

“The Contract” by Sławomir Mrożek and the image of Central Europe
as a (non)presence in Slovak television adaptations (1990–1993)

Television fiction. Central Europe. Balkanism. Sławomir Mrożek. Art after 1989. Adaptation of stage-play.

This article analyses the specific case of the Slovak television adaptation of Sławomir Mrożek’s lesser-known stage play *The Contract* (1986). The play was written before the fall of communism by the famous Polish exile playwright, and was shot for Slovak television in 1992 by the ex-Yugoslav director Goran Marojević. This resulted in multiple shifts in the meanings and visibility of various geopolitical concepts used in the play, including a reduction of references that could render the director’s origin more visible. The paper focuses especially on the replacement of significant references to Balkan and Orientalist discourse (which are parodically overused in the play) with the more readable concept of Central Europe (which stays unnamed in the play). In the final section, the paper also analyses the position of *The Contract* within the broader context of contemporary Slovak television production, which usually avoided Central European authors or direct images of Central Europe, but on the other hand added indirect references to the concept of Central Europe even to works which originally lacked them. The result in both cases was the frequent usage of allegorical meanings, masking or inversion that followed uncertainties typical for transition from the announcement of Soviet perestroika to (un)expected post-communist condition.

Doc. Jana Dudková, PhD.
Ústav divadelnej a filmovej vedy
Centrum vied o umení SAV
Dúbravská cesta 9
841 04 Bratislava
Slovenská republika
janadudkova@gmail.com