kiállítás/ The R-Show (Budapesti Műszaki Egyetem "R" Klub /"R" Club, Budapest Technical University)	26	1	3.8
1970–73	Balatonboglári Kápolnatárlatok / Balatonboglár Chapel Studio	87 (92)*	5 (3)*	5.4 (4.2)*
1981–87	Új Szenzibilitás/New Sensibility, series of exhibitions (various venues)	32	3	9.3
1983	Az avantgarde meghal / The avant-garde is dead (Bercsényi Klub/Bercsényi Club)	18	1	5.5
1984	Frissen festve/Freshly Painted (Ernst Museum)	14	0	
1986	Eklektika '85/Eclecticism '85 (Magyar Nemzeti Galéria/Hungarian National Gallery)	33	1	3
1990	Hatvanas évek/The sixties (Magyar Nemzeti Galéria/Hungarian National Gallery)	73	8	10.9
1994	Nyolcvanas évek/The Eighties; Ernst Museum	143	16	11.1

*Not only visual artists participated or performed at the events of the Chapel (but art historians, musicians, social scientiest, performing artists, writers, poets, and journalists). The first figures in the table show number and proportion of visual artists; the figures in brackets show number and proportions of all participants.

Sources: Catalogs for individual exhibitions, Klaniczay & Sasvári 2003; *Artportal*, online database of Hungarian contemporary art (http://artportal.hu/lexikon/fooldal/). Numbers and percentages are my own computation.

Table 6

Number and proportion of male and female artists in relevant artists' groups, collectives and initiatives, 1945–2000s

YEARS OF ACTIVITY	NAME OF GROUP	TOTAL NUMBER OF MEMBERS	NUMBER OF FEMALE MEMBERS	% OF WOMEN IN THE GROUPS
1945–48	Európai Iskola/The European School	34 (47)*	6 (7)*	17.6 (14.8)*
1946-48	Elvont Művészek Csoportja/Group of Abstract Artists	9	1	11.1
1958-1968	Zuglói kör/The Zugló Circle	11	0	0
1970-80	Pécsi Műhely/The Pécs Workshop	8	0	0
1972–	Vajda Lajos Stúdió (VLS)/Studio Lajos Varga**	22 42	0 5	0 11,9
1976–77	Rózsa Presszó/Café Rózsa	24	3	12.5
1978–88	Inconnu	7	1	14.2
1978–86	InDiGo***	50	19	38
1980–85	A.E. Bizottság/A.E. Committee	4 (8)	0 (3)	0 (37.5)
1982–92	Xertox	3	0	0
1984–92	Hejettes Szomlyazók	8	0	0
1989–95	Újlak	8 (9)	0 (1)	0 (11.1)
1990–	Block csoport/Block Group	8	0	0
1994–	Kis Varsó / Little Warsaw	2	0	0
2000–01	Kirakat Galéria/Art Window	2	2	100
2002–	HINTS Institute for Public Art	8	6	75
2001–03	KMKK (Két művész, két kurátor/Two artists, two curators)	4	3	75
2003–06	Dinamo	2	2	100
2005	Kurátori Egyesület Budapest/Curators' Association Budapest	10	9	90
2006-	Impex Contemporary Art Provider	6	3	50

* Some groups had non-artist members (art theorists, collectors, philosophers, authors, poets, journalists, doctors, architects, musicians, and cleaning ladies). In such cases, the first figures in the table indicate number and proportion of visual artists; the figures in brackets indicate number and proportions of all participants.

**In the 1990s, the group profile of VLS faded, while their exhibition space continued to host shows. The figures in the second row indicate participants from this period.

***More participants at the InDiGo courses were non-artists than artists; therefore i only indicate the overall members of male and female participants.

Sources: *Kortárs magyar művészeti lexikon I–III.* (Fitz 1999–2001); *Artportal*, online database of Hungarian contemporary art (http://artportal.hu/lexikon/fooldal/); Novotny 2002; Hornyik & Szőke 2008; and my own data collection. Numbers and percentages are my own computation.

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