

HISTORY

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RECONSTRUCTING THE PRODUCTION OF THE FEATURE FILM “PURVA BRIDĒJS” (WADER IN THE BOG) AT THE RĪGA MOTION PICTURE STUDIO IN 1966

This paper is on the production of a feature film called “*Purva bridējs*” (Wader in the Bog) at the Rīga Motion Picture Studio in the 1960s. The film is based on a novella by the Latvian author Rūdolfs Blaumanis, on the stage play that was produced from the novella, and on other works. The film was directed by Leonīds Leimanis. This research is based on documents from the Latvian National Archives, which offer a chance to reconstruct the events of the 1960s and to take a look at Soviet-era cinematic practices. The film “*Purva bridējs*” attracted a great deal of attention when it was released, and people debated the way in which screen versions of literary works conformed or did not conform to the original texts. To be sure, “*Purva bridējs*” is one of the masterpieces of Latvian cinema.

Keywords: Rīga Motion Picture Studio, “*Purva bridējs*”, Arts Council of the Rīga Motion Picture Studio, Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Leonīds Leimanis, Vija Artmane, Uldis Pūcītis, Juris Lejaskalns.

“The historian’s task is no longer to compile otherwise unknown sources and make them available to all: He must learn instead to use material that is already widely available. If the scholars of the past had not accomplished their enormous task, there would be no positive history, no ‘scientific’ history. But if historians today neglect audiovisual material, it will exist in spite of them as a history through pictures.”¹

This article is an attempt to present the history of a film. This is a way of integrating the audiovisual materials of feature films into the body of historical knowledge. Reconstruction of the production procedures in

“Wader in the Bog” (known as “Edgars and Kristīne” internationally) is possible on the basis of documents from the Rīga Motion Picture Studio (RMPS) which are stored at the Latvian National Archives. Vita Zelče has reconstructed the production procedures of another RMPS film, “*Pēdējais blēdis*” (The Last Crook).² She writes: “*Feature films are narratives. They tell stories. In its turn, a story can be told in various ways, and these can be assigned different social functions.*”³ Zelče warns us against taking anything for granted when analysing a feature film as an historical source, noting that it depicts a reflection on dominant convictions and values. There are multiple layers between the society and the way in which it is presented in a film. These are cultural, sub-cultural, economic, institutional and film industry factors which compete, influence and compete one another in this situation.⁴ The task in this research project, therefore, is to reconstruct the production routines of feature films at the Rīga Motion Picture Studio by analysing documents related to “Wader in the Bog” that are available in the archives.

The film is certainly a classic of Latvian culture. It is regularly shown on television, and it has been issued in a series of films known as the “Golden Classics Collection”. Both during its production and its successful release, however, the film fomented passionate debates among professionals in the fields of literature and film. The relationship between literature and cinema and between written text and screen presentation were debated, as were issues such as originality, authorship and creative freedom. These debates demonstrated social mechanisms at work, also offering us a look at the cultural assumptions made by participants in the debate.

This article will attempt to reconstruct the production of “Wader in the Bog”, as documented by the Rīga Motion Picture Studio. The author will also look at debates about the script and the film that occurred at the studio. Finally, she will consider the reasons why the film was criticised.

The process

The Rīga Motion Picture Studio was established on August 10, 1948, after the merger of two smaller studios – one which produced feature films, and one which produced documentary chronicles. Both had been established before World War II, and upon merger, they became known as the Rīga Feature and Documentary Chronicle Film Studio.⁵ The studio was subordinate to the Ministry of Cinematography of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic. In May 1953, the ministry was shut down on order of the Soviet Latvian Ministry of Culture.⁶ For the next five years, the RMPS was

subordinate to the Ministry of Culture. In February 1958, it was renamed and took on its present name.⁷ Output increased, and the way in which films were produced was reorganised. A State Cinematography Committee was established in each of the Soviet republics, and these were subordinated to a central Committee on Cinematography which was an agency of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. These reforms occurred in November 1963.⁸

Since 1948, the Rīga Motion Picture Studio had a secretariat, a planning department, a bookkeeping department, a script department, a chronicle department, a human resources department, and administrative and economics department, and a supplies department. A new department of actors was added in 1956, a production department followed in 1962, and an engineer responsible for capital construction, rationalisation and invention was added in 1963.⁹ According to Krauze and Līce, who have produced an analysis of RMPS films in the 1960s, this was a period of stabilisation at the Rīga Motion Picture Studio.¹⁰ New facilities for the RMPS were built to make it possible to concentrate the production of film in a single location. The first buildings of the new studios were ready for use in 1961, and the others were completed in 1963.¹¹

Krauze and Līce: *"A whole spectrum of professionals from very different spheres could work under the same roof and master the production of colour and wide-screen films, which had not been possible before."*¹²

The new studio could produce between five and eight films a year, and in the 1960s, the RMPS actually produced an average of four films per year.¹³ Some years the number of produced films was greater because of co-productions with other studios or because of the filming of theatrical or operatic productions. Of course, these latter films cannot strictly be seen as feature films.

An editorial board to oversee screenplays was established in 1962, and it became another institution to place controls over the creative process in cinematic production. The screenplay board worked with screenplays and treatments, while the art council of the studio debated, approved and declared the reimbursement category of each film. During the period that is reviewed here, the director of the RMPS and therefore also the chairman of its art council was Fridens Koroļkevičs, while the screenplay board was chaired by the author Arvīds Grigulis.¹⁴ In June 1965, Koroļkevičs sent a letter to the chairman of the State Committee on Cinematography, N. Kārklīšs, asking for permission to purchase a new screenplay, "In the Fire". The art council approved the purchase later that same month.¹⁵ The authors

of the original script, Jānis Sīlis and Aleksandrs Stankevičs, received 3,600 Soviet roubles for their efforts. This was the standard price of a screenplay in the 1960s.

The version of the screenplay in the National Archives is 73 pages long. It is based on two separate novels by Blaumanis – “In the Fire” (*Ugunī*) and “Wader In the Bog” (*Purvā*). The screenplay, of course, was based on a classic work of literature, and so the film represented the screen version thereof. The first treatment was actually an application for permission to write a full screenplay. An extensive treatment had to be written after an editorial board decided – usually on the basis of a letter of application or abstract – to go ahead with a screenplay, provided that the subject matter was acceptable and that the studio had room in its annual plan for another film. An example of how this works can be seen in the context of a film called “Four White Shirts”.¹⁶ The descriptive letter begins with a sentence which explains the situation very well: “A script for the fourth film of 1967 has still gone missing.”¹⁷

As can be seen in the aforementioned statement, the Rīga Motion Picture Studio produced an average of four films a year. The ongoing lack of screenplays often led to decisions by the staff of the studio to write up their own screenplays on the basis of novels, short stories or plays by distinguished Latvian authors.

The relationship between the screenplay and its literary source was one of the main subjects to be discussed by the editorial board on April 23, 1965.¹⁸ Present for the meeting were the chairman of the board, Arvīds Grigulis (he held that post from 1962 until 1967),¹⁹ along with members Jānis Sīlis, Osvalds Kublanovs, Fricis Rokpelnis, Aleksandrs Stankevičs and Jelena Vahruševa. The subject would be debated later in the filmmaking process, as well. One statement from the board – “After reading the script it becomes clear that the play ‘In the Fire’ can be turned into a film”²⁰ – demonstrates that there was a hierarchy of cultural texts, in which the literary original held the upper hand. It also speaks to the way in which screenplays were produced. The idea for the film came from a very successful theatrical production, “In the Fire”, which had been performed on and off at various Latvian theatres ever since the first production in 1905. Rūdolfs Blaumanis wrote the play on the basis of one of his earlier novels, “Wader in the Bog” (1898), which means that the screenplay in the 1960s was strongly linked not just to the theatre, but also to literature. Soviet ideology had, since the 1930s, considered literary text to be the ultimate cultural text.²¹ The superiority

of literary scripts over film was reconfirmed by the creation of screenplay editorial boards at all Soviet film studios in the 1960s, as noted above. It is perfectly natural, therefore, that Grigulis spoke about Blaumanis and even Shakespeare when discussing the script: *"Blaumanis took the daughter of a laundress and a stable boy and turned them into Romeo and Juliet. In this work, major passions, major love and a major panorama of life are missing. In this film, we must show the environment in all of its wholeness."*²²

This topic would remain the key issue during the production of the film and even after its release. The film's editor, Viktors Lorencs, asked whether it made any real sense to screen these two specific Blaumanis works – "In the Fire" and "Water in the Bog" at that particular moment in time. Such questions were typical of the man, and his first answer was "no". Lorencs continued, however: *"Still, if we agree that these works can be put on screen, then it must be admitted that the authors of the screenplay have done a major and serious job. From my point of view, this can be accepted as the first version of the screenplay. In which direction should we go now? From my point of view, the screenplay at this time is one which has one foot on screen and the other foot still on the stage."*²³

Grigulis suggested that the application screenplay was sufficiently comprehensive to be accepted as the first version of the script. The board gave its blessing. On June 18, 1965, after discussing a revised screenplay, the art council decided to recommend that the screenplay for "In the Fire" be translated into Russian so that it could be forwarded to Moscow for its approval. Only then could the production be included in the studio's planning. Lorencs, on the same date, was appointed to be the film's editor.²⁴

The script was purchased by the Motion Picture Studio on June 27, 1965.²⁵ Two days earlier, the Russian version of the screenplay was sent to the central Soviet agency for cinematography.²⁶ The five copies of the screenplay first passed through the Cinematography Committee of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR.²⁷ The response from the GLAVK included two reviews in Russia and a two-page letter. The reaction was not uniformly positive, so the screenplay was revised once again. Six copies of the modified screenplay were submitted to the Committee for Cinematography on October 8.²⁸ Technical details about the intended film had been sent to the committee a few days later by Koroļkevičs. These included the approximate cost of the production (355,000 roubles), its length in metres (2,700),²⁹ the number of scenes outdoors (1,400) and in the studio (1,300), and the approximate production schedule – January to October 1966.³⁰ Enclosed was a review



Kristīne – Vija Artmane. LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-118.



Kristīne – Vija Artmane. LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-423.



Kristīne – Vija Artmane.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-248,
RK 41-412(978),
RK 41-412(979).



Kristīne – Vija Artmane,
Edgars – Uldis Pūcītis.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-224.



Kristīne – Vija Artmane,
Vešeriene – Lūcija Baumanē.
*LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-194,
RK 41-194(2).*

of the revised screenplay by Grigulis. He noted that the necessary changes had been implemented, new characters and episodes had been added so as better to feature the social environment, the characters of Edgars and Kristīne had been fleshed out, and the process now recalled the successful film "Frost in the Spring", which was also based on the work of Blaumanis.³¹ The Committee for Cinematography decided to forward the script to Moscow, where it was approved for production.³² As noted, the script had been purchased in June, and permission from Moscow actually to do so only came on October 28, 1965. The letter subtly demonstrates the relationship between the all-Soviet cinematographic committee and the committees of the various Soviet republics. After a statement of the sender, the recipient and the subject matter, the letter had this to say: *"The State Committee for Cinematography of the Council of Ministers of the USSR has, as an extraordinary measure, deemed it possible to allow for the purchase of the script 'In the Fire' by J. Sīlis and A. Stankevičs by the Rīga Motion Picture Studio for a sum of 3,600 roubles."* Signed by one V. Baskakov, the letter was copied to the director of the Rīga Motion Picture Studio, comrade Koroļkevičs, the editor in chief, comrade Grigulis, and the editor in chief of the State Committee, comrade Kunaeva.³³

On October 26, 1965, Koroļkevičs, the director of the studio, signed instructions on the next stage of working with the script. This was the point at which what was often referred to as a "literary script" was transformed into a proper screenplay – the "director's script". At this stage, the director of the film was actively involved in the creative process, whereas previously the intended director had just one voice on the art council along with everyone else. Koroļkevičs appointed not only the director, but also the cameraman, the artist and the producer.³⁴ His instructions appointed Leonīds Leimanis as stage director,³⁵ Herberts Līkums as stage artist, Miks Zvirbulis as cameraman, and Augusts Pētersons as deputy producer. These men were now entrusted with the development of the "director's script" for a feature film that would be produced in black-and-white and would have a one-channel soundtrack.³⁶ The director's script would have to be ready for approval by December 28, 1965. The technical aspects of "In the Fire" were changed, too – the film would be 2,600 metres long, the production costs would be limited to 300,000 roubles, there would be no more than 35 different sets (15 of them would be indoors), there would be two filming expeditions, and the entire production period would be limited to 270 days. The budget for the development of the director's script was 18,100 roubles.

Leimanis produced the script, now titled "Wader in the Bog" once again, on schedule, and the art council met to discuss it on December 28.³⁷ After much debate, the script was approved, but Leimanis was asked to make a few changes in accordance with Council recommendations and with sketches for set design that had been produced by Likums.

On January 5, 1966, the director of the RMPS signed instructions which said that the preparatory period for the film version of "Wader in the Bog" would begin on that very day and end on April 4.³⁸ The film was to be 2,500 metres long, and the preparatory budget would be 35,000 roubles, including 3,000 roubles for stage equipment. Time and budget estimates were to be produced by March 21. There were a few changes in the staff, too. Editor Lorencs was given a new script to edit – one for the film "On the Cliff."³⁹ The new editor for "Wader in the Bog" was Fricis Rokpelnis. A new cameraman was also appointed – Mārtiņš Kleins, who was a recent graduate of the Soviet State Institute of Cinematography, where his graduate film was "The Conspiracy of Ambassadors" (1965). Another director was appointed, too – Boļeslavs Ružs.⁴⁰

Casting for "Wader in the Bog" was discussed at the next meeting of the art council on February 5. Leimanis argued that the role of Kristīne should be performed by Ieva Mūrniece, who was graduated from the Daile Theatre's actors' studio in 1962. The Council, however, voted for Vija Artmane, who was 11 years older than Mūrniece and had received a number of honours in her career – Stage Artist of Merit of the Latvian SSR in 1955 and People's Stage Artist of the Latvian SSR in 1965.⁴¹ Leimanis had to accept the decision, but he argued that the choice was between youth and professionalism: *"You can obtain a lot out of Mūrniece, but Artmane's image is out there already, there is nothing else to extract from her."*⁴² Grigulis responded: *"Maybe something can be shaped out of Mūrniece as Kristīne, but what if it cannot be done? Artmane will not disappoint us, because she is a talented actress. This is an important consideration."*⁴³

Kristīne is the most important character in the story, and the selection of the actress had an influence on the entire concept. According to director Māris Rudzītis, most male characters in the film are shown in relation to Kristīne. One of the authors of the screenplay, Jānis Sīlis, said that Mūrniece should be given the role, and the film crew agreed. Rudzītis believed that in tandem with the actor Uldis Pūcītis, Mūrniece would present a more original character. Cameraman Mārtiņš Kleins suggested that Artmane was simply too old for the part. Despite all of these arguments, Grigulis and other

members of the art council decided to play it safe, and they recommended Artmane as the actress who should play Kristīne. At the same time, however, the Council did leave itself an escape route: *"If Artmane satisfies the crew, then she stays."*⁴⁴

She did.

Most arguments about actors are based on their bodily parameters. The actress who played Kristīne could not be taller, older or larger than the actor performing the role of Edgars. The bailiff could not look more distinguished than the baron, etc. Other arguments were based on typology – stereotypes about various characters in accordance with their social roles. Speaking about the baron in the film, Grigulis proclaimed that *"Skulme [the actor Valentīns Skulme] is not the baron, he does not correspond to a Baltic baron and his image. [...] Just because someone has seen photographs of 60 barons, that doesn't mean that he's seen all Baltic barons. This is why we must find the very best baron for our manor house. The baron must be very aristocratic."*⁴⁵ Grigulis also said that Juris Lejaskalns in the role of Akmentiņš was too "sickly sweet" and that he certainly did not resemble a member of the Latvian bourgeoisie. All in all, however, decisions on casting were taken quite smoothly. Elza Radziņa would play Madam Horsta, Lūcija Baumanne would be the laundress, Skulme would play the role of the baron after all, Lejaskalns would be given the role of Akmentiņš, Kārlis Sebris would perform the role of the bailiff, Uldis Pūcītis would be Edgars, Eduards Pāvuls would take the role of Sutka, and Olga Dreģe would play the role of Matilde.⁴⁶

Production of "Wader in the Bog" began on April 6 after Koroļkevičs issued his orders: *"According to the decision of the Soviet Council of Ministers of 24 February 1961 and that of the chairman of the State Committee for Cinematography of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, Order No. 73 of April 4, 1966, I hereby order: 1) A start to the production of the film 'Wader in the Bog' on April 5, production of the film to be executed in the Latvian language; 2) Production of the film to be entrusted to: Staging film director L. Leimanis, film director B. Ružs, cameraman M. Kleins, stage artist H. Līkums, sound editor I. Jakovļevs, product A. Petersons; 3) Declaration of September 20, 1966, as the deadline for providing the final version of the film; 4) Estimation of the cost of the film at 270,000 roubles."*

In the summer of 1966, the production team moved to the Latvian town of Cēsis, where most of the outdoor shooting was completed.

The set for the film underwent inspection during the summer, and administrative sanctions were issued against a foreman, an artist and a craftsman, among others, because of improper equipment storage, the

poor quality of stage materials, and fraud related to the size and cost of decorations.⁴⁷ Stage materials that were not used, decorations which were not built and labour which was not put to use were probably stolen or embezzled by the technical staff assigned to work on "Wader in the Bog". It can be noted here that one unit in the Rīga Motion Picture Studio was a technical support workshop.

This was not the only attempt by people to take "possession" of certain elements of the film. On August 19, 1966, the screenplay editorial board met to discuss a demand by Leimanis that he be named among the authors of the screenplay. The original titles for the film had this text: *"Screenplay by Jānis Sīlis and Antons Stankevičs with the participation of L. Leimanis."*⁴⁸ The board vetoed Leimanis' request: *"The RMPS bought the screenplay for 'Wader in the Bog', which is based on the novel of the same name by R. Blaumanis. The screenplay board has continued to improve the literary script in order to prepare it for production. It was at this stage that the staging director, L. Leimanis, became involved in work on the screenplay. L. Leimanis is assigned to work on the literary script and is receiving a full wage. The literary script was discussed, analysed and improved over the course of collective discussions involving the authors, J. Sīlis and A. Stankevičs, the editor-in-chief, A. Grigulis, the then editor, V. Lorencs, and the director, L. Leimanis. All modifications, additions and changes made by the editorial board are of a collective nature. All questions are discussed collectively, and a common solution is found. The editorial board believes that the work done at this stage by the director, L. Leimanis, has been compensated by his wage, and it is part of his duties as a staging director. Based on these circumstances, the editorial board declares that the submitted project for titles is not properly formulated, as it creates the ungrounded impression that director L. Leimanis was a co-author of the script."*⁴⁹

The editorial board had to meet again to discuss the title of the film. After a brief debate, it was decided that in Russian, the idea "Wader in the Bog" didn't sound very good, and so in Russian, the film would be titled *"Edgar i Kristina"* – the names of the main characters. The title of the Latvian version remained "Wader in the Bog".⁵⁰ The all-Soviet cinema union was informed of this decision by telegram.

On September 9, the art council saw two incomplete versions of "Wader in the Bog". Some scenes were declared to be a problem, and a majority of Council members argued that they be excised. The camera work of Mārtiņš Kleins was universally praised. On September 19, the Council discussed the remuneration category for the completed film. "Wader in the Bog"

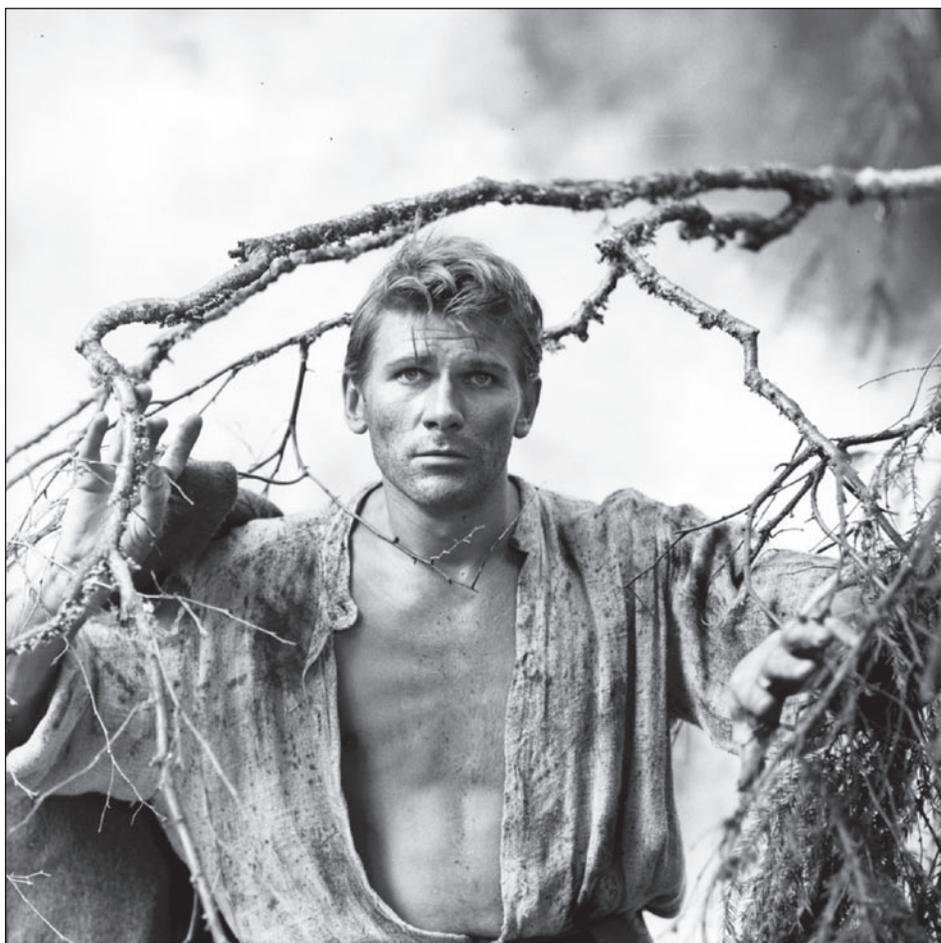
was given the second class of remuneration, with nine Council members voting in favour and five abstaining.⁵¹ The art council also asked the State Committee on Cinematography of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR to recommend the film for all-Soviet presentation.⁵²

Once the art council and the state committee had approved the film and the category of remuneration was determined, the next step was to decide on how the money would be divided up among cast and crew. The producer and director of the film wrote up a request to pay Artmane (Kristīne) 400 roubles, Pūcītis (Edgars) 400 roubles, Baumane (washerwoman) 150 roubles, Pāvuls (Sutka) 100 roubles, Kalpaks (valet) 100 roubles, Dreģe (Matilde) 100 roubles, Skulme (baron) 100 roubles, Lejaskalns (Akmentiņš) 100 roubles, Radziņa (Madam Horsta) 100 roubles, and Sebris (Frišvagars) 100 roubles. The total was 1,650 roubles, and the request was signed by Leimanis as director and Pētersons as producer. The art council approved the payments on September 6.⁵³ Production of the film was now complete. The post-production period is not well documented, it can only be said that there were two processes – dubbing of the film and promotion of the film.

"Wader in the Bog" was released in Latvia and, later, in a dubbed version throughout the Soviet Union. Some of the countries in the socialist bloc also bought it – Poland and East Germany, among others. The film was also shown in Sweden and Brazil. According to statistics from 1970,⁵⁴ the film was seen by 26.6 million people in the USSR and 661,700 in Latvia. This made "Wader in the Bog" the most successful locally produced film in the 20-year history of the studio.⁵⁵

Discussions

Discussions about screenplays and films were a common way of controlling and implementing the collective process of filmmaking at the Rīga Motion Picture Studio, as at all cinematic studios in the USSR. The screenplay editorial board and the art council were the two institutions which took decisions about scripts and films, respectively.⁵⁶ Members of the editorial board often sat on the art council, and the editor-in-chief was always one of those members. The chairman of the art council, meanwhile, was the head of the entire studio. As noted above, the editor-in-chief was Arvīds Grigulis when "Wader in the Bog" was produced. He held the post from 1965 until 1967. The director of the RMPS was Fridens Koroļkevičs (1964–1968). The screenplay editorial boards were comparatively new institutions at the time. They were created in response to a Communist Party Central



Edgars –
Uldis Pūcītis.
LVKFFDA,
Nr. RK 41-270.

Kristīne –
Vija Artmane,
Edgars –
Uldis Pūcītis.
LVKFFDA,
Nr. RK 41-293.



Kristīne – Vija Artmane,
Edgars – Uldis Pūcītis.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-188
(363), RK 41-188(362),
RK 41-279.



Committee resolution on improving the way in which feature films were produced in the Soviet Union. The board was established at the RMPS on November 3, 1962, and its first editor-in-chief, as noted, was Grigulis. This was a job which required approval by the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party. The first board members were Osvalds Kublanovs, Jānis Lūsis, Gunārs Priede, Antons Stankevičs and Ojārs Vācietis.⁵⁷ The screenplay editorial board was the first structure to discuss any film, and its key purpose was to *“provide for the execution of thematic plans involving qualitatively, ideologically and artistically valuable screenplays”*.⁵⁸

There were three institutions which decided on the repertoire of Soviet Latvian filmmaking – the screenplay editorial board, the management of the studio, and the State Committee on Cinematography. The general framework for this process was defined by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and one requirement was that producers of films pay more attention to a *“closer link between the artist and society”*.⁵⁹ Līce has interpreted this as a demand for *“timely films that are relevant to the Soviet society and that focus on the most important problems of life”*.⁶⁰

The reader may realise that the production of a film based on a script from the turn of the century did not exactly satisfy these requirements. The problem was that there was an overall lack of screenplays, and the authorities were rather leery of many contemporary tales. Given that the screenplay for *“Wader in the Bog”* was first criticised in Moscow and then, later, back in the Latvian SSR,⁶¹ the overall lack of screenplays appears to be a plausible explanation. We will discuss the timeliness of this particular film a bit later.

A film, of course, is not just a screenplay and some work with a camera. These are processes which involve a larger or smaller number of participants, but the fact is that in the USSR films are produced through the process of collective discussion. Participants in the debate had their own assumptions as to what the film would be like, defined problem areas and the clash of opinions and perceptions offered a look at the meanings that were assigned to screenplays and to finished and unfinished versions of the resulting films. This is a process which is interesting to monitor, because it shows how initial ideas and/or materials can change by the time the final film is released. This helps to illustrate the level of influence which each participant in the debate has had.

The screenplay

As noted above, the first institution to discuss an idea for a film and the resulting draft screenplay was the screenplay editorial board. Analysis of meetings held to discuss "Wader in the Bog" shows that most of the discussion was about what should be presented on screen, as opposed to what should be cut. The film, participants said, must demonstrate the great sorrow of the character Kristīne, the way in which she loses faith in the world. Blaumanis' "In the Fire" is usually interpreted as a psychological drama, but members of the screenplay editorial board talked about Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", too. The bottom line was that the board wanted to ensure that the film would be a tragedy. The editors also demanded that the life of the baron be shown as an opulent life, that there be detailed depictions of preparations for a wedding. One member called for greater contrasts in the film. This allows us to take a look at the relationship between the screenplay and the resulting film. Theoretically, a film is an illustration of written text. One part of the screenplay which attracted protests was a scene in which Edgars chased Kristīne into the manor house. The sequence was criticised for being "too cinematographic". This suggests that film is a medium with its own conventions and forms of expression, while the member of the RMPS screenplay editorial board felt that the film should be subordinated to the literary work from which it was taken. When a film represented the screen version of a literary work, in other words, it had to be "bookish", not "cinematographic".⁶² Other objections were thematic. Participants in the discussion insisted that alcoholism must not be shown. The result was a scene in which Edgars spotted a bottle and seemed to forget everything else. There was also insistence that there be no scenes showing orphans.

Then there were two fairly specific requests. One was that "the language should not be stylised". Clearly, this applied to dialogue. The editorial board decided that characters would speak in modern voices, and their dialogue would not be a sign pointing to the time and place of the story. Editors in Moscow, however, felt that the resulting script was boring, and they demanded that the characterisation of various figures in the story be based on individualisation of their speech. Silvija Līce has written on what happened next: *"Silis and Stankevičs chose a novel as the basis for their screenplay, integrating characters from the play 'In the Fire' into it [...] along with conflicts grounded in social environment [...] The result was not unpleasant – creativity was rejected on the altar of loyalty to Blaumanis. Attempts to preserve the structure of*

the novel and the play ensured the nebulous, diffuse and pale illustration of these emotional literary works on the screen."⁶³

The authors of the screenplay were trapped between two literary genres. There was the novel, which was very detailed in terms of space and time. Then there was the play, which was built entirely on dialogue and was set in a different time frame.⁶⁴ Silis and Stankevičs initially failed to merge the novel and the play into a single screenplay. In order to save it, the screenplay editorial board tried to force it into the framework of "three-phase" dramaturgy.

There was also the demand that the film have no childhood flashbacks, because that would not help to "move forward with the action." The cinema theorist Mikhalkovich has written that Soviet cinema before the early 1960s was firmly bound to "iron screenplays".⁶⁵ The idea of the "iron screenplay" helps to explain debates about "Wader in the Bog": "*Three-phase' dramaturgy is based on the subordination of characters to intrigue: The character's nature manifests its features through an immixture of personage with the 'special dramatic event' and involvement in its process.*"⁶⁶

Although Mikhalkovich argues that the early 1960s were a period when a new evolutionary stage of "dedramatisation" based on the concept of an "iron screenplay" was first appearing, but the screenplay for "Wader in the Bog" was based on a work of literature, and there was no option other than a strict following of the structure "beginning-culmination-resolution". This is the structure of classical theatre, classical music and opera. Blaumanis' "In the Fire" was based on precisely the same structure. Childhood flashbacks, said to be "unhelpful in moving forward in the action", would actually add information for interpretation and production of a different meaning than Blaumanis' original work would suggest. Exclusion of these episodes preserves the "three-phase" nature of the dramaturgy, and the literary text is once again confirmed as the exclusive source of meaning in the screenplay and, consequently, the film. The "iron" screenplay is an idea in the screenplay, and it is bound to the literary text very firmly.

As noted, Soviet culture ensured the total superiority of literature over other forms of art. Anke Hennig, an expert in the area of word and film, has had this to say about the situation with the Soviet media: "*Among the main features of the mass media in the USSR is the birth of cinematic dramaturgy. The term was consolidated in the 1930s, referring not to the analysis of film itself, but rather to the discourse via which a script is created.*"⁶⁷ She continues by looking at literary scripts as the basis for films. Film production, as an industry,

requires a screenplay and the profession of the screenwriter: *"Assigning a narrative nature to a film lead, in all cultures, to the emergence of the screenplay as an object for analysis, by drawing together dramaturgy and the theory of literature. Even taking into account these factors, the script in the Soviet Union was of an extraordinarily high level of status. This is seen in the titles of films, which are presented in strict hierarchical order. Since the 1930s, the screenwriter was listed before the director of the film, and this practice continued all the way through to the 1980s."*⁶⁸

The status of the script in Soviet cinematography not only established the priority of literature over cinema, but also, as in the case of this film, makes sure that the director has the burden of interpreting the literary text. Critics have concluded that this was a mistake.

The nearly religious attitude toward the written word might be an element of modernity in general, although most Russian researchers claim this to be profoundly Russian or Soviet as an idea. Wail and Genis had this to say in the introduction to one of their books about Russian and Soviet literature: *"For Russia, literature is the point of departure, a symbol of faith, of ideological and moral judgment. [...] Naturally, for such mutual understanding [of political, religious and other antagonists], only that kind of literature which is acknowledged to be classic will be acceptable. Classic literature is a universal language, one that is based on absolute values."*⁶⁹

The works of Rūdolf Blaumanis (1863–1908) have long been seen as classics in Latvian literature, and this is true in the same sense as that which was presented by Wail and Genis. Their book about literature presents Russian schools as the most important instrument in *"ensuring that the classics are sacral"*.⁷⁰

Blaumanis was one of those Latvian authors who were deemed by the Soviet authorities to be in line with Soviet ideology. A museum in his memory was established at his birthplace, where he often went to visit his parents and to do his work.⁷¹ His works were reprinted during Soviet times, and used in schools.⁷²

One Blaumanis work had already been put on screen in 1955 – *"Frost in the Spring"*. This was accepted by the mass audience and the critics, and it was celebrated as the first truly Latvian film. Here, the screening of a literary work had the effect of reinforcing the ideological aspects of literature, as defined by Hennig. Writing about Soviet cinema in the 1930s, she argues that *"as a reaction of culture to the media revolution that was provoked by the emergence of sound in film, the ideological activity which favoured the realm of*



Matilde – Olga Dreģe.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-186,
RK 41-187.



Edgars – Uldis Pūcītis,
Matilde – Olga Dreģe,
Kristīne – Vija Artmane,
Akmentiņš – Juris Lejaskalns.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-288.





Kristīne – Vija Artmane. LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-210.

Akmentiņš – Juris Lejaskalns. LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-358.



speech and the superior position assigned in Russian culture to literature in the hierarchy of the arts – these two factors reinforced one another".⁷³

Films began "speaking" in the 1930s, but the first sound film in the Latvian language only appeared after the Soviet occupation, in the 1950s. As film production and the cinematic industry got back on their feet after the war, the media situation of the 1950s, including the first screening of a Blaumanis film, was reminiscent of the 1930s in Soviet Russia, where scripts and control over them were used as a means for conquering and controlling the medium of film. Hennig writes that the establishment of a visual image in speech culture appropriates the polysemantic nature of the visual, and replaces fascination with the visual with the pathos of establishing sense.⁷⁴ The screenwriter has power over speech, and this subjugates the visible. Hearing appears as "*the third dimension of the visible*"⁷⁵ – the dimension that is not seen, which appears in sight while preceded by sound, and which is predetermined by the act of speech – the screenplay itself. Hennig has analysed screenplays as the basis for films, as well as literary scripts as independent elements of the arts in the 1930s in the Soviet Union, concluding that Stalinism obviously abused the qualities which allow every individual medium to make sense, and it also established a whole range of forms which meant that the transformation of something from one medium to another also became a phenomenon for establishing sense.⁷⁶ In discussions about "Wader in the Bog", we see that the preoccupation with hearing was still of determinant importance in the creation of the meaning of a film. Participants in the discussion demanded the insertion of verbal explanations in several parts of the screenplay.⁷⁷ Here, the polysemantic nature of the visual was not seen as a threat. No, the visual was not trusted at all.

In the 1950s, the Rīga Motion Picture Studio gradually began to hire mostly Latvian directors for Latvian films.⁷⁸ The only element which allowed control over any production was the translation of literary scripts into Russian. Hennig has hypothesised that ideology and literature reinforced each other in the 1930s in the Soviet Union, and that remained true in Soviet Latvia two decades later. The first films to be produced were based on the work of author Vilis Lācis.⁷⁹ He produced works of literature which supported Soviet ideology. These were not seen as classics of Latvian literature when the resulting films were first screened, but film and text reinforced one another. The relationship between the two was presented to the Latvian audience. The first film based on Lācis' work had also been a stage play, and the use of the same text in the theatre and the film allows for

a consideration of the differences between the two media. Resulting senses and the mechanisms for producing these senses became strictly defined. The message of the films was to be understood in a predetermined and established sense.

It does have to be said that the interpretation of classical works is usually well established, and that was the case with Blaumanis' works. "Frost in the Spring" established the sense of the work in that it related both to Blaumanis' work and to Soviet ideology. The film reinforced the original text as classical literature, but it also presented Soviet ideology as a natural part of classical Latvian culture. "Wader in the Bog", by contrast, offered a new interpretation of a classical work. Krauze and Lice have written that Leimanis pushed his own interpretation onto the text: "*According to his screening principles, Leimanis freely used the literary works of Blaumanis and [Andrejs] Upītis to find material for his films. These are featured in the style of Leimanis, in the aesthetic and ethical ideals of the man.*"⁸⁰ The idea of presenting more in a film than what is written in the source text – that can be seen as a crime against the authority of literature itself.

The use of methods and possibilities which are associated with a medium other than the literary text means that new and different elements are brought into the process, and a new cultural text is created. When these are evaluated by a society that is primarily focused on literature, they are seen as alien and strange. The new cultural text can be labelled a perversion, an abuse of the original text. The Soviet philosopher Mikhail Ryklin wrote about the "imprisonment" of the collective body in terms of the totality of speech when discussing the situation in the USSR in the 1930s. Ryklin applied this concept of the totality of speech to the cinema, too: "*This 'evocation' of aspects of content which are external from speech is continuing, it is a basic feature of the Soviet performing arts, and particularly of the cinema. Here we continually see a fundamental shift of cultural traditions toward the word and its non-visual aspects. The specifically hypnotic nature of the cinema, which cannot be reproduced in exclusively literary components, disappears. The reduced soundtrack and visual sequences mean that nuanced visual atmospheres and drops of light and shadow are expelled from films.*"⁸¹

The film "Wader in the Bog" and debates about it served to illustrate this struggle between the media and their cultural meaning. In the Soviet Union of the 1930s, the issue was resolved in favour of literature at the procedural and ideological level, but the dispute nevertheless continued in a subtle way at the level of individual films.⁸²

It must also be noted that the screening of classical works of literature always provided a comfortable evasion of censorship in the Soviet Union. In writing about the genre of Soviet historical films, Anna Bon has quoted the distinguished Soviet director Ivan Pryiev⁸³: *“There are no contemporary themes in our cinematography. Everyone is afraid to deal with them. This is primarily true of Bolshakov himself. If you take a different view of a topic, if you dissatisfy certain individuals, or if you formulate the question in the wrong way, you may well end up having your screenplay banned. That is why Eisenstein is producing ‘Ivan the Terrible’, Pudovkin is working on ‘Naihmov’, Petro wants to produce ‘Port Arthur’, and Barnet is working on ‘Sheep and Wolves’. I myself want to produce Dostoevsky. These are interesting but not dangerous subjects. Given the censorship which occurs today in the hands of the Committee and other high-ranking institutions, we can only produce films about history and the classics.”*⁸⁴

According to Bon, the Soviet genre of historical films began to decline in the late 1940s, when biographical films became more common and national culture reclaimed its value. This hypothesis is supported in the development of Soviet Latvian filmmaking. The very first film after the Soviet occupation, “Homeland With Victory”, directed by Aleksandr Ivanov in 1947, was an historical film, depicting events in Latvia during World War II. Next, however, was the film “Rainis” (Yuri Raizman, 1949), which told the story of the great Latvian writer, playwright, poet, translator and politician Jānis Pliekšāns (1865–1929), known popularly as Rainis. Leonīds Leimanis assisted the directors of both films. In 1955, work began on “Wader in the Bog”, with Pāvels Armands and Leimanis serving as staging directors. In 1957, Leimanis produced his own film, “Nauris”, which told the story of an athletic young man. The title role was performed by Haralds Ritenbergs.⁸⁵ Next, Leimanis turned to a screenplay which had been written in part by the author Zigmunds Skujiņš, “The Sword and the Rose”. Both films were devoted to “contemporary subject matter” insofar as Soviet discourse about cinematography is concerned, but neither was well received. Both were criticised for excessive romanticism and exaggerated aesthetics.

There were a few historical films produced after World War II. One was called “Swan White Clouds” (1957). All other films, however, were adaptations of literary works.⁸⁶ All in all, here we see an interplay of the aforementioned factors – reinforcement of ideology and literature, the lack of high-quality scripts, and the production of films which were of a politically safe genre.

This trend continued in the 1960s, when Leimanis found himself directing a film based on a comparatively weak literary script, this one again based

on the work of Rūdolfs Blaumanis. Līce, in writing about the first version of the screenplay for "Wader in the Bog", noted that the literary script had to be rewritten very substantially: "*Editors Grigulis and Lorencs were actively involved in this work, as was the staging director of the film, Leimanis. His creative will and bright inner eye were dominant.*"⁸⁷

The literary director's screenplay, as Līce called it, was the one which was actually used to produce the film. Although Līce mentions Grigulis and Lorencs as working with Leimanis on the final version of the screenplay, this is not supported in documents. As noted, Lorencs left the production of "Wader in the Bog" in January 1966. Grigulis, as the senior editor at the studio, worked on nearly all screenplays. Līce makes no further mention of Grigulis and Lorencs, referring only to work done on the screenplay by Leimanis, who integrated ideas and characters from other works by Blaumanis into his films. Among these were the novella "Prodigal Son" and a satire called "Revenge".⁸⁸ Leimanis also developed characters from the first version of the literary screenplay to a greater degree. Līce criticised both the screenplay by Stankevičs and Silis and the film by Leimanis in terms of the relationship of the screenplay and film to the works of Blaumanis. Līce claims that the screenplay failed because the authors tried to preserve the structure both of the novel and the play, thus creating a nebulous, diffuse and pale illustration of the emotional literary works. She accused the film itself of not following the structure and logic of literary works: "*Logic and the depth of the literary charters, along with the uniqueness of the environment and the accuracy of the literary works – all of these have been sacrificed before the altar of the film's 'all in all' cinematographic form.*"⁸⁹

A later version of the screenplay – the one which Leimanis handled – was also criticised by the screenplay editorial board for being "too cinematographic". In this case, the dominant interpretation of "Wader in the Bog" and "In the Fire" is that they belonged to the medium of the word, of literature and theatre, so they could not and should not be visualised. The transformation of the medium from literature to cinema was seen as unacceptable. The board would only accept a transfer from one directly to the other medium. The first version of the screenplay, the one produced by Silis and Stankevičs, was based on this process, but rejected. Leimanis' screenplay, by contrast was clearly a transformation, but it, too, was seen as a failure in accordance with criteria that apply to literary texts – the first screenplay was deemed to be worse than the original, and the second as criticised as being too cinematographic.

The film

Discussions about the film were held by the art council of the RMPS. There were several discussions, as noted, about actors, payments and decorations, but there were also three separate discussions which shall be examined in greater detail here. The first was about the director's script, the second occurred after the first cut of the film was screened, and the third was a debate about the final version of the film. Analysis of documents cited here shows that the only member of the art council who actively supported Leimanis' ideas was Fridens Koroļkevičs. He sought to protect the creative freedom of the artist: *"It is nice that there is a discussion here. It is meant to help the author. There are two versions of 'War and Peace', and anyone else who made this film would do it in yet another way. It cannot be otherwise, because each person perceives the classics in his or her own way. History has shown us that multiple interpretations of the classics are possible."*⁹⁰

During these debates, it sometimes appeared that everyone who took part approached the subject as though all members of the group were collectively responsible for the outcome. Leimanis alone expressed the individual responsibilities of the director, thus limiting the strength of collective opinions in the creative process: *"I am threatened, for my hands are bound. I am told that a Latvian does not do this or that, that a Latvian does not ride a horse."*⁹¹

Leimanis also expressed his gratitude to Koroļkevičs, who encouraged him to continue. The decision of Koroļkevičs to support the film went so far as to the decision to take personal financial responsibility for it. The original script had been bought without the permission of the Central Board for Cinematography, and later the man was willing to organise more discussions so as to gather together a greater variety of opinions. This can be explained by virtue of the fact that Koroļkevičs was quite intuitive in taking decisions. He also trusted that Leimanis would succeed. Koroļkevičs himself said that his goal was that of the RMPS – to produce high-quality films. During a discussion about the director's screenplay, he said, *"It would be great if we could complain about or complain the script from the emotional perspective. We waive much of this discussion, but we should strengthen all of the characters."*

Given the context in which these words were spoken, we can speculate that this represented Koroļkevičs' opinion on feature films in general – Latvian feature films were lacking detail and emotion. Latvian cinematographer ignored many emotions that may have seemed petty to them. Sometimes there were concerns that an emotion or detail might be misinterpreted. The

resulting films were pale and humble. Korolkevičs felt that the individual nature of any film can be enhanced by the strengthening of characters through emotions and detail.

Analysis of these discussions shows that a few constructive recommendations were made at the point where the director's screenplay was discussed. It was decided that Edgars would strike a blow instead of just grappling with his opponent at the beginning of the film – that would make the character stronger. There was the idea of filming rapids in the Daugava river. This could have been for reasons of documentation as such, but it could also have been a desire to use the natural phenomenon so as to illustrate the feelings of the film's characters.⁹² Participants in the discussion also pointed to two episodes in the screenplay which required further verbalisation of the visual elements of the film. In one case, the laundress is required to explain how difficult her life is. The initial screenplay had her saying, "You know what kind of life I had". More was needed.*

In the film, the mother and the daughter understood each other without verbal expression. In other sequences, Leimanis found different ways of expressing emotion without words. There were various comments about this. A scene showing ducks running away from the camera were unnecessary. A drunken man should not be shown kissing a horse. The horse itself should not be left outside all night long. There was a discussion of other kisses, too – the baron should not kiss the hand of his cousin. Kristīne should not ride a horse. Edgars should not be seen barefoot.

The conclusion for the upcoming film was also subject to debate. At the first discussion of the screenplay, participants called for a tragic ending. The film should show the sorrows of Kristīne and the misery of unlucky love. Parallels with the story of Romeo and Juliet clearly suggested that this was a tragedy. Leimanis, however, was not planning to produce a tragedy, and his version of the screenplay attracted criticism for being too sweet and melodramatic. This is because the screenplay by Silis and Stankevičs drew on many different Blaumanis characters from "Wader in the Bog" and "In the Fire", and one job in the revision of the screenplay was to reduce the size of the cast. Leimanis gradually shed various characters in the story, thus focusing attention on the main couple and the love triangle which surrounded it. This granted the film both unity and intensity. One character still present at the stage of the director's screenplay was Pičuks, a young

* In the final version of the film there indeed are no ducks, but horse is kissed and Edgar takes his boots off. His bare feet are shown at close-up.

boy who helped to disprove false accusations made against Edgars. In this version, the film had a happy ending in which everyone was delighted. In the final cut of the film, the role of Pičuks was reduced in importance. A false accusation was replaced with a bar fight, and the conclusion of the film concentrates on Edgars, Kristīne and their feelings. The ending was still seen as excessively melodramatic. The reasons for this will be discussed later.

Analysis of the discussions and the final version of the film show that there were several issues that were seen as particular problems. These include the bar fight, the chase through the manor house, the sequence in the bedroom, and a sequence in the poorhouse. Other problems arose when the main characters in the film were analysed. Edgars was shown barefoot, and it was said that when he spotted Kristīne and Akmentiņš, he screamed in an inappropriate way. There were those who felt that the bedroom episode disgraced Edgars. The bedroom episode, in fact, was a thorn in the side of many participants in the discussion. Some demanded that it be cut entirely, while others kept quiet as the fate of the film was determined. Cameraman Miks Zvirbulis, after seeing the final cut, had this to say: *"I think that even if this film is not harmful in a political sense, it will be harmful for our country's young people."*⁹³

This was a serious suggestion. The film was based on a classic literary work that had been upheld by Soviet ideology. It could not be harmful in the sense of speaking against that ideology. The idea that a film was "harmful for young people" was a way of ensuring that the film would be withheld, that it would mean financial losses for the studio, or that it would be released at a lower category of reimbursement. That would mean less money for the crew, fewer copies of the film, screenings at distant cinemas and a shorter running time. Considering the steps which the art council could have taken, Leimanis did what he could to defend his film by joining his opponents in sticking to the elements of the literary text: *"I do not believe that I have departed too far from the intonations of Blaumanis. Every added scene is based on one of his works."* Later: *"I do not think that Edgars has deflowered Kristīne in bodily or spiritual terms. No fall is intended here. Blaumanis' text presents Edgars as thrusting himself onto girls and harassing them in various ways."*

The issues which were discussed at the screenplay stage reappeared in the press when the film was finally released. A review of the film was produced by a collective of authors in a book called "The Cinematic Art of Soviet Latvia", which was the be-all and end-all of filmmaking in Soviet

Latvia. Never before had anyone conducted such a detailed and complex analysis of filmmaking in Latvia, and the book was published under the supervision of the Soviet Latvian Academy of Sciences. In this book Līce and Krauze wrote the chapter on feature films from the 1960s: *"Psychological drama was turned into melodrama in the film. The love story of Edgars and Kristīne was trivialised, and the environment of the film and its images were one-sided."*⁹⁴

The authors also discussed the fact that the film enjoyed success with audiences both at home and abroad. Vija Artmane and Uldis Pūcītis won awards for their performances at an all-Soviet film festival in Leningrad in 1968. The success was attributed to the stylistically uniform and balanced plot of the film.⁹⁵ In their article on "Wader in the Bog", the two authors described the debates which occurred over the film and the presentation of classical literary works onscreen – the debate which had been proposed by Grigulis at the art council session of September 19, 1966, which is discussed above. The debate took place two months later. Krauze and Līce support the film's opponents, concluding that it represents a *"downgrade to an aesthetically and ethically lower level than that of the original source"*.⁹⁶

Silvija Līce is also the author of a book about literary classics in cinema in Latvia. In the chapter on "Wader in the Bog", she quotes reviews which came out when the film was released, finding that all professional critics, whether literary or cinematic, were forced to admit that the film failed as a representation of Blaumanis' work. This was true even among those who sympathised with the effort that Leimanis had put into the project. One of the loudest opponents of the film was the author Regīna Ezera: *"The fact that Rūdolfs Blaumanis is dead should not be misused by treating characters which he created in a way that would never be permitted by any living author who respects himself and his characters."*⁹⁷

Līce, reviewing both Ezera's review and that of the literary critic Valdemārs Ancītis, listed some of the departures from Blaumanis' text and the modifications that were made to the characters which he had created. In fact, Līce was writing about the established interpretation of "Wader in the Bog" and "In the Fire". She addressed the same issues that had previously been discussed at the motion picture studio, accusing the film of *"naïve, vulgar sociological illustrations, alien to the naturalistic works of Blaumanis"*.⁹⁸

This applied to bathing scenes, the bare feet of Edgars, and the entire character of Sutka. Class contradictions were portrayed *"superficially, not specifically, and with a touch of the cliché"*.⁹⁹ In this sense, Līce addressed the aspect of casting. As discussed above, the art council went looking

for typical and representative faces and bodies for characters such as the baron. Faces, bodies and stature were to represent the social background of each character, and this inevitably led to a certain amount of stereotyping or “cliché” in the way in which the characters were presented. The “cliché” can be reaffirmed on screen through dialogue and action, and these support the general line of narration, and vice versa. This allows the “cliché” to become credible and trustworthy. In “Wader in the Bog”, the stereotypical statures of characters were not articulated in the narrative, they were not at the centre of the film. This allowed critics to view them as mere decorations, as a “sociological illustration” of a story that was about something other than class contradictions. The film, wrote Līce, attempted “to satisfy the cheap tastes of the public with fight scenes in a pub, this in the spirit of cowboy films, and with melodramatic effects, particularly at the end of the film”.¹⁰⁰ The fight scene was actually described in very much the same terms by the art council. It is reminiscent of a traditional Western. The pejorative use of the phrase “cowboy movie” was common among professional critics. By contrast, the mass audience, and especially the younger end of that audience, “was entranced by the style of acting, the adventure and the music” of Westerns that were imported into the USSR.¹⁰¹

The most vicious quotation in the Ezera review – one fully supported by Līce – attacked the way in which love between Edgars and Kristīne was portrayed: “Take away the endless trust which Solveig has in Peer Gynt, marry her off, and you won’t have Ibsen’s Solveig. Forbid millstones of prejudice and love to grind Anna Karenina into dust, and you won’t have Tolstoy’s Anna any longer. Replace girlish modesty with feminine sensitivity. Allow her to be pure and proud while wallowing with Edgars in the baron’s bed. Allow her to embrace him in front of others, to cuddle under the shelter of carpets, and to refuse Akmentiņš theatrically and in public. There won’t be any Blaumanis Kristīne any more.”¹⁰² Ezera showed that the interpretation of the film could be fully dependent on the relationship between the film and the original literary text, and when she drew parallels and comparisons, they were strictly related to the field of literature. After quoting Ezera, Līce added a question of her own: “What is the motivation of authors who refuse to present the ever-timely personality of Kristīne, as created by Blaumanis, through the use of modern means of cinematography?”¹⁰³

The authors of a book about the actor Uldis Pūcītis (Edgars) also mention Kristīne as the most debated and rejected character in Latvian film history: “Gunārs Priede organised a discussion about ‘Wader in the Bog’ at the Cinema Building¹⁰⁴ to bring shame upon Vija Artmane for her performance as Kristīne.”¹⁰⁵ Pūcītis, however, was not criticised for his performance as Edgars, even

though the role required him to appear barefoot, screaming and riding a horse. Each gesture and each phrase spoken by the actor received the praise of critics.¹⁰⁶ Kristīne, by contrast, is presented as a woman who is running around in her search for Edgars and removing her own veil. What's more, she does not speak a critically important line from the play upon which the film was based: "*Now I am laying down my easy days.*"¹⁰⁷ Moreover, there is a scene in the film in which Kristīne and Edgars are in bed together. This was mentioned in most reviews, and the actress Vija Artmane was questioned about the issue, even though director Leimanis was the one who attracted most opprobrium for it. Reinis Ādmīdiņš claims that at the discussion at the Cinema Building, Artmane behaved shamelessly: "*The actress engaged in discussion and blatantly said that each person judges things on the basis of his or her own level of putridity. She explained that the scene was not a 'bedroom scene' in the banal sense of the term. Edgars, after all, was young and madly in love. He understood that he just could not allow Kristīne to marry Akmentiņš. That's why he broke into the manor house barefoot. That's why he hid behind the curtains to catch Kristīne and kiss her passionately.*"¹⁰⁸ The properties of the film character were projected unto the actress in this discussion, and Artmane was actually blamed for the moral degradation of her character and the film in general. The conclusion here must be that in Soviet Latvian culture, the traditional and patriarchal image of women was that they should embody and protect morals and morality.

Ādmīdiņš offered much irony in describing debates about the film claiming that both supporters and opponents were behaving emotionally. In a more contemporary evaluation of the film, Kristīne Matīsa has also portrayed the debate as very emotional and sometimes illogical. A contemporary evaluation of the film can be found in books which are aimed at popular taste and a mass audience, as opposed to a professional or academic reader.¹⁰⁹ Among major contemporary works on the Latvian cinema include Matīsa's "The Good, Old 50 Brightest Jewels of Classic Latvian Film".¹¹⁰ Here, again the main criticism falls upon the character of Kristīne. Matīsa quotes both outraged and delighted letters from viewers. She also recalls an episode from the production process in which the distinguished actress Lūcija Baumane, playing the laundress in the film, claimed that Kristīne must have been pregnant when marrying Akmentiņš and blamed Leimanis for this. Baumane based her thinking on the bedroom scene in the film, also noting that in the scene in which Kristīne is searching for Edgars, she is draped in a large shawl. Leimanis replied by saying that "*Baumane has a dirty fantasy*".¹¹¹ Matīsa also quotes a review from the Communist Party newspaper "Cīņa",



Frišvagars –
Kārlis Sebris,
Baron –
Valentīns
Skulme.
LVKFFDA,
Nr. RK 41-305.

Cousin –
Anda Zaice.
LVKFFDA,
Nr. RK 41-315.



Cousin – Anda Zaice.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-317.



Sutka – Eduards Pāvuls.
LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-346, RK 41-345.

which demanded that a panel be organised to discuss the permissible level of departure from literary texts in film production.¹¹²

It can be concluded here that when the film was released and also in the present day, the debate has focused on the relationship between the literary text and the film, as well as on how the images of Edgars and Kristīne should be interpreted – primarily in the context of gender dimension. It is worth noting that these were the same topics that were previously discussed by the film studio's art council. Giddings, Selby and Wensley, in "Screening the Novel",¹¹³ offer an extensive review of theory and the history of film production. From the very start, the authors warn us against attempts to create boundaries in this area: "*There has nevertheless been a close relationship between the two media, in terms of material originally published in prose narrative, but subsequently adapted for the screen. There do not, however, seem to be any universally accepted principles which may be applied when examining such transfers.*"¹¹⁴

The authors also quote Luhr and Lehman's "Authorship and Narrative": "*Criticism of films using novels as a source will frequently centre on their 'fidelity' to the events of the novel, not on the artistic integrity. References are constantly made to what is 'left out' or 'changed', instead of what is there.*"¹¹⁵ This certainly applies to criticisms which were levelled against "Wader in the Bog."

When it comes to gender representations in the film, it does have to be said that Leimanis and Artmane created a new depiction of a woman who is in love. The Soviet Union proclaimed itself to be the land of gender equality, but the fact is that women faced a double burden, not a new definition of gender roles. Even though many held jobs, women also had to act in tradition with stereotypical concepts of womanhood. They had to be patient, sensitive, in the background, passive, frigid, abstinent and silent. Kristīne shattered the pattern of positive heroines performing in the traditionally patriarchal way that was expected of women. She presented the modality of gender which had previously been acceptable only in negative female characters. The gender performance of Edgars also departed from the dominant modality of masculinity, but critics did not notice this. This can be explained through the charm of Uldis Pūcītis, as Ādmīdiņš did. It can also be based on the assumption that professional critics wanted female characters to preserve traditional gender modalities more than they wanted male characters to do the same, because women were supposed to be more pure and spiritual in the first place. Artmane was given the thankless task of protecting the traditional interpretation of gender roles, as found in Blaumanis, while

still being expected to keep the home fires burning, too. Let us keep these conclusion in mind as we look at "Wader in the Bog" from the perspective of how it has been criticised. We shall take another look at the problematic areas that were defined in the discussions which we have analysed so far.

Reasoning and interpretation

Changes in the script for "Wader in the Bog" led to a reduction in the number of characters in the film, as well as a different ending which somewhat reduced the initial level of intrigue in the movie. There were, however, no changes that prolonged dialogues or abolished any details. Leonīds Leimanis, with the support of Fridens Koroļkevičs, changed nothing once the film was in the can. Discussions at the art council show that the final version was on two tapes, and the original scenes were all preserved despite criticism that were made. Critical debates about the film, as depicted in surveys by Līce, Matīsa and Ādmīdiņš, spoke to the same issues which were seen as problems during the production period of the film. It must be said here that despite professional critical discourse and certain letters that were published in the local press, "Wader in the Bog" was well accepted at home and abroad. Today the film is a part of classic Latvian cinema. Analysis of critical discourse in this case demonstrates the gap between mass culture, which serves overall public tastes, and the high level of culture among professionals in the fields of literature, cinema and the arts.

My hypothesis here is that the presentation of Blaumanis' "In the Fire" and "Wader in the Bog" on screen in the mid-1960s in the USSR was handled in this particular way because no other options were really available. Leimanis was clearly the main reason why the film ended up the way it did. He produced sharp contrasts, made use of light and darkness, offered dynamic shots, and presented the subtle influence of German expressionism. The film was also strongly influenced by factors such as the initial rejection of the screenplay by the central authorities. There were time pressures, financial pressures, resistance on the part of the art council, constant alternations to the screenplay, the strong personality of the director, support from the studio head, etc. All of this had as much an effect on the final product as did issues such as people stealing set decoration materials and actors being willing to perform only in some specific way.¹¹⁶ In addition to this, however, I would like to propose a few other hypotheses as to why this interpretation of Blaumanis' work was put on screen in 1966.

I believe that the film "Wader in the Bog" was, in a sense, a forecast of the end of the 1960s as a period of Communist utopia and liberation. The "Prague spring" occurred in 1968. Pyotr Wail and Alexander Genis authored a book about Soviet literature in the 1960s that was called "Soviet Baroque". Another was called "The 1960s: The World of the Soviet Person". In each book, the authors analysed and described the worldview of the Soviet intelligentsia at the time.¹¹⁷ They describe the events of 1968 in Prague as a seminal experience for the Soviet intelligentsia in the 1960s.¹¹⁸ The crisis for Communism, according to Wail and Genis, started on August 21, 1968: "*The invasion of Czechoslovakia finally provided a reason to finally disassociate oneself from the Soviet authority. As people put it back then – it was a reason to envision.*"¹¹⁹

In the introduction to "In the Fire", which Blaumanis published in 1906 as a stage version of his novel "Wader in the Bog" (1897), the author indicated that the play was set at a time "before the revolution".¹²⁰ This means that the film "Wader in the Bog", too, can be considered to be set at a time before the revolution of 1905. Admittedly, the interpretation stated in the previous paragraph may seem to be a bit far-fetched. The events of Prague followed the start of production of "Wader in the Bog" by three full years, and one may well ask whether the interpretation is applicable at all. The point is that social and cultural ideas about concepts such as *fin de siècle*, frustration in the ideals of an older generation or in one's own ideals, the idea of political and social maturity – these are ideas which transcend time and space. Cultural and social ideas which may not yet be printed on paper or imprinted on people's minds may, thanks to the atmosphere and *zeitgeist* of the moment, find expression in literature, cinema and other forms of art, they may be articulated in any event. The events of Prague and the film that is analysed here both spoke to the end of a thaw in the Soviet sphere, the beginning of a period of stagnation which nonetheless laid bare an awakening of individuality, liberation of the individual from the collective, and an end to the pressures of collective opinion. Critical discourse about the film demonstrates a strong and opposing reactionary force, just as did the Soviet tanks which rolled into Prague.

Criticisms of the film were aimed at protecting classical and traditional culture. This was hierarchically indoctrinated into education and the socialisation of values and norms in the Soviet Union. Sensitive aspects of criticism of "Wader in the Bog" include gender performance, an understanding of history, and literary texts as the dominant form of the

arts. The film did not thematise the works of Blaumanis. Instead, it focused on the same existential search as did the play and the novel.

If one looks at the way in which Leimanis developed his creative signature from "Sword and Rose" in 1959 to "Wader in the Bog" seven years later, one sees that although he tried to bring to life the ideas of Socialism through symbols and allegories, the fact is that these were just "empty promises". "Wader in the Bog" speaks the same language of beautiful form and bright contrast, but now we see that these were not symbols of Socialism at all. They didn't symbolise anything, as most of the film's opponents rightly noticed. The message was an empty one, and nothing was articulated other than that which was given and real. Two persons in love communicated love with their bodies, because words could not be trusted. Rudzītis argued at the art council that the speech of Edgars was that of a drunk who tries to charm a girl. Others talk, but Edgars drinks, fights, rides, dances and kisses. Kristīne listens. She says "save me" to Madam Horsta, and she says "yes, mother" to the laundress, but then she gets in bed with Edgars and searches for him when he disappears. Kristīne removes her veil. This is a performative act just when Edgars is heading toward the abyss. These acts are performed because words cannot be trusted, they cannot express the sufferings of love or the pursuit of major life decisions. Wail and Genis see links between political developments in the 1960s to things which happened in the area of words: *"As long as the programme of the Communist Party is interpreted as a literary work, it can resist any attempt at social makeovers. As soon as the poetic atmosphere disappears, however, its ridiculous nature becomes very evident."*¹²¹

The authors also apply this observation to the 1970s and 1980s, claiming that at the end of the 1960s, the audibility of ideological words disappeared and turned at best into a distant rustle: *"Fruitful ideas in Soviet society which were expressed not as an impulse for action, but as well-articulated formulas of words, ceased functioning. In this context, standing still means holding back, and stagnation means silence. The 1980s began talking again."*¹²²

In "Wader in the Bog", as interpreted by Leimanis, words do not matter, they are a factor of disturbance. Words belong to others, to those who are trying to impose power over Edgars and Kristīne. The laundress says things which make Kristīne visit Akmentiņš. There are the words of people at the saloon, of people at the park. They bring Kristīne and Edgars apart. Both of them must be free of words, they must deprive words of their meaning in order to love and survive. Kristīne and Edgars are not trying to change the world, they are not doing anything on behalf of people or in pursuit of public



Kristīne – Vija Artmane, Edgars – Uldis Pūcītis. *LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-228.*



Akmentiņš – Juris Lejaskalns, Kristīne – Vija Artmane.
VKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-366.



Kristīne – Vija Artmane, Edgars – Uldis Pūcītis. *LVKFFDA, Nr. RK 41-6.*

health. They are withdrawing from the public sphere. Even when they are out among others, they remain private, they are there just for one another. Their answer to the public sphere is to withdraw into the private sphere; that is their only rescue. The embrace between Edgars and Kristīne in the final scene of the film is a performative act by which they create their own private space – a space to be, to be free and to be happy. Inner freedom is necessary to perform this act. This freedom is freedom over one's own body and mind. There is but one way to obtain it and to free oneself of patriarchal power. It is revolution – irreversible revolution based on a conscious necessity for transformation. The main characters in "Wader in the Bog" represent a new generation of people who are still linked to their mothers and fathers, but who are gradually freeing themselves – not changing their environment, but escaping from it.

This path toward individuality and freedom is depicted in the film through metaphors of space and mobility. There is a scene in which Edgars and Kristīne are walking alongside a railway, and a train passes them by. This is a sign of motion, just like the horse in the film, just like dancing

at the ball which is held at the part. This is movement and change which depicts Edgars. Akmentiņš, for his part, is depicted by his real estate, his house, and a conversation as to where horses and carriages are to be put on the day of the wedding. This articulates stability, but also stagnation. When Kristīne chases Edgars, she starts in the manor house, but she ends up at the poorhouse as she searches for him. This represents the way in which she liberates herself, step by step. At the beginning of the film, we typically see her walking upstairs and downstairs, opening and closing windows and doors. This can be interpreted as social mobility – climbing up and down the ladder of hierarchy. Toward the end, however, Kristīne is moving horizontally, both in longer narrative sequences which involve changes of sets and in single sets such as her room before the wedding. Things kind of geographic mobility represents a rejection of any engagement in the existing system of power distribution. In this sense, a sequence featuring pitch burners, which many people opposed, is a critical element. Pitch burners are far from any power relations, they are rank outsiders. They live in the forest, on the periphery of life. The rules and norms of the village and the manor house do not function in their lives. The burners here are each an individual revolutionary, a man who makes no attempt to change the world, preferring instead to create his own world, one in which he can be free. Wail and Genis have written that the Prague spring was also an example of awakening individuality: *“As events moved toward their tragic end, the Prague spring became an incident in which heroic and free individuals took a stand against a blunt mass that was not broken down into individuals.”*¹²³

In *“Wader in the Bog”*, both Edgars and Kristīne become aware of their own individuality. They seek ways of distancing themselves from the masses – the villagers and the inhabitants of the manor house. This was best seen at the start and finish of the scene at the church – a mass not broken down into individuals.

Debates about the film have revolved around the same subject while not naming it explicitly. Leimanis had the individual freedom to film his individual interpretation of Blaumanis, and each viewer had the individual freedom to interpret the film which Leimanis had made. Professional critical discourse about the film plays the same role as did Soviet tanks in Prague in 1968. It interferes with the critical process, and it is a punitive function, one which takes form in critical reviews and panel discussions after the film’s results. The public, by contrast, profited from the gap between the two cultural texts. Audience members could exploit freedom,

visual polyphony, the idea of escapism, and a focus on the details of private life – all present in "Wader in the Bog". The conclusion from the film is that individualities, as represented by Edgars and Kristīne, stand apart from the state – the manor house, the baron, their parents, marriage, etc. To survive as individuals, moreover, the two of them must escape the state. The individual filmmakers – Koroļkevičs and Leimanis – found gaps in the way in which the Soviet system controlled filmmaking, and they also escaped in a sense. There were penalties, to be sure, but the film did find its audience.

Documents

Discussions about new films were very common as a means for controlling the collective nature of filmmaking at the Riga Motion Picture Studio, as at all studios in the USSR. Such discussions were always recorded, and I present some of those which applied to "Wader in the Bog". First there are excerpts from screenplay reviews produced by experts in Moscow,¹²⁴ and then there is the final ruling from the central Soviet cinematography headquarters. I also offer excerpts from sessions of the editorial board and the art council.

A review of the screenplay for "In the Fire" based on literary works by R. Blaumanis)¹²⁵

From my point of view, it is a very good idea to screen Blaumanis' "In the Fire" and "In the Swamp". Blaumanis creates the atmosphere of a manor house, where the oppression of the "German" baron reigns. There is also the household of servants, seduced by adulation and flannel. Blaumanis does not forget the problems of a Latvian village in general. He shows growing social stratification and rebellious tendencies. All of these are found in the works which have been selected for screening. The romantic image of Edgars is that of an eccentric rebel, flouncing in the atmosphere of a congested "court of servants". The poetic image of Alder is that of a dreamer, a poet, somewhat reminiscent of the first activists of the national movement. Assiduous Akmentiņš is the "strong farmer", there are the images of the fearful peasant Klenga, of a bailiff, a servant. The images of almost everyone are unconditionally typical portraits of a social, psychological and "common" historical nature.

On the other hand, the screenplay is written quite naively, without the appropriate social "implicit meaning". The love story of "noisy" Edgars and "positive" Kristīne

is not as elementary as is seen in the screenplay. [...] "In the Fire" and "Swamp" are hypostases which should have been "uncovered" by the authors. While positively judging the very fact of producing this film, I would still recommend further work on the screenplay. It can depict that which Blaumanis has set forth – the foreignness and animosity of the "German" barons and their "courts" in relation to the peasants of Latvia, the corrupting influence of the baronial dominion, the deep hatred which peasants felt toward the barons, and the growing rebellion in the peasantry. It should be mentioned, too, that the Russian translation is highly deficient. As a result of this, the dialogue is very poor and plain.

Z. Kutov

A letter from the State Committee on Cinematography of the Soviet Council of Ministers and the Central Board for Artistic Cinematography to the director of the Rīga Motion Picture Studio Comrade F. I. Koroļkevičs and the main editor of the screenplay editorial board, Comrade A. P. Grigulis, presenting the decision of the editorial board¹²⁶

Dear Friden Ignatyevich and Aroid Petrovich:

As agreed, we are sending you a letter of recommendation containing our wishes and advice concerning further work with the screenplay of "In the Fire", as produced by J. Sīlis and A. Stankevičs. As you already know, members of the editorial board of the Central Board for Artistic Cinematography came to the unanimous decision that the received version of the screenplay still requires serious literary revision, and so there might be no sense to bringing the screenplay in for a broader discussion and official presentation. The screenplay for "In the Fire" presents a screen version of two of the most famous works of the distinguished Latvian author Rūdolfs Blaumanis. This means bringing new material into Latvian cinematography. There are strong and vivid characters, there is the atmosphere of Latvian peasant life in the 1890s. Situations and narratives in the script cannot be opposed, but there are a few elements which require explanation. We believe that this screenplay is not quite a successful incarnation of the Blaumanis novel "In the Swamp" and the play "In the Fire" for film production. The social pathos of these works, the tragic circumstances in which the heroes find themselves – these often appear in the script as traditional melodrama about a girl from the dregs of society who is in love with one man, but forced to marry another. The ideas of Blaumanis in this regard must be reinforced – the foreignness and animosity of the "German" barons and their "courts" in relation to the peasants of Latvia, the corrupting influence of the baronial dominion, the deep hatred which peasants felt toward the barons, and the growing rebellion in the peasantry.

The artistic development and evolution of the main characters in the screenplay should be considered more thoroughly. At the moment, the images of Edgars, Kristīne, Akmentiņš, Viskrelis, Milda and others have not been developed to sufficient depth, and there is inadequate psychological motivation. Can one believe in the operatic villainy of Sutka and Viskrelis if their framing is banal and naïve? Edgars has almost lost his beloved because of this. How is he doing, then? What about her? She is constantly changing her mood. The artistic logic which is so present in the prose of Blaumanis is completely absent here. The image of the baron is presented in the screenplay with rather shoddy means – against a tacky background of luxury which the authors do not treat with adequate irony. It seems that because everything that takes place in the screenplay is unexceptional and is brought about by objective social and economic circumstances, the images of the major heroes are of a typical nature, and they require a more concrete, detailed and socially determined characterisation. Serious work is also needed on dialogue. Edgars, Kristīne and Akmentiņš are presented as drowsy and flat people. In this work, from our point of view, the thing to do would be to minimise inexpressive dialogues and to individualise the language of each character in the film. The script editorial board thinks highly of the fact that works by Blaumanis are to be screened, and these wishes are being stated so that the authors of the screenplay might continue their work, offering spectators a set of interesting and deep characters, along with the social atmosphere of the era, one which is portrayed through unique national colours.

I. Kokoreva, deputy of the president of headquarters

L. Borovikova, member of the script editorial board

Review of the screenplay "In the Fire" by J. Sīlis and
A. Stankevičs, based on the R. Blaumanis play "In the Fire"
and the novel "In the Swamp"¹²⁷

I regret that I have read neither the play nor the novel which are the foundation for this screenplay. Because I cannot judge the relationship between these works and the screenplay, I must judge the screenplay as the literary foundation for the future film. The title "In the Fire" is probably appropriate for a play, but it absolutely cannot support this screenplay. Life in the screenplay is inert and dull. The image of the main hero, of Edgars, is confused. His rebellion seems to be mere intemperance, mettle ordered up by the authors which has nothing to do with the hero's character in various circumstances. All elements and situations in this screenplay seem to be borrowed from films which we have seen already – not necessarily a Latvian

atmosphere, but certainly one where there are peasants, a baron, a girl and some grooms. For the sake of "cinematographicity", the love triangle is at the centre of the narrative, but can the story of a runaway bride who chooses to love the one who has been rejected by her environment really surprise the modern audience? This story could have been written so that it impresses. All of this is a cliché, it is very uninteresting. The play probably had great social meaning, but in the screenplay it is replaced with an unsuccessful search for entertainment so as to amuse the spectator. Of course, a baron's hunt can be staged impressively on the screen, but why? Everything else in the screenplay is boring and without any tension. The natural question is why this boring and grey script should be filmed. It makes no sense to me.

E. Dolmatovskiy, 17 July 1965

Summary of a discussion about the screenplay of "In the Fire" by J. Silis and A. Stankevičs

Rokpelnis: A reading of the script creates the impression that a film can be made out of the play "In the Fire". The feelings of Edgars and Kristīne, the depiction of love. The songs are also good. The beginning should be shown later. The most important thing is to establish what people are doing. Frišvagars [the bailiff] is not seen enough. Bringing Marga into the manor house is good, but that needs to be elaborated to a greater degree. The drama for Kristīne is that she does not believe Edgars. The great sorrow of Kristīne should be shown – she cannot trust Edgars any longer. It is not good that childhood and memories under the oak tree are shown. Archaisms should be avoided throughout the screenplay, the language should not be stylised. There should not be an orphan's song, it would be better to use songs by girls and men. The scene at the ball should not be shown. Edgars spots a bottle and forgets everything, he forgets his promise. It feels that this is material which will produce a thrilling work.

Grigulis: Blaumanis has taken a laundress' daughter and a stable boy and turned them into Romeo and Juliet. In this work, however, the grand passion, the grand love and the grand scale of life are all missing. In the film we must show the environment in its entirety. The manor house in Koknese and the baron must be shown at a large scale. The life of the baron must be visualised, his living space in all of its opulence. In my opinion, bringing the character of Marga into the manor house could be very interesting. Greater contrasts should be shown in terms of cinematography. Frišvagars should have more screen time, we must see that he is the one who really destroys Edgars' happiness. The wedding should progress much further, almost to

the altar, and only then should it go wrong. The script is sufficiently ready to be acknowledged as the first draft.

Lorencs: Are "Wader in the Bog" and "In the Fire" by Blaumanis really the Latvian classics which should be put on screen today? I'm not sure. If we decide that the works are right for the screen, then I must admit that the authors of the screenplay have done great and serious work. I believe that the screenplay fully matches up with the original version. In which direction shall we work from now on? In my view, the script has one foot on screen and the other still on stage – overall rhythm, the sequence of episodes, the dialogue and, to a certain degree, also the way of writing. Edgars' "escapades" are partly lacking any psychologically deep motivation. The script's structure of dramaturgy needs to be considered once more and carefully. The memory flashbacks are unnecessary, they don't move the story forward and have no deeper impact. The race by Kristīne and Edgars through the baron's rooms is too "cinematic". Edgars is given a pistol, but that is a mechanical and inappropriate thing, it turns him into a cowboy. Is it really necessary to show the way in which Kristīne and Akmentiņš prepare for their wedding day in such elaborate detail – the preparation of the meal, the wedding gown, etc.?

Koroļkevičs: I also believe that a good film can be made out of this material. At the moment, the foundation of dramaturgy is missing, it must be strengthened. I favour moving ahead with this project. The most important thing is that we have started to put the classics on screen. We cannot sign a contract with the authors, as they are employed by the studio, but once the work is done, we can buy it from them.

Session of the art council, Rīga, December 28, 1965¹²⁸

Present: F. Koroļkevičs, A. Grigulis, N. Zolotonoss, O. Kublanovs, L. Akurātere, A. Stankevičs, H. Līkums, J. Vahruševa, L. Leimanis, F. Rokpelnis, I. Čerevičnika, M. Kleins, G. Balodis, I. Milkeviča, A. Pētersons

Agenda: The first director's script for "Wader in the Bog" and sketches for set decoration

Grigulis: I don't like that Edgars just grabs the little man, it would be better really to slug him. On page 15, where the laundress is with Kristīne, maybe Ede could come in and say "Not only one person has been ground down by life, and not only one person has sunk into the swamp". On page 16, Edgars is at the mill dam. I think that it would be much better if we saw the Daugava, its rapids. Otherwise this sequence is not dynamic, it has no potential. On page 19, we read "You know what kind of life I've had". This requires explanation – what kind of life has the

laundress had? On page 35, Edgars has to chase away Viskrelis, and while he is doing so, he overhears the discussion between the laundress and Akmentiņš. On page 44, the taming of the horse should be shown. On page 52, where Edgars takes off his shoes and catches Kristīne – that can't be done, Edgars has to be as he is, but he can't be barefoot. On page 75 – the sequence with the pitch burners is too long. Page 77, where Kristīne is on the horse – that doesn't fit. Page 84, where Edgars rides toward the saloon – wouldn't it be better if Edgars saw something through the window and then entered the saloon? The end is too sappy, the scene with Pičuks is totally unnecessary. We should end with Kristīne and Edgars walking away. The scene where Edgars goes to cut some rope should be redone.

Kublanovs: The screenplay is very professionally written, it is quality work. Comrade Leimanis has provided us with a good idea of the forthcoming film. The dramaturgy of the literary script has found its place in the director's script. The script has been written with a sufficient number of shots, no cuts are necessary. The director's script can be accepted. The sketches for set design are also of a high level of quality. The only thing which requires some attention is the excessive number of extensions on the decorations.

Rokpelnis: The screenplay is good and understandable. Maybe Pičuks should be shot where he shows that he's found a knife. Where the rope is cut, Frišvagars cannot punch anyone. Where Akmentiņš says "I want to marry your man" – this sounds Russian. I have not seen a baron going to the city with three horses. Page 42 needs to be filmed in a more neutral and reserved way. The end is good, it ends with such certainty and such great emotion.

Zolotonoss: I like the script. It also seems to me that Pičuks with a knife can be a good point in the script. I agree with the director's choice of music, but original music must be played for 11 minutes in the film, you can't get away without doing that.

Akurātere: I really question the ending, it is a sob story which has nothing to do with Blaumanis. The scenes in the bedroom and with the pitch burners should be shortened.

Grigulis: Blaumanis is not about the sacrifice of Kristīne.

Sīlis: The screenplay is more concentrated. The scene where Edgars rides a horse and ducks right and left – is the ducking necessary? Shot 8 should be reviewed. Shot 15, where a small man kisses a horse. Shot 23, where the horse spend the whole night by the saloon. Shot 27, where Kristīne's mother weeps because Edgars has drunk at the saloon. Shot 42 – the event in front of the barn – Kristīne should see everything through a window. Shot 44 – would a baron really kiss the hand of his cousin at the manor house? Shots 91 and 92, before Edgars comes to Kristīne in the manor

house, should it be raining all the time? Shot 97, will Edgars turn unpleasant if he is barefoot? Shot 194, where it is often repeated, "You are mine, and I am yours." Shot 105 – shouldn't the sun come out after the thunderstorm? Shot 129 is about toddlers and chits, and Mustafa has to be an old crock.

Zvirbulis: The director's script has eliminated several very unfortunate elements in the literary script, it has become more compact and focused. Still, the character of Pičuks unnecessarily increases the melodrama. Special attention should be paid to the motivation behind what Kristīne does."

Stankevičs: Thought should be given to shortening the film, for instance the sequence with the burners. The ending should also be considered. The sketches are very nice.

Balodis: I can see that Blaumanis is not lost in this screenplay, which had been a concern for us. The sketches are very good, they will be very helpful for the cameraman. It is nice that Straupe has been selected as the site for the film.

Koroļkevičs: I understand that all comrades are prepared to accept the screenplay and sketches. The screenplay is very professional, it shows that love is stronger than death, and we can safely hope that it will be a very good film. I have a few notes that I would like to discuss, however. First, the title "Wader in the Bog" doesn't sound good in Russian. It seems that a different title should be developed. "The Stable Boy and Kristīne" would be a title that would be acceptable for export, too. We need to think more about the title of the film. It seems to me that the director's idea of antique music is acceptable. It seems to me that the ending should be tragic. The whole content of the film is tragic, the whole environment, the young love. A tragic end will strengthen the film, and at the level of the idea, tragedy should be achieved. It would be great if we could boost up the screenplay in emotional terms. We should strengthen all of the characters."

Leimanis: I am threatened here, and my hands are tied. I'm told a Latvian doesn't do this or that, a Latvian doesn't ride a horse. I'm pleased to hear the ideas of the director of the studio. That gives me courage to go on with my work.

The art council decided that the director's script for "Wader in the Bog" and the set design sketches were approved. The screenplay director was asked to take into account the recommendations that were expressed at the meeting.

Council chairman: Koroļkevičs
Minutes taken by A. Plūme

Session of the art council, Rīga, September 19, 1966¹²⁹

Present: F. Koroļkevičs, N. Kārkliņš, A. Grigulis, J. Silis, J. Lūsis, A. Stankevičs, L. Akurātere, J. Vahruševa, R. Grīnblats, N. Zolotonoss, M. Zvirbulis, R. Kalniņš, H. Līkums, A. Leimanis, L. Leimanis, G. Priede, F. Rokpelnis, M. Rudzītis, R. Žulanova, J. Karlsons, A. Zīle, M. Bendrupe, comrade Berns, B. Ružs, A. Pētersons comrade Sorvačovs, E. Grauze, H. Kinstlers, V. Lorencs, M. Zariņš, comrade Kleins, comrade Dimiteris

Agenda: Distributing money among the cast of the film "In the Morning Fog". Screening of "Wader in the Bog" on two reels

The group suggested the following distribution of money among actors who appeared in the film "In the Morning Fog" – 100 roubles for I. Andriņa, 140 for J. Meldēris, 80 for I. Adermanis, 60 for M. Vērdiņš, and 30 for V. Bārda. The council approved this distribution of money.

F. Rokpelnis: A good, sincere film has been produced here. Some small misfortunes that were identified earlier have largely disappeared, we do not need to discuss these any longer. The first part of the film has improved, it is lighter. Artmane has created a good and fulfilled image. Her mastery manifests itself to full extent. Edgars is also good. His protest against the absurdities of the manor house is strong. The film speaks to the objectives of the day – it fights against stupidity. We must note the outstanding performance by Baumane. The decorations are good. The cameraman has done excellent work (where Edgars is riding). The music by Mārgers Zariņš is strategically placed at the right spot. I suggest that we approve the film.

Grigulis: The most important achievement of this film is that we recognise Blaumanis in it, the character of his work has been preserved. Leimanis has proven himself as a real artist who can adjust himself to the era. The image of Edgars surpasses the ones which we saw before, but that cannot be said of Kristīne. The music is a special achievement which we must note. It is important that two manor buildings are shown – one for the servants, and one for the masters. Frišvagars' image is too pale in comparison to the others. That is a definite minus. Some details which are not consistent with the era should be improved (windmills without sail arms, benches in the park of the manor house which are too modern). I do not like how Edgars screams while he is riding. The ending is a bit poor. There can be no text, but taking off the veil should be emphasised. Accentuation goes missing. To sum up, this is a film of considerable calibre. Though the scene of Sutka picking leaves should be shortened.

Rudzītis: Edgars still has not been developed as a strong and passionate man. His last text sounds like the twaddle of a boozier who is trying to fast talk a girl.

The scene of the thunderstorm at night has nothing to do with Blaumanis. In Blaumanis it occurs during daylight, a quiet day. It seems to me that failure to stick to the original hurts this scene. I cannot vote to accept the film if the thunderstorm scene stays the way that it is. I feel that other added scenes – the pitch burners, the poorhouse – are unnecessary and pointless. I like the fact that Leimanis has selected all the right actors. This is a brilliant cast, particularly Kristīne and the laundress. The music is rather decorative.

Grigulis: Why has Rudzītis forgotten that later, in the play "In the Fire", Blaumanis changed Kristīne and Edgars, giving them sharper moods than is the case in the novel. Why is Rudzītis here referring to the mood of the novel and not the play?

Rudzītis: Events in this film come from both the novel and the play.

Grigulis: We must remember that there are two different things here – Blaumanis the playwright and Blaumanis the novelist. The first is what has been adopted in this film.

Zolotonoss: I join with Grigulis and Rokpelnis in the opinion that this is a good film. I like it a lot. An undeniable plus is that the director has managed to grasp a social issue in several sequences – two houses on the manor. Pūcītis does a very good job. I love that the film has a mood. The director and composer have found common ground. The scream of Edgars is unnecessary, it would be enough to emphasise the scene with music. Speaking of the music, I think that it is not only decorative, but also independent. The screening has moved away from Blaumanis, a lot that is good has been lost, and instead we get fake "cinematographicity" – running, the poorhouse, the cliffs, etc. It is a pity that Alders has disappeared.¹³⁰ If we take up screenings of the classics of literature in future, we should keep in mind the serious way in which this must be done. I cannot vote to accept the film.

Leimanis: I think that the film is good, because what has been added fits in well with Blaumanis' material. The scene with the pitch burners is a bit sentimental. A great achievement is the creation of apt and powerful images. It seems, however, that Artmane is not given the possibility to develop to her full extent. After the thunderstorm, Kristīne has to be more broken. Until the saloon scene, the sunny side of her needs to be shown to a greater extent. More drama has to be added at the market scene. The final scene can be misunderstood in a way, it is as if Edgars is bidding Kristīne farewell. The crew have done a serious and big job. I hate the poorhouse scene. The scene of kissing feet is spooky. It features Edgars as a strong man.

Lorencs: I could argue about the level of taste in some of the scenes, but the question is not whether we accept or refuse the film. Work with the credited cast is

good, that is less so when it comes to background actors (the pitch burning scene). I think that the scene is good, I don't believe it should be changed. I propose that we cut out the screaming of Edgars. In the scene in the dressing room, Kristīne does not react as she should. There's no surprise. The film is acceptable.

Kalniņš: I join Zvirbulis and Rudzītis in the opinion that this version of the film is not acceptable. It is not "Wader in the Bog" by Blaumanis, it is "Wader in the Bog" by Leimanis alone.

Akurātere: Edgars and Kristīne do not conform to my understanding of them, but the film is a completed work of art it cannot be improved. The director has his own concept. The film must be accepted.

Priede: The really major aspect of a work of art is never embellished or surrounded with lace. Blaumanis' greatness lies in his simplicity. This film lacks simplicity. We have not trusted Blaumanis enough. In the thunderstorm scene, it is not the running that is important, it is the attitude that is expressed through the running and the catching. These are not Blaumanis' Edgars and Kristīne. The scene where Kristīne and Edgars kiss in front of Viskrelis is also not from Blaumanis. Moreover, it humiliates Edgars. Blaumanis produced very saturated dialogue, and that's why insertions sound like an alien body – at the poorhouse, for instance. I'm against the poorhouse episode, too. It's not good that the baron pays Edgars. Huge work has been done, but if the result were closer to Blaumanis, it would be simpler and deeper.

Leimanis: I categorically object to any accusations about distorting Blaumanis. You cannot read the texts of Blaumanis on screen. You can film a play at the theatre, and then it is pure Blaumanis, but this is another method. Yes, they film could have been made better with more time, the production schedule was too tight. I did it this way, someone else would do it differently. I don't think that I have strayed too far from Blaumanis' intonations. Every added episode is based on some work by Blaumanis. I suggest that a special evening be organised to discuss the screening of Blaumanis' works.

Grigulis: I agree with Leimanis' suggestion. It would be good to organise an evening at the Union of Cinematographers to talk about the screening of classical works in general. I believe that it is impossible to produce additions which are of equal value to the original text. I also don't think that the character of Aldars would have best expressed Blaumanis' attitude toward the manor house. Alders only expresses the attitude of the intelligentsia, but that is basically an attitude that is created by generalisation of characters. I also don't like the poorhouse, because it takes a sentimental line, but it is a sentimental line that is found in Blaumanis. I think that the scene could be cut, but it is allowable, as it does not oppose the spirit

of Blaumanis. I hold the view that the film still conforms to Blaumanis, and there is no distortion.

Kalniņš: No one can accuse me of hypocrisy. I say what I think.

Koroļkevičs: It is good that we're having this discussion, it is meant to help the author. There are two versions of "War and Peace". Everyone who would make that film would do it in a different way. That cannot be avoided – each person perceives the classics in his or her own way. History has shown that multiple interpretations of the classics are possible. I also support the idea of a meeting to discuss the screening of the classics. We can do that here at the studio. We can show the film and discuss it afterward. I believe that the film is not a distortion of Blaumanis. I suggest that we discuss the film on two reels as soon as possible at the Union of Cinematographers.

Rokpelnis: I am against this suggestion. There is no purpose to it.

Grigulis: If we watch it on two reels and discuss it at the union, the results will be too insignificant. It would be more effective if Priede were to organise a discussion about several screen versions of literature. That would help in our further work.

Koroļkevičs: If we decide to organise the discussion on the basis of the two reels, then I will take charge of financial losses. First I suggest thinking about an exhibition in the hall as a good thing. Second, I would note the good work of the crew during the production. Third, I suggest that we call the film "Kristina" in Russian.

Leimanis: I can't accept that title.

Grigulis: Nor can I.

Koroļkevičs: We need a final decision on the title as soon as possible. I think that the ending of the film is good, no more emphasis is necessary. I believe that this is the optimal ending. I congratulate Kleins for being a good cameraman. The music is good. It's not just illustrative, it is very good and natural music. Collective discussions are the way to go, soon we will put together a board of directors. I suggest that we vote now. Who is in favour of accepting the film?

There were 14 votes to accept the film and three to reject it.

Leimanis: The production situation is really rough. The cost estimate was cut throughout the process, the schedule was shortened. I ask for permission to finish the film on September 20.

Koroļkevičs: We'll decide on that tomorrow. I agree that a discussion about screening the classics should be organised at the union or at the studio.

Council chairman: Koroļkevičs

Minutes taken by A. Plūme

Session of the art council¹³¹

Participating: F. Koroļkevičs, A. Serdants, L. Akurātere, G. Balodis, J. Vahruševa, N. Zolotonoss, M. Zvirbulis, R. Kalniņš, H. Likums, L. Leimanis, A. Leimanis, G. Priede, F. Rokpelnis, M. Rudzītis, A. Stankevičs, E. Grauze, comrade Škapars, H. Kinstlers, M. Kleins, B. Ružs.

Agenda: Viewing one version of "Wader in the Bog"

Rokpelnis: Lots was said after we viewed the picture in two versions, maybe now that there's just one, something new has come up. Last time there was one thought – that the added material was not Blaumanis. Such comments maybe make sense, even though everything has been based precisely on Blaumanis' motifs. Of course, there could be Alders, but it can be done without him. I think that the film that we just saw was Blaumanis. The lead actors are very good. Pūcītis is good, Pāvuls is good in her role. Radziņa is very monotonous in her role, that is sad. The camera work is good. Edgars shouting when he seeks Akmentiņš riding together with Kristīne on the road – that might be liked by some and not others. I cannot say anything bad. Some of us were against Kristīne running in the castle, but at the end of the day, that has to be left up to the consciousness of the director. The film is good, and Blaumanis is on the screen. The film can be accepted.

Kalniņš: My thoughts have not changed after seeing the film today. Discussions should continue about this issue.

Rudzītis: I believe that the film is flawed.

Priede: After watching the picture in two versions, there were many recommendations and instructions for the director to follow when cutting it down to one film. The film has proven to be the same, no instructions were followed, and nothing has changed. There's nothing to discuss here. Some scenes are really very good, the camera work is good, and I think that the studio has found itself a good cameraman. The actors do good work, particularly Kristīne at the terrace of Ķezberi, but there are a few scenes which I don't like at all – at the poorhouse and in the baron's bedroom. Provocation at the saloon is very primitive. The music is good. The laundress is very good. Last time we argued about our ideas, but that had no impact. Last time I voted to accept the film, but this time I am forced to abstain. I have also heard a few comments about German phrases in the film, that they are not right. That should be checked.

Serdants: I'm seeing the film for the first time today. I've heard people suggest that there is no sense of Blaumanis in the film, and I would have to agree. After listening to the ideas of comrades, however, I must ask whether an interpretation of the type that Leimanis has produced should exist. We have seen a mixture of Blaumanis' works today. From my point of view, we need to ask whether this interpretation

of Blaumanis will satisfy the viewers. Some scenes do not conform to the style of Blaumanis. The sequence in the saloon with the battle of bottles is a skirmish, it reminds me of cowboy movies. If the episode were shorter, perhaps that would be less noticeable. The episode in the bedroom evokes serious reflection, and if it ends as we have seen it, then that is a big minus for Edgars. In Blaumanis, it is quite clear that the saloon girl can be an object of desire for Edgars, in contradistinction to Kristīne. If asked today whether the film should be accepted, I personally would say yes, because at the end of the day, the director is responsible for the results of the film.

Akurātere: There are scenes where Kristīne walks from the manor house, where the dogs are led, there are the scenes at the ball, the ones where Kristīne and Edgars walk along the railway. All of these are very good. The opposite can be said about the scene at the poorhouse, I don't like it. I cannot say that I will vote for the film, but I am sure that as soon as it is on screen, there will be much talk about Blaumanis' style. I also believe that I will abstain from voting.

Zvirbulis: I also have changed my opinion of the film, but there will be more discussion. I think that the film is not harmful in a political sense, but it will be harmful for our youth. The only thing to be kept in mind is that more attention should be devoted to the work of the cameraman, Kleins. In this film, special attention should be focused on the ball scene.

Leimanis: Comrade Priede said that the German language is not right. The language was spoken by a German lecturer who has a better command of German than of Latvian. If I had more time and resources, maybe I could have done many things differently. I am surprised by today's vote.

Koroļkevičs: Whether this is Blaumanis or not, that is something to be discussed at the film union. What is important is that we have a variety of ideas and opinions. The film is ready, and we must decide what happens next. It seems to me that it is not proper to be angry at people who have other thoughts about the film. It is clear that we must make good films. The art council made several recommendations with which the director found it impossible to comply. It is good that members of the art council have actively expressed their opinion concerning this director's work. This activates the work of the art council.

Voting on approval of the film for screening resulted in 12 votes for, three against and two abstaining.

Leimanis: I have never thought that Edgars has taken Kristīne's crown in bodily or spiritual terms, no fall was intended. It is said in Blaumanis' text that Edgars thrusts himself upon girls and harasses them in different ways.

The art council decided to accept "Wader in the Bog" on one reel. The future course of the adaptation is to be discussed by the film union.

The crew of “Wader in the Bog” asked for the following payments to be made to the lead actors:

- Artmane, V. – 400
- Pūcītis, U. – 400
- Baumanē, L. – 150
- Pāvuls, E. – 100
- Kalpaks, A. – 100
- Dreģe, O. – 100
- Skulme, V. – 100
- Lejaskalns, J. – 100
- Radziņa, E. – 100
- Sebris, K. – 100

The art council approved this list without changes. Koroļkevičs suggested that “Wader in the Bog” be assigned to the second group of remuneration. The council duly proposed that this be so.

*Council chairman: Koroļkevičs
Minutes taken by A. Plūme*

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- ² Zelče, Vita. Filma “Pēdējais blēdis” jeb nākotnes zīmējuma fragments. *Latvijas Arhīvi*. 2004. 1. 59–83.
- ³ Ibid. P. 50.
- ⁴ Ibid. P. 59.
- ⁵ Постановление Совета Министров Союза ССР № 3054. 10.08.1948. LVA (Latvijas Valsts arhīvs/National Archives of Latvia), 416. f. Витола, Р. (сост.). Рижская киностудия, Предисловие. С. 1.
- ⁶ Приказ Министерства культуры Латвийской ССР № 161. 16.05.1953. Витола, Р. (сост.) Рижская киностудия, Предисловие. С. 1.
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- ⁸ LVA, 416. f. Р. Витола (сост.) Рижская киностудия, Предисловие. С. 1.
- ⁹ Ibid. P. 1,2.
- ¹⁰ Krauze, Andris, Līce, Silvija. *Sešdesmito gadu mākslas kino*. Grām.: Riekstiņš, E. (red.). *Padomju Latvijas kinomāksla*. Rīga: Liesma, 1989. 73. lpp.
- ¹¹ Riekstiņš, E. (red.). *Kinoskatītāja rokasgrāmata*. Rīga: Galvenā enciklopēdiju redakcija, 1980. 416. lpp.
- ¹² Krauze, A. Līce, S. *Sešdesmito gadu mākslas kino*. 73. lpp.
- ¹³ See: Riekstiņš, E. (red.). *Padomju Latvijas kinomāksla*. 361.–374.lpp.
- ¹⁴ F. Koroļkevičs (1964–1968), A. Grigulis (1965–1967). See: Riekstiņš, E. (red.). *Padomju Latvijas kinomāksla*. 272.–274. lpp.
- ¹⁵ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 149. lp.
- ¹⁶ The resulting film was actually called “Breathe Deeper”.

- ¹⁷ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 42. l.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 38. l., 146.-148. lp. Protocol No 21 of the editorial board for screenplays.
- ¹⁹ Riekstiņš, E. (red.). *Padomju Latvijas kinomāksla*. 270.-271.lpp.
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- ²¹ Хенниг, Анке. "Открылось третье добавочное ухо". К пафосу медиального перехода в советской драматургии 1930-х годов. In: Аймермахер, К., Бордюгов, Г., Грабовский, И. (ред.). *Культура и власть в условиях коммуникационной революции XX века. Форум немецких и российских культурологов*. Москва АИРО-XX, 2002. See: Hennig, Anke. "Und es öffnete sich ein drittes, zusätzliches Ohr": zum Pathos des Medienwechsels in der sowjetischen Kinodramaturgie der 30-er Jahre. In: Becker, Petra, Mundt, Katrin, Steinweg, Dagmar (Hgs.): *Zwischen Anachronismus und Fortschritt. Modernisierungsprozesse und ihre Interferenzen in der russischen und sowjetischen Kultur des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Bochum: Projektverl, 2001.
- ²² LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 146. lp.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid. 145. lp. From Protocol No. 19 of the art council.
- ²⁵ Ibid. 45. lp. Purchase act.
- ²⁶ The agency was known as the GLAVK – Главное управление кинематографией. In shorthand, people simply said that films were sent "to Moscow".
- ²⁷ The letter was sent by Koroļkevičs as director of the Motion Picture Studio to the chairman of the Committee for Cinematography of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, N.N. Kalniņš, on June 25, 1965. LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 60. lp.
- ²⁸ The letter was sent by H. Kinstlers, deputy director of the Motion Picture Studio, to the chairman of the Committee for Cinematography of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, N.N. Kalniņš, on October 8, 1965. 2[Z]N i858. LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 53. lp.
- ²⁹ Полезный метраж.
- ³⁰ The letter was sent by Koroļkevičs as director of the Motion Picture Studio to the chairman of the Committee for Cinematography of the Council of Ministers of the Latvian SSR, N.N. Kalniņš, on October 5, 1965. LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 52. lp.
- ³¹ Ibid. 49.-51. lp.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid. 44. lpp.
- ³⁴ These are North American and Western European film terms which translate the Russian concept of "директор картины" as "producer" of the motion picture. It must be noted, however, that in Soviet cinematography, all films were commissioned by the state, and the person who was the "producer" was essentially the individual who was responsible for the flow of money in the production process.
- ³⁵ "Постановщик" in Russian. The term appears related to the director or artist – "режиссер-постановщик" and "художник-постановщик".
- ³⁶ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 43. lp.
- ³⁷ Ibid. 39.-42. lp. Protocol No. 35 of the art council.
- ³⁸ Ibid. 38. lpp. Приказ по Рижской киностудии № 4.
- ³⁹ Lorencs was both a scriptwriter and an actor, and soon after this he began to work on a screenplay for the Estonian Motion Picture Studio "Tallinnfilm". The film, "Madness", was produced in 1968 but banned by the Soviet authorities until 1987. See <http://www.ezhe.ru/cgi-bin/vgik-bd.cgi?p=14070>. Lorencs also wrote a screenplay for the film "Fatherland, Forgive Me!", which the Riga Motion Picture Studio eventually turned into the film "I Remember Everything, Richard". That film was released in 1966 and also banned until 1987.
- ⁴⁰ Ružs was not a staging director or a substitute for a staging director. Almost every Soviet film had two or three people known as directors.
- ⁴¹ Artmane became Soviet People's Stage Artist in 1969, when she was the mother of two children. This was the highest professional award in the USSR, and Artmane probably

- received it in part because she joined the Communist Party in 1968. In her memoirs, the actress has explained that she decided to join the party purely because of her career and her comforts. See Artmane, Vija. *Ziemieši. Mirkļi no manas dzīves*. Rīga: Pētergailis, 2004.
- ⁴² LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 31.–35.lpp. Protocol No. 6 of the art council.
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid. 35. lp.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid. 31.–35. lp.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid. 35. lp.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid, 26.–28. lp. Приказ по Рижской киностудии № 470.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid. 24.–25. lp. Protocol No. 28 of the screenplay editorial board.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid. 25. lp. Text by Grigulis.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid. 23. lp. 26.08.1966. Protocol No. 29 of the screenplay editorial board.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. 12. lp.
- ⁵² Ibid. 7. lp. N: 1822. 30.10.1966.
- ⁵³ Ibid. 2.–6.lpp. Protocol No. 26 of the art council.
- ⁵⁴ LVA, 1405. f., 1. apr., 392. l., 35. lp.
- ⁵⁵ A film called “Three Plus Two”, which was a co-production of the RMPS and the Soviet studio Mosfilm, had 35 million viewers in the USSR, but only 500,000 in Latvia. Claims have been made with respect to another film, “24–25 Does Not Return”, which was produced in 1968 and reportedly seen by 28.5 million Soviets and 217,800 people in Latvia. These are numbers from a letter from the deputy director of the Riga Motion Picture Studio to the Committee on Cinematography of the Soviet Latvian Council of Ministers in September 1971 (LVA, 1405. f., 1. apr., 424. l., 79. lp.).
- ⁵⁶ It must be noted here that I refer only to feature films. Documentary films and news chronicles were produced by a separate unit at the RMPS.
- ⁵⁷ Vorontsov, Yuri, Rachuk, Igor. *The Phenomenon of the Soviet Cinema*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1980. P. 259.
- ⁵⁸ Līce, S. Mākslas kino, pārķāpjot 1980. gada sliekšni. In: Riekstiņš, E. (red.). *Padomju Latvijas kinomāksla*. 271. lpp.
- ⁵⁹ Vorontsov, Yuri, Rachuk, Igor. *The Phenomenon of the Soviet Cinema*. P. 259.
- ⁶⁰ Līce, S. Mākslas kino, pārķāpjot 1980. gada sliekšni. 270. lpp.
- ⁶¹ See: Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras klasika kinomākslā*. Rīga: Zinātne, 1977.
- ⁶² This is a fairly common opinion in the modern age, as well. There are, for instance, whole lists of errors made in the film version of “Lord of the Rings”, as compared to the original book by J. R. R. Tolkien. See <http://jackflannel.org/lotr>. We see the same tendency to want films to be word-by-word illustrations of books.
- ⁶³ Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras klasika kinomākslā*. 68. lpp.
- ⁶⁴ The film here disappeared as the ultimate goal. The screenplay connected to the film once again only once the director, Leimanis, started working on his own version of the screenplay.
- ⁶⁵ Михалкович, Валентин. Эволюция киноязыка: новый этап. В кн.: *Экранные искусства и литература: современный этап*. Москва: Наука, 1994. С. 5.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid.
- ⁶⁷ Хенниг, Анке. “Открылось третье добавочное ухо”. К пафосу медиального перехода в советской драматургии 1930-х годов. С. 242.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid. С. 243.
- ⁶⁹ Вайль, Петр, Генис, Александр. Родная речь. *Собрание сочинений в двух томах*. Екатеринбург: У-Фактория, 2004. Т. I. С. 8.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid. С. 7.
- ⁷¹ See: www.literature.lv/lvdbase/autors.php?id=67.
- ⁷² Vlaumanis’ short stories, translated into Russian, were first printed in 1951, 1952 and 1958.
- ⁷³ Хенниг, Анке. “Открылось третье добавочное ухо”. К пафосу медиального перехода в советской драматургии 1930-х годов. С. 243.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. C. 249.

⁷⁶ Hennig, Anke. "Und es öffnete sich ein drittes, zusätzliches Ohr": Zum Pathos des Medienwechsels in der sowjetischen Kinodramaturgie der 30er Jahre. S. 176–177.

⁷⁷ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 39.–42. lp.

⁷⁸ During its first seven years, the studio only produced three full-length feature films, and all were co-productions with the Soviet motion picture studio Lenfilm. See Krauze, A. and Līce, S. *Sešdesmito gadu mākslas kino*. 32. lpp.

⁷⁹ These were "Homeland with Victory" (1947), "Toward a New Shore" (1955), "Fisherman's Son" (1957), and "Tempest" (1960). Vilis Lācis (1904–1966) was a Latvian author who became the first chairman of the Soviet Latvian Council of Ministers after the Soviet occupation, maintaining that post between 1940 and 1959. His "Fisherman's Son" was screened in independent Latvia in 1939 and in the Latvian SSR in 1957. Many of his works were translated into Russian.

⁸⁰ Krauze, Andris, Līce, Silvija. *Sešdesmito gadu mākslas kino*. 90. lpp.

⁸¹ Рыклин, Михаил. Сознание в речевой культуре. В кн.: Рыклин, Михаил. *Террорологики*. Тарту; Москва: Эйдос, 1992.

⁸² To name just one – Andreiy Tarkovskiy's "Childhood of Ivan" (1962). The film was based on a story by Vladimir Bogomolov, who also wrote the screenplay. According to Zokraya, "Ivan is the title of a wartime story which Vladimir Bogomolov published in *Noviy Mir*. The film, ruined by some wreck of a director, was completed in haste by a recent graduate of the Institute of Cinematography and previewed at a conference of the Filmmakers' Union in March 1962. Said Mikhail Romm, an ardent supporter of young talents, 'Remember his name: Andreiy Tarkovskiy'..." (Zorkaya, Neya. *The Illustrated History of Soviet Cinema*. New York: Hippocrene Books, 1989. P. 230.)

⁸³ As recorded in a secret report to A. Zhdanov from the people's commissar on state security, V. Merkulov.

⁸⁴ In. Бон, Анна. Блеск и нищета истории: Советский исторический фильм под политическим руководством управления пропаганды и агитации ЦК ВКП(Б). В кн.: Гюнтер, Ханс, Хэнсен, Сабина (ред.). *Советская власть и медиа*. Санкт-Петербург.

⁸⁵ Haralds Ritenbergs was a leading ballet dancer at the Latvian National Opera from 1951 to 1977.

⁸⁶ Immanuel Sosnovskiy, in a book on the Soviet Latvian cinema, notes that during the second half of the 1950s, the film studio in Rīga was preoccupied with screenings: "The profit from screenings cannot be questioned. By means of cinema, important literary works are popularised. This is also a major school for cinematographers – scriptwriters, cameramen, artists, actors, etc. This school has proven itself, however, in only three or four successful films." Sosnovskiy did not list "Wader in the Bog" as one of those successes. Сосновский, Иммануил Л. *Кино Советской Латвии*. Москва: Искусство, 1976. С. 42.

⁸⁷ Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras klasika kinomākslā*. 68. lpp.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 69. lpp.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 10. lp.

⁹¹ Ibid, 42. lp.

⁹² This was common practice in Soviet films until the mid-1950s. See Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras klasika kinomākslā*. 64. lpp.

⁹³ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 2.–6. lp. Zvirbulis also spoke against the thunderstorm sequence (the chase and bedroom scenes), and at the end of the day he considered the film to be a failure.

⁹⁴ Krauze, A. Līce, S. *Sešdesmito gadu mākslas kino*. 91. lpp.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 92. lpp.

- ⁹⁷ Ezera, Regīna. Biedri rauc pieres dibināti. *Literatūra un Māksla*. 1966. 10. dec. 3. lpp. Quoted after: Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras kinoklasika kinomākslā*. 69. lpp. The quote also appears in a book by Kristīne Matīsa on the classics of Latvian cinema which was released in 2005.
- ⁹⁸ Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras kinoklasika kinomākslā*. 69. lpp.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁰¹ Stites mentions John Ford's "Stagecoach" (1940), which was released in the Soviet Union under the title "The Journey Will be Dangerous". Starring John Wayne, the film was described in the Soviet Union as an "epic about the struggle of Indians against white imperialists on the frontier". Stites, Richard. *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. P. 125.
- ¹⁰² Ezera, Regīna. Biedri rauc pieres dibināti. Quoted after: Līce, Silvija. *Latviešu literatūras kinoklasika kinomākslā*. 70. lpp.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁴ The Cinema Building was a club for cinematographers and film experts, offering a forum for debate, as well as for screenings of films.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ādmidiņš, Reinis. Edgars. Grām.: ...*tad tas ir Uldis Pūcītis*. Rīga: Aplis, 2003. 214. lpp.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁷ This statement in the play has traditionally been seen as an example of female self-sacrifice. Kristīne is promising to forget about her youth so that she can bear the heavy load of moral responsibility piled upon her by the man of her dreams.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ādmidiņš, Reinis. Edgars. 214. lpp.
- ¹⁰⁹ Books about Soviet Latvian filmmaking include the aforementioned book about Uldis Pūcītis. It is a collection of memories and articles about the actor and his career. Other actors and actresses have been subject of biographies or autobiographies, as have film directors who worked for the RMPS during the Soviet period. One example: Artmane, Vija. *Ziemcieši. Mirkļi no manas dzīves*.
- ¹¹⁰ Matīsa, Kristīne. *Vecās, labās ... Latviešu kinoklasikas 50 spožākās pārles*. Rīga: Atēna, 2005. 502 lpp. "Wader in the Bog" is discussed from page 59 of the book, which is populist in nature and has no bibliography. The author has not indicated her source materials, and there is not a single reference to what she is citing. On the other hand, the book is quite reliable in terms of presenting quotations from letters to the director of the Riga Motion Picture Studio or in reporting on events which occurred during the production of the film. The Matīsa book was reviewed by Agris Redovičs, a distinguished film research and former director of the Film Museum in Riga. In his review, he noted the aforementioned deficiencies, but he also said that Matīsa's research could be trusted, not only because of her insider perspective (both of her parents were film professionals), but also because Redovičs himself had seen Matīsa working with archive materials. He had helped her in that search. Redovičs, Agris. *Zelta laikmeta starojums* (K. Matīsa. *Vecās, labās ...*). *Kinoraksti*. 2005. 11./12. 318.–319. lpp.
- ¹¹¹ Matīsa, Kristīne. *Vecās, labās ...* 66. lpp.
- ¹¹² Ibid.
- ¹¹³ Giddings, Robert, Selby, Keith, Wensley, Chris. *Screening The Novel. The Theory and Practice of Literary Dramatization*. London: Macmillan Press, 1990.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid. P. 9.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid. P. 9–10.
- ¹¹⁶ Matīsa tells the story of actor Eduards Pāvuls, who was performing the role of Sutka, absolutely begging Leimanis to film a bathing sequence in the way which Pāvuls believed would be natural for his character. The story of the sequence also involves the search for an authentic woman's bathing suit. Matīsa, Kristīne. *Vecās, labās ...* 62. lpp.
- ¹¹⁷ Вайль, Петр, Генис, Александр. *60-е. Мир советского человека. Собрание сочинений в двух томах*. Екатеринбург: У-Фактория, 2004. Т. II.
- ¹¹⁸ The concept of the "Soviet intelligentsia", I believe can also be applied to academics, writers and cinematographers in Soviet Latvia. The Soviet regime had been in full swing in

Latvia for 20 years and more in 1968, and many members of the intelligentsia – those who had not fled the country or been deported to Siberia – worked for Soviet institutions or were educated in Soviet schools. That was particularly true in the area of cinematography, which is, of course, a very specific area of activity. Filmmaking in the Soviet Union was a strict state monopoly.

¹¹⁹ Вайль, Петр, Генис, Александр. 60-е. Мир советского человека. Собрание сочинений в двух томах. С. 866.

¹²⁰ See: Blaumanis, Rūdolfs. Ugunī. Grām.: Blaumanis, Rūdolfs. *Kopoti raksti*. Rīga: Jumava, 1997. 5. sēj. 206. lpp. The play "In the Fire" was first published in the newspaper *Latvija* in 1906. The revolution of 1905 in Latvia was aimed at territorial autonomy from the Russian Empire, focusing also on political rights, freedom of speech, an end to the privileges of the Baltic German nobility, and an end to Russification. Punitive expeditions arrived in Latvia late in 1905, and throughout 1906, scores with the revolutionaries were settled very harshly. The events of 1905 had a great effect on the thinking of ethnic Latvians, and 1905, therefore, became an important aspect of understanding the times.

¹²¹ Вайль, Петр, Генис, Александр. 60-е. Мир советского человека. Собрание сочинений в двух томах. С. 890.

¹²² *Ibid.* С. 891.

¹²³ *ibid.* С. 970.

¹²⁴ The first is by someone whose signature appears to read "Z. Kutov". The other is the Soviet writer Evgeniy Dolmatovskiy. His text in the original Russian was replete with grammatical mistakes.

¹²⁵ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 57.–58. lpp.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 54.–56. lp.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 59. lp.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* 39.–42. lp.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* 8.–11. lp.

¹³⁰ Alders was a scribe in Blaumanis' play "In the Fire". Blaumanis based the character on himself, presenting his own experience and emotions as a scribe at the Koknese baronial estate, where he watched the people of the estate very carefully.

¹³¹ LVA, 416. f., 4. apr., 38. l., 2.–6. lp.

Marija Krilova

MĀKSLAS FILMAS "PURVA BRIDĒJS" UZŅEMŠANAS RĪGAS KINOSTUDIJĀ 1966. GADĀ REKONSTRUKCIJA

Raksts vēsta par Rīgas kinostudijas mākslas filmas "Purva bridējs" veidošanu. Uz ekrāniem tā iznāca 1966. gadā. Filmas pamatā Rūdolfa Blaumaņa novele ar tādu pašu nosaukumu un tās dramaturģiskais "Ugunī", kā arī citu darbu motīvi. Filmas režisors – Leonīds Leimanis. Pētījumā izmantoti Latvijas Valsts arhīvā esošie Rīgas kinostudijas dokumenti, kas ļauj rekonstruēt 20. gs. 60. gadu notikumus un sniedz ieskatu padomju kino praksē. Rakstā citēti Scenāriju redkolēģijas sēžu un Mākslas padomes sēžu protokoli un citi dokumenti, kas ļauj rekonstruēt scenārija izstrādes un

apstiprināšanas, aktieru izvēles, filmas veidošanas gaitu un tās sarežģījumus. Īpaša vērtība ir tajos rodamajiem faktiem par filmas korekcijām, kas tika veiktas saskaņā ar Mākslas padomes lēmumiem. Tas ļauj izprast padomju kino tapšanas praksi, padomju estētikas, tikumības u.c. normas.

Rakstā iztirzāti filmu galvenie varoņi – raksturu un sociālā statusa tipizējums –, kā arī aktieru darbs viņu atveidojumā. Galvenā vērtība veltīta Kristīnes (Vija Artmane), Edgara (Uldis Pūcītis) un Akmentiņa (Juris Lejaskalns) tēliem un aktieru meistarībai.

Filma “Purva bridējs” iemieso 20. gs. 60. gadu noskaņas un vērtības. Tieši tālaika kultūras demokratizācijas tendences ļāva tapt šai filmai – tik spilgtai, drosmīgai un poētiskai, tik izteiktai individualitāšu demonstrācijai. L. Leimaņa filma bija ir viņa – režisora, mākslinieka, cilvēka – R. Blaumaņa “Purva bridēja” interpretācija, kas savukārt deva iespēja ikvienam tās skatītājam kļūt par tās interpretētāju, tādējādi veidojot un izkopjot savu individualitāti. 60. gadi bija vienīgais laiks Padomju Savienībā, kas ļāva pastāvēt (kaut vai daļēji) individualitātēm un interpretācijām.

Filma “Purva bridējs” radīja plašu rezonansi tālaika sabiedrībā un izraisīja diskusijas par literatūras klasikas ekranizējumu atbilstību un neatbilstību literārajam pirmavotam.

Filma “Purva bridējs” ir iemantojusi lielu skatītāju atzinību un, nenoliedzami, pieder latviešu kino klasikas zelta fondam.

Raksta noslēgumā ir iekļauti fragmenti no Latvijas Valsts arhīvā rodamajiem dokumentiem par filmas tapšanas gaitu, diskusijām, aizliegumiem.

Atslēgvārdi: Rīgas kinostudija, “Purva bridējs”, Rīgas kinostudijas Mākslas padome, Rūdolfs Blaumanis, Leonīds Leimanis, Vija Artmane, Uldis Pūcītis, Juris Lejaskalns.



Raksta ilustratīvo noformējumu veidojis Latvijas Valsts kinofotofonodokumentu arhīvs. Tā pamatā arhīva fondos esošie filmas “Purva bridējs” uzņemšanas fotoprovju materiāli. Fotogrāfs Ē. Fridrihsons. Fotodokumentus ieskenējis I. Beišāns.