

Eroticism in Thaw-era Soviet Lithuanian Cinema: Body Representation, Film Style, and Sociocultural Change

The dissertation explores the representation of eroticism in the cinema of Soviet Lithuania. The first part uses Janet Staiger's historical reception approach to examine how eroticism was understood and discussed in Soviet Lithuanian film discourse. The analysis shows that the local film press sought to regulate the meanings attached to eroticism, yet the very act of discussing and circulating such material also opened space for interpretations that diverged from official judgements. As a result, eroticism became a relatively familiar topic for readers of the film press and cinema audiences. In this sense, a broader process of eroticisation can be identified within the public discourse of Soviet Lithuania.

The second part examines films produced by the Lithuanian Film Studio through a historical analysis of film style informed by the work of David Bordwell. It demonstrates that images associated with eroticism continued to appear in local film production despite being subject to constant institutional control. Changes in film style, film technology, and the wider sociocultural environment enabled local filmmakers to incorporate the exposed body into their experiments with a new cinematic language. Soviet Lithuanian cinema thus became one of the fields in which the boundaries of visual permissibility, bodily representation, and erotic meaning were being renegotiated. Local film production is therefore understood as another important site in the wider eroticisation of Soviet Lithuanian public discourse.

Taken together, these two approaches show how the officially proclaimed "purity" of Soviet cinema began to fracture down in Soviet Lithuania during the Thaw. The nude body emerged not only as an object of ideological and institutional control, but also as a significant element of cinematic language, artistic experimentation, and audience reception.